

Stalwarts prepare with talk of **‘SECOND REVOLUTION’**

By *Ben and Mary Turok*

Ben and Mary Turok, venerable ANC stalwarts and long-time members, attended a pre-conference meeting of the veterans held in November 2017 to raise the concerns of ANC veterans and stalwarts. They report on the veterans pre-conference discussion.

INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on the mood of the National Consultative Conference (NCC), and the current upsurge of exposure and criticism of the ANC leadership, it seems that whatever the outcome of the ANC elective conference, the Stalwarts and Veterans have an ongoing role to play, either in assisting the process of correcting and re-constructing the current flawed system or in continuing to expose and mobilise against corruption and for development and respect for democratic values.

BACKGROUND

The ANC Stalwarts and Veterans first met as the 101 Veterans two years ago and publicly raised their concerns about the moral and political crisis within the ANC, which was affecting the country as a whole. They tried to engage with the leadership to evolve a programme that would halt the demise, but they were rebuffed.

As concern grew about the need to address the crisis, the ANC Stalwarts drew up a founding document in October 2016, titled “For the Sake of our Future”. This was presented to the President and the top five officials

of the ANC. It declared that the ANC had abdicated its historic leadership role. Its leaders were accumulating ill-begotten wealth and were engaged in a cycle of infighting, thus eroding ANC electoral support. It called for a consultative conference before the 2017 ANC conference to address critical issues and lead to the rebuilding and renewal of the movement.

Several meetings with the ANC Top Six followed, but without a positive outcome. The leaders of the Stalwarts and Veterans therefore decided to go ahead with the NCC on the ANC, which was held before the ANC elective conference in December.

It was held in a number of large tents on Constitution Hill in Johannesburg. Present were not only ANC veterans but also representatives of civil society. Familiar faces from the ANC were there, including former presidents Thabo Mbeki and Kgalema Motlanthe, Ministers Derek Hanekom and Lindiwe Sisulu, former Ministers Pravin Gordhan, Blade Nzimandi and Bheki Cele, and former members of parliament and other leading political figures.

Well-known academic NJABULO NDEBELE presented the Keynote Address. He spoke as an independent observer and someone deeply concerned about the state of the

country. He raised key moral questions about the ANC, which were taken up throughout the conference, and asked whether the present leadership of the ANC had been finally compromised.

His speech was published by Independent Newspapers and the Daily Maverick. It is worth quoting from it at some length:

“What has happened in South Africa today is that the government that was elected to support and promote law, order and constitutional rule, has abdicated that responsibility. Formidable sounding names such as ‘the security cluster’, ‘the national joint operational and intelligence structure’ have become a cloak behind which criminal government transgressions can take place with calculated impunity. That is why it has become a matter of absolute importance that all South Africans recognise the necessity to rescue their country and themselves from a parallel, secret, security-driven state that has consolidated in the last 10 years into an organised criminal order that wilfully defrauds the state. It performs outward gestures of legitimacy but with diminished public trust. This enables me to make the following statement: the ultimate threat to South Africa’s >>

achieved constitutional democracy is the loss of freedom through the near total collapse of state capability. Regaining that freedom, that capability and the collective genius of the South African people to flourish through a sustainable constitutional democracy is what makes it imperative to embark on a second revolution. What to struggle for may have been revealed to us by the current national crisis. It is this revelation that has brought this gathering together today.”

Presentations on diverse subjects followed:

1. The Religious Community: An input was made by the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, and responses came from Rabbi Dovid Hazden, Moulana Igsan Abrahams and Tebogo Thothela from the student movement
2. Sustainable Economic Development: Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA) presented an input and responses came from the Chamber of Mines, the Banking Council, AgriSA and youth leader Phindile Kunene
3. Non-racialism and Nation Building: with inputs from former justice of the Constitutional Court Yvonne Makgoro, academic Mark Hayward, local community leader Gugu Nzima and student activist Sarah Mokwebo
4. The Constitution and the Law: The input was from prominent anti-apartheid activist and former Justice of the Constitutional Court Zak Yacoob and responses from Advocates for Social Change, the Black Lawyers Association, Lawson Naidoo from the Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution and Yusuf Peer from law firm Edward Nathan Sonnenberg.



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PEGGY PILLAY of Johannesburg Against Injustice then engaged with NCC delegates, asking the Stalwarts what they were going to do to address the problems that had been raised.

Although it was late in the day and the session was due to end, the large tent remained half full. In response to a request by a speaker from Wits University, the Chair agreed that discussion of the day’s proposals would continue into the first session of the following day.

The next day SNUKI ZIKALALA, as the Chair for the formal opening of the conference, spoke briefly on the state of the ANC and the country, stressing that the NCC must have an impact on both.

FRANK CHIKANE then spoke, and asked how had the ANC allowed itself to be hijacked? He said the publication of “For the Sake of our Future” was an attempt to reclaim our country and our movement.

He referred to those veterans who had passed away during the last 10 years, and asked had they died with heavy hearts, asking themselves if it had all been worth it. Chikane said the time had come to say “no further”.

Calling on the NEC to act decisively, he said the ANC had to recapture the movement and liberate state enterprises, even if that meant going back to the trenches. We need clear strategies, he told the gathering, and these must be taken to the masses and the ANC members in the branches.

The crowd rose in song to praise Tambo, but the atmosphere was punctuated by pertinent questions from young people. A young woman, Carla, asked what Tambo would have expected of the youth and wanted to know why they were unable to access rights. “Beware of the wedge-driver with a bag of money,” she warned.

The plenary opened on Saturday amid the singing and enthusiastic reunions of old comrades. It was pointed out that there were 13 NEC members at the conference, 12 former MPs and 9 former Ministers. Overall, the atmosphere contrasted with the rigidity of previous ANC national conferences.

MAVUSO MSIMANG made introductory remarks and moved on to serious matters. Comrades must take note of Ndebele’s comments, he said, and prepare to define a new course based on an active civil society that must claim back its mandate from parties.

SANCO raised concerns about disrespect being shown to old members who are being rejected (by the ANC). Moreover, it warned against attempts to capture the alliance. SANCO made it clear that it was not captured and there are still disciplined members in the ANC. SANCO also emphasised that gatherings like the NCC must continue to ensure the ANC stays in power and the country never falls to the DA.

COSATU declared that it was participating in order to reclaim and unite the ANC. It asked if today’s alliance is still true to the original alliance. COSATU warned that signs that the ANC is moving away from

its people were being ignored, with the result that three elections have been lost. To stay in power we need the support of our people. The conclusions of this conference and how COSATU will align to them were to be deliberated upon at the November meeting of its Central Executive Committee.

A young woman from the SACP made an impassioned speech, saying the revolution has entered uncharted waters. The instruments of revolution have been hijacked and looted in the current crisis of government and mismanagement and there was a need to deal with the rot. She said the State was now family-owned with power concentrated in the President, while the ANC was undermined daily by tribal loyalty and attacks on its critics. The National Democratic Revolution was stagnating, she said.

If the ANC flounders someone else may take over, which is of concern to the alliance. Efforts to engage the President have been rebuffed and Zuma should step down or we must call for his removal, she said. He has violated the Constitution on many occasions, she added. The ANC cannot be under the patronage of one individual. The party challenged Zuma on the removal of Pravin Gordhan, and she demanded Tom Moyane step down. We cannot have a president who defies his party and we must do whatever it takes to arrest this. The SACP speech stirred the crowd into a renewed round of song.

PEGGY PILLAY, in her reflections on the Civil Society Session, called on the Stalwarts and Veterans to show the way and to demand of our leaders to say no to the nuclear deal. She stressed the need to listen so that discussions don't come to nothing. We need to deliver a new culture of politics, she said.

SYDNEY MUFAMADI said that the ANC today is in crisis. He described it as anti-transformation. Public authority

is now defending personal interests at the expense of the people and the poor. He lashed out at the authoritarianism within the organisation that is enabling checks and balances to be bypassed.

He warned of harmful consequences, with violence re-emerging and provinces serving as fiefdoms of the powerful. He feared the issue of corruption was taboo with some leaders refusing to engage in discussion on it. The leadership, he said, has become spineless and moribund.

He added that history has taught us that crisis can be a turning point. It is an opportunity for the ANC to undergo introspection and mobilise popular engagement. This needs fresh discussions of the Constitution and the democratic practice and revolutionary morality embedded in the ANC. Mufamadi described this as a point of departure and called on all to be ready for the long haul.

The plenary was followed by discussion in the following commissions:

1. Organisational renewal;
2. The role of the state in fostering sustainable economic development;
3. Politics of the Constitution today;
4. Electoral reform, accountability and leadership with integrity;
5. The challenges of building a non-racial society; and



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6. The relationship between civil society, ANC and the state.

Not all commissions could be covered in this report (see note at end), but the following is a report of Commission 2:

COMMISSION 2: THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Commission was attended by about 100 delegates with Alec Erwin as the presenter. He said the ANC-led government had some success in stabilising income disparities, but worsening inequality presents a threat to stability. Without a strong state, development is not possible. In 1994, we were too preoccupied with the existing economy, and the issues of high costs, lowering tariffs, no jobs, powerful, racially concentrated capital. In this time of global capitalism the State must actively engage capitalists to make productive investments. The economy is shrinking, and this has been made worse by corruption. It had been a serious mistake to ally with Zuma. Now we have to rebuild roads, electricity and water. The Commission decided that the following steps need to be taken as a matter of urgency:

1. Immediately mobilise the masses/mass movement to stimulate economic activity;
2. Extricate ourselves from the crisis, with a top team to rescue Eskom, SAA, etc.;
3. A huge cabinet is useless and there is a need to clean up the state;
4. A massive development drive is needed (with a focus on local government which is the weakest). We also need an infrastructure drive. We have a manufacturing sector, but it has been weakened;
5. We must take Africa seriously and rebuild relationships with the rest of the continent, with South Africa taking the lead. >>

THE COMMISSION CHAIR, SIHLE MOON, summarised the pressing issues as the role of the state, regional development, communities, spatial planning, agriculture and land reform. The following came up for discussion:

1. What went wrong? We have done this before, but must focus on implementation. What is lacking is a driver. We lack immediate plans for revival and implementation by local authorities.
2. Emergency measures are needed.
3. What actually needs to be done? We need to emphasise what and when?
4. An inclusive economy is needed, with a protection mechanism against immigration in townships.
5. What about an economic CODESA?
6. We need a strategy for the future that engages young people, as well as groups from different generations, to plan together.
7. Our education is not focused on development. Rural villages used to be clustered around development but that has now gone.
8. Which agencies will take this forward? Mbeki had a policy advisory sector on monitoring but that has gone.
9. How do we bring in the private sector, and what sort of financing is needed?
10. The ANC is putting too much money into white areas. More needs to be spent in rural areas. For example, farmers need to be taught the value of selling cattle.
11. Foreign workers are competing and undercutting South African workers.
12. Our economy has not changed. We have failed in all the areas that we agreed to regulate. What has changed in the last 20 years? We are still confining our people to townships.
13. We must move economic opportunities to townships. We need to have one South Africa. This means integrating neighbourhoods.

14. We also need a 4th industrial revolution with South African firms moving in. Our organisational culture is archaic.

FORMER PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI addressed the final session, saying that the ANC had been captured by a dominant faction, which is not the ANC, but the rot had infected the ANC as a whole.

“What do we do to liberate the ANC from a dominant group?” he asked. The conference declaration should be distributed to all ANC members and their decisions must be pursued. The National Executive Committee had done itself and the rest of the ANC a great disservice by disassociating itself from the NCC leadership.

THE NCC DECLARATION

The Declaration expressed profound commitment to the ANC and pride in its role in the achievement of democracy but deep concern at the abandonment of its historic values, which has undermined popular confidence in government. The current elected leadership is “paralysed and unable to deal with ill-discipline, incompetence and corruption that point directly to the highest office in the land.

“In short, the ANC has relinquished its leadership of society and plunged itself into an untenable political crisis. We believe that the ANC can and must be saved,” he said.

While acknowledging that “our failure to address these issues timeously contributed to the political crisis, we are convinced that our movement, with rigorous, serious and genuine introspection can self-correct.

“We therefore call for the following:

1. The ANC conference in December 2017, in accordance with rule 11.5 of the ANC, must result in a plan of

action and a thorough renewal of the ANC structures, including the branches.

2. The Integrity Commission must be an independent constitutional structure within the ANC with the capacity to act independently of the NEC or any official, including the president of the organisation.
3. We must introduce one member, one vote for the direct election of the NEC.
4. The number of deployed NEC members in government must be capped.
5. The Tripartite Alliance must be revitalised, strengthened and respected.

This National Consultative Conference furthermore:

1. Calls on all women and men of honour and integrity within the ANC and government to stand up against all forms of corruption and expose, reject and isolate the dishonest elements that seek to undermine and destroy our organisation, government and reputation.
2. Calls for an open and fair election of the new ANC national leadership at the forthcoming elective conference.
3. A principled new leadership will be expected to heed the call for an urgent, all-inclusive conference that will get the process of correcting the wrongs within the ANC underway.
4. Calls upon President Zuma, for the sake of our future, to resign with immediate effect as State President and as President of the ANC.”

Note: This report does not cover the entire conference. It is based partly on our experience and otherwise relies on the programme and reports on the sessions that we missed. It only covers in some detail the Commission 2 on Sustainable Economic Development which we attended – authors. [NA](#)