



African Communist

2nd/3rd Quarter 2011

Issue Number 184

CELEBRATING
90
YEARS
OF SOUTH
AFRICAN
COMMUNISM!



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EDITORIAL NOTES

We honour those who built and sustained our Communist Party

It is not only through the courage of thousands of South African communists that we have survived and thrived, but also through the enduring, strategic alliance with the national liberation movement, the ANC

This issue of the *African Communist* commemorates the 90th anniversary of the Communist Party in South Africa. That the Party has survived and ultimately thrived over nine decades is a testament to the courage and commitment of hundreds of thousands of South African communists. For the greater part of its history the Party was the target of sustained repression. Three decades of persecution, from 1921 to 1950, were followed by four decades of outright banning.

The story of the Communist Party is the story of many hundreds of thousands of ordinary South Africans, women and men, black (mostly) but also white; some were peasants, others intellectuals, but overwhelmingly they were drawn from the ranks of the working class. Many of these communists have become household names in our country. Today, streets, communities, a 2010 World Cup soccer stadium, schools and trade union office buildings are named after them. But many more are less well known. This issue of the AC is dedicated to all of them, the well-known and the less well known.

As many of the articles in this issue

note, there has been one outstanding contribution in particular of the SACP to the international hand-book of revolutionary struggle. It has been the forging and consolidation over many decades of a strategic alliance with the African National Congress. An alliance of this kind has not been entirely unique to South Africa, of course. In the late 1920s the Communist International instructed communists in the colonial and semi-colonial world to forge alliances with progressive national movements.

It was a path briefly pursued by communists in China, for instance, but the alliance with the Kuomintang ended in civil war between the two formations. In India the relations between the Indian Congress and communists never really consolidated and have been largely acrimonious ever since. In both the Chinese and Indian cases, any prospect of an enduring patriotic alliance was undermined by narrow nationalists, often encouraged by colonial and imperialist forces as well as indigenous feudal and comprador strata. In other cases – among them Sudan, Indonesia and Iraq – communists working with supposedly patriotic anti-colonial forces, suffered brutal repression after independence. In

still other cases (Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe), Marxists operated entirely within liberation movements that, at one stage or another, styled themselves as “Marxist-Leninist”. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, these liberation movements drifted off ideologically and there was no organised socialist counter-weight.

In South Africa we have had an enduring (which is not to say an always smooth-sailing) alliance that stretches back to the late 1920s. Uniquely, since that early date, there has always been overlapping membership between the Party and the ANC. Outstanding Communist leaders (among them Cdes Moses Kotane and JB Marks) who were also ANC leaders, and ANC leaders who were not communists (among them Cdes Josiah Gumede and OR Tambo) played a major role in defining and cementing the alliance.

However, it would be a mistake not to appreciate the objective class realities that have underpinned our revolutionary alliance with the ANC. Compared to a China or an India, or an Angola or Mozambique – in South Africa, by the 1930s and 40s, the scale of colonial dispossession and the related proletarianisation and urbanisation of the indigenous majority was immeasurably greater. In the latter half of the 20th century, South Africa’s national liberation struggle, directed at a special variant of colonialism (in which the ruling colonial bloc was itself located within the colonised country), was essentially a working class-led and predominantly urban struggle. It was a struggle with its epicentres in work-places (mines, factories, shops) and in proletarian-dominated dormitory townships and informal settlements on the outskirts of our cities, towns and

villages. And therein lies the particular contemporary, global relevance of our 90-year revolutionary experience here in South Africa.

Some time in the last several years, for the first time in human history, the majority of the world’s population has become urbanised. One billion from among those urbanised are living in squalid slums on the outskirts of rapidly expanding metropolises in the global south – favelas in Brazil, bidonvilles in francophone Africa, chawls in Mumbai, gecekondu in Turkey ... they have different names but they are the same fundamental reality as our own shanty towns here in South Africa. These are homes to much of today’s working class, but also to a wide array of the uprooted and dispossessed – casual workers, the unemployed and the under-employed. Hundreds of millions of these popular masses are often mistakenly called “micro-entrepreneurs” (as if they were small capitalists, when, in fact they are self-employed and highly vulnerable workers).

It is among these proletarian and semi-proletarian strata that you will find the motive force for the Arab Spring. It was the self-immolation by a street vendor in Tunisia that lit the first flames of the democratic revolt still sweeping across the Arab world. But the democratic, often secular and anti-imperialist, aspirations of the popular masses in the Arab street will be betrayed without a broad and relatively united national democratic movement and without dedicated, class-conscious socialist formations that are both autonomous and immersed within the broad popular movement.

The local mainstream media often warns us that we too could suffer an

Arab Spring – as if there were something inherently wrong with a popular revolt, and as if we had not already led several decades of semi-insurrectionary popular struggle. But the warning is appropriate if it reminds us that bureaucratic complacency is impermissible. Seventeen years after our democratic breakthrough it is absolutely imperative that we continue to mobilise both state power and working class and popular power to

advance, deepen and defend our democratic opening – and particularly now on the terrain of social and economic transformation.

In this way, and only in this way, will we honour the memory of the hundreds of thousands of South African communists, the well-known and the lesser known, who together built and sustained our Communist Party over 90 fighting years. ★

SACP 90TH ANNIVERSARY

Celebrating 90 years of heroic and persistent struggle for liberation

Communist cadres to the front on all terrains of struggle to build people's power for socialism, **Blade Nzimande** told the rally in Clermont marking the Party's 90th anniversary

Celebrating 90 years of the SACP is most of all a celebration of a heroic and persistent struggle by South African communists for national liberation, people's power, socialism and for the reconstruction of our country from the ravages of colonialism and apartheid. Ours is a principled and unshakable struggle for a better South Africa and a better world.

Capitalism constitutes the gravest threat to the survival of humanity and our planet. While the world today produces enough food for everyone to eat, billions of people go to bed hungry every night. Our rivers are destroyed, our forests are cut down, the air we breathe polluted, in the drive to increase profits for the few. Factories are closed, workers are retrenched. There is one simple reason for this: the minority of the rich are only interested in profits for themselves. Only a more human system, socialism, can harness the energies of all our people, the human inventions and technology for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

As we celebrate 90 years of heroic struggle, the SACP can proudly claim its many unique contributions to the struggle for liberation in our country. Indeed no history of South Africa can be written

without the role of the SACP. Our Party was founded in 1921, some four years after the triumph of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917.

A party for national liberation

Since its foundation the SACP has been part of all the major political developments in the struggle against national oppression. We were part of the heroic workers struggles against capitalism and exploitation.

We have been on every front and terrain of struggle. We are a party both of socialism and of national liberation. We resolved in 1929 to form an alliance with the ANC, as the organisation best placed to lead the national liberation movement to which we are also committed. We evolved in practice dual political membership through a principled loyalty to both the SACP and to all other political and progressive formations in which we have served, whether the ANC, trade unions or, of late, our democratic state. This has confused and often angered and frustrated our enemies and detractors alike. We have made enormous contributions and sacrifices in the building of the ANC into what it has become today. At the same time, the SACP has

also learnt a great deal from the ANC, which has contributed to sharpening our theoretical tools of analysis as well as grounding our struggle in the realities of South Africa.

There are those, both within and outside our liberation movement, who are uncomfortable with the presence of a principled and activist Communist Party within the alliance. Today, the true agenda of many of those who take this anti-SACP position stands exposed. They want to plunder the resources of our country; they want to steal from working class and poor communities, so that they can accumulate for themselves. Some even claim to substitute for the SACP as the vanguard of the working class. These are the brazen tenderpreneurs and capitalist accumulators who steal the language of ordinary people to accumulate for themselves.

Today, just as we did more than 80 years ago in 1929, as South African communists we commit ourselves to our Alliance, to strengthen it as a multi-class movement, uniting all progressive and democratic forces, all those genuinely committed to struggling for a better life for all. But to build the multi-class unity of our movement, we need to expose and flush out all tenderpreneurs from the ranks of our movement. It is their money politics that lies behind the disruptive factional politics that distracts us from taking for the struggle for a non-racial, democratic and united South Africa.

A party with and for a progressive trade union movement

No political party in our country can claim to equal the record of the SACP in building the progressive trade union movement. From its inception the Communist Party in South Africa not only

threw its weight behind the progressive struggles of the workers, but also, in its own right, initiated and built progressive trade unions. We helped to build the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) in the 1920s; led the mineworkers' struggles culminating in the great mineworkers' strike of 1946; were in the vanguard of the formation of Sactu in 1955; and, through our underground structures, contributed significantly in the formation of Cosatu in 1985.

Today we continue to be in the trenches with the progressive trade union movement in the struggle for a living wage, the closing of the apartheid wage gap, and for vastly expanding the social wage. That is why today we are not only calling for a living wage, but for workers to be able to live closer to their workplaces, to have access to affordable housing, and for their children to enjoy access to schooling and higher education and skills. In addition, we want workers and the poor to have affordable public transport and for national health insurance to ensure that all shall have access to health care.

We are also a party committed to building working class power in the workplace, on the shop-floor. Part of achieving this objective is to ensure that not only do we democratise the workplace, but also make sure that the trade union movement itself is led by the workers through worker democracy and leadership inside the unions. Trade union leaders must themselves be subject to worker control and worker leadership at all times.

Much more critically for the SACP – is the necessity to ensure that we build red trade unions. In our context red trade unions must mean congress-oriented unions, and a trade union movement

that is genuinely committed to socialism. It must be a union movement that fights all forms of workerism, liberalism and business unionism. We must continue to fight against all tendencies in the trade union movement that seek to position workers against the ANC, the Alliance and the government led by these formations.

In this context, we re-affirm our commitment to deepen and strengthen our relationship with Cosatu. Our relationship with Cosatu remains the principal socialist axis upon which we seek to consolidate and deepen the national democratic revolution. Together with Cosatu, we have rolled back the late 1990s drive to privatise state-owned enterprises, and engaged in the struggle against outsourcing and casualisation of the working class.

Let us as communists deepen our work with the progressive trade union movement

A party of mass activism, people's power and political education

We are also a communist party of mass activism, whether in the struggles of the squatter camps in the 1940s through leaders like Dora Tamana, to the 1950s Defiance campaigns and the mass offensive against apartheid, to the post-1973 mass uprisings and the Red October Campaigns of the post-1994 period.

Through our Red October Campaigns we have won the struggle against the “willing buyer, willing seller” principle in land reform, basic rights for the workers and the poor to have access to financial services, for the regulation of the credit bureaux and support for a progressive co-operative movement. These were the achievements mainly of SACP-led mass activism for radical land reform and the

transformation of the capitalist financial sector.

We have refused to be relegated to being only a party of theory, much as we have led the theorisation and analysis of our national liberation struggle both as an important objective in its own right and as a terrain of struggle for a socialist South Africa.

Mass activism led by the SACP in particular, and our liberation movement in general, has been informed by the need to build people's power from below. We have refused, and still resist, to being drawn into liberal struggles and notions to build a “civil society” movement. These have often been movements of elites directed at weakening the majoritarian power of the liberation movement.

Instead, the SACP stands for the building of people's power from below: for building street committees, a progressive civic movement; a co-operative movement; community policing forums; a shop stewards' movement on the shop-floor (including Cosatu locals); truly progressive youth and women's movements of the workers and the poor – and generally a people-driven movement representing the aspirations of the ordinary workers and the poor of our country.

We are for a people's movement and people's power to ensure that indeed the people shall govern. It is a movement to ensure that it is not a DA that must govern, it must not be a coalition of elites of “civil society” that must govern, not liberals and their “civil society” tentacles, but the ordinary workers and the poor of our country, led by the ANC and its allies.

Building people's power through mass struggles from below must also

mean that we must refuse to be reduced to an oppositionist movement to the ANC and its government, or to become heroes of the media by virtue of unprincipled criticism of our own movement, its leaders and government. Taking co-responsibility for our revolution must not mean subsuming the independence of working class organisations. Just as the independence of our working class formations must not translate into oppositionist politics to our own movement.

It is through our principled campaign that this year we boast of a Party that has 130 000 members. At our unbanning in 1990 the SACP only had 3 000 members, a number it had never exceeded throughout its existence. While many communist parties declined and even collapsed after the fall of the Soviet Union (a setback indeed), ours has continued to grow and earn the respect of millions of the workers and the poor in our country.

An independent party, but a party of governance

The SACP is a political party of the South African working class. It cannot only locate itself outside the state, but must also be inside the state. There is no contradiction for an SACP that, in the post-1994 period, is located both inside and outside the state. Instead, this dual and dialectical location can only serve to advance the building of working class power in all sites of power.

Building an independent SACP and an SACP participating in the state is the necessary condition for advancing people's power and the socialist objectives in the current period. It is a necessary condition to ensure that the people shall govern.

Part of building independent work-

ing class power must be to ensure that the resources in the hands of the workers are controlled by the workers themselves. Workers' monies must be under their control rather than under the unfettered control of bourgeois financial institutions and banks. Let's build co-operative banks controlled by workers rather than bourgeois financial institutions. We are calling for workers power in the financial sector – workers' pension and provident funds controlled by workers – rather than allowing workers' monies to be adjuncts to bourgeois financial institutions. Subjecting workers' financial resources to bourgeois financial institutions, without a meaningful workers' voice, can only promote business unionism rather than working class power over the financial sector!

True to the traditions of our party, that of night schools to educate workers and train communists, it is of absolute importance that we deepen political education among the working class in particular, and the poor of our country in general.

The relevance of communist values in the current period

The two biggest threats to our national democratic revolution today are populist demagoguery (underpinned by tenderpreneurship) and the anti-majoritarian liberal offensive. Populist demagogues hijack militant rhetoric to conceal their agenda of narrow capitalist accumulation – completely opposed to the interests of the overwhelming majority of the workers and the poor of our country. It is this reality that characterises the close relationship between demagoguery, narrow capitalist accumulation and corruption today.

These opportunists also, increas-

ingly, flout the longstanding non-racial traditions of our movement with a narrow and chauvinistic Africanism. They don't want to change the underlying system of apartheid and colonialism. They simply want to expropriate some of the ill-gotten wealth of white capitalists for themselves. That is why, today, the SACP continues to be proud of its pioneering role in building the traditions of non-racialism in South Africa. From its very outset, the Communist Party pioneered non-racialism – not just in theory – but shoulder to shoulder in the trenches of struggle. We called for the unity of the working class and of all progressive and democratic forces regardless of colour, gender, or ethnicity.

On the other hand, South Africa today is experiencing a conservative, anti-majority liberal offensive which seeks to maliciously use our institutions of democracy to undermine majority rule and try to discredit (and challenge or undermine) the ANC-led alliance government. They pose as defenders of our democratic Constitution. But they pervert and vulgarise our wonderful Constitution, narrowly focusing only on those elements of the Constitution that seek (quite correctly) to check and balance the power of the State. They ignore the rest of the Bill of Rights and Constitution which clearly mandate the democratically-elected state to carry forward far-reaching, radical transformation in line with the document that inspired the Constitution – the Freedom Charter. Such a liberal offensive seeks to capture our institutions that support democracy to use them to undermine the will of the people as expressed through the periodic democratic elections.

Many of these so-called “civil soci-

ety” groups are funded by the rich, both domestically and internationally, to try and subvert the majority voice of our people, and are worried about the staying power of the ANC and its allies. In many instances liberation movements do not last a decade or so in power, yet our Alliance looks strong. Such funding is normally in the name of promoting democracy, as if there is no democracy in our country, to strengthen the power of those who have lost elections, but are supported to rule from the grave. We need to build a popular movement to defend the right of the people to govern after overwhelmingly supporting our movement.

It is in the light of all the above threats that we need to re-affirm the relevance of the values espoused by the SACP over its 90-year existence. These include selfless service to our people without any expectation of reward. It has consistently meant reducing the gap between rich and poor, and being humane and caring. And it means building the unity of our alliance through concrete struggles on the ground.

In the current period, the values espoused by the SACP over the last 90 years also mean fighting all forms of factionalism and divisive behaviour within our movement. Factionalism today is directly linked to the politics of money and accumulation, and attempts to capture our alliance organisations for purposes of selfish interests.

The 90 years of communist activism must also mean reclaiming what is best from the history of our national liberation struggle and movement. This means commitment to fighting against all forms of corruption, irrespective of who is involved. It must also mean that we wage a consistent struggle so the

supporters of a system of exploitation and their vanguard, the tenderpreneurs tremble before a national liberation movement in which communists play their rightful role.

As we celebrate 90 years of a non-racial SACP, we need to intensify the struggles for gender equality in society, ensuring that we organise and mobilise working class women to be in the forefront of the struggles against patriarchy.

A communist programme of action to advance and deepen the NDR

Today, on our 90th anniversary, we call upon all communists, working together with the workers and poor of our country, to deepen mass mobilisation to reduce inequalities and achieve a better life for all.

The SACP will continue to act together with the workers to fight for a living wage. It is for this reason that the SACP wishes to, once more express its solidarity with the metal, engineering, chemical and mineworkers in their legitimate struggles for a living wage. South African communists have been, and will continue to be, in the trenches with the workers in these sectors to win a living wage for all.

In joining these struggles for a living wage, the SACP will continue to advance the equally important struggle for an increase in the social wage, for accessible and affordable public transport, for affordable housing for the working class, for access to education and for access to health for all.

Using our voting district-based branches, the SACP also calls, and will struggle for, the building of street committees, community policing forums, ward committees, school governing bodies, local health committees and all oth-

er organs of people's power. Let us not wage newspaper-driven, often elite, programmes, but people driven campaigns on the ground!

Celebrating 90 years of the SACP must be about building organs of people's power to deepen the national democratic revolution as our most direct route to socialism!

Internationalist solidarity

Since our formation, we have been a party of internationalist working class solidarity. We re-commit to intensify our solidarity with the Cuban people and call for the release of the Cuban Five from US jails and for the end of the embargo against Cuba.

We reiterate our solidarity with the Swazi people in their just struggle for democracy. We call for the unbanning of all political parties and the release of political prisoners as a pre-requisite to the democratisation in that country. We call upon government not to bail out Swaziland without a commitment to do away with the tinkhundla system.

The SACP calls for Morocco to grant the Saharawi people their right to self-determination and for Palestinian independence with an end to the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.

The SACP will strengthen its internationalist solidarity work, especially in the light of very real possibilities that the major capitalist economies may experience another economic crisis. Let us strengthen working class and socialist forces to roll back the capitalist system and prevent the rise of a neo-fascist movement exploiting the plight of the workers and the poor. ★

Cde Nzimande is the SACP General Secretary

SACP 90TH ANNIVERSARY

The ANC pays tribute to its fraternal ally

President **Jacob Zuma** reflects on 80 years of shared strategic vision and common perspective between the Party and the ANC

I bring revolutionary greetings from the soon-to-be 100-year-old African National Congress, to its fraternal ally, the 90-year-old South African Communist Party.

It is an important day in the history of our country because very few organisations in history survive this long, having operated under such difficult, repressive conditions.

On behalf of the leadership of the ANC and its membership, we congratulate the SACP on reaching this milestone.

This anniversary is also significant moment, not only for the Alliance but for the country as a whole, as an SACP anniversary celebration is part of the progressive history and heritage of our country.

It is a reminder of the successful and heroic struggles of our people for freedom, justice and human dignity.

The anniversary has brought us together as the ANC, SACP and Cosatu, to reflect on how far we have come in the struggle for the liberation of our people and country and that of liberating our people from poverty and inequality.

The SACP has played a key role in that struggle, in its 90 years.

On 30 July 1921, key socialists, among them Bill Andrews, David Ivon Jones, S.P. Bunting and Colin Wade, established the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA).

The relationship between the SACP and the ANC was shaped by the 1924 resolution of the Party which said; “Party stresses the prime importance of mass organisation of labour ... the problems of the working class can only be solved by a united front of all workers irrespective of colour.”

This resolution was to pave the way for the SACP and the ANC to work together for many years. The Party and the ANC have since then shared a strategic vision and a common perspective that has linked them together, the advancement of the National Democratic Revolution.

It indicates the resilience of the membership of the Party, that this movement has survived difficult conditions of persecution, harassment, banning, arrests, exile and deaths in detention of leaders during the period of colonial repression and apartheid.

This is testimony to the spirit of selflessness and “no surrender”, as well as the dedication of the scores of cadres of

the Party to the cause of freedom from all forms of oppression.

This 90th anniversary also enables us to reflect on the role that the Communist Party played in strengthening the ANC, especially in the 1930s and the 1940s and also during other critical periods, such as the 1960s when the ANC was banned, and had to go underground.

The banning of the Party in 1950 provided valuable lessons to the ANC when it was also banned in 1960. The SACP already had the experience of operating underground, which it shared with the ANC.

The adoption of the armed struggle during this period and the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe was a collaborative effort between the ANC and the SACP as well as the leadership of the Congress Alliance.

Once MK was formed, members and leaders of the SACP played an instrumental role in building it and showed much courage.

Today we also mark the historical fact that the SACP was the first truly non-racial Party or movement in South Africa.

So as the ANC we owe one of our most cherished and important principles and character of non-racialism to the Party.

By 1928 the Communist Party had more African members than White members.

What is also remarkable about the South African Communist Party is the fact that from the earliest of times, it produced outstanding and courageous leaders who were always in the frontline of struggle.

We are inspired by the selfless sacrifices, commitment and dedication of leaders such as Albert Nzula, J.B. Marks, Ray Alexander, Ruth First, Josie Mpama,

Jack Simons, Yusuf Dadoo, Bram Fischer, Govan Mbeki, Harry Gwala, Joe Slovo, Chris Hani and others.

Both the SACP and the ANC lay an equal claim to the leaders of their calibre and many others.

This was always a unique trait in our Alliance, that comrades could take leadership positions in any component of the Alliance without any hassle.

For example, while he was a leader of the Communist Party, Comrade Moses Kotane was also a dynamic trade unionist and a leader in the ANC.

He struck a balance in all his positions and ensured that there was both an understanding and an appreciation of what each individual organisation had to do.

Comrade Oliver Tambo acknowledged the dual leadership and membership role when he said at Comrade Mabhida's funeral in 1986: "It was part of Comrade Mabhida's greatness that, having quite early on understood the importance of the unity of these great movements, he succeeded in ably serving each one of them individually, and all of them together, as a collective front for national and social emancipation."

Another remarkable characteristic of the South African Communist Party is that it has in its history produced leaders who have always had clarity of thought and a clear vision about the execution of the National Democratic Revolution.

We have a good example in Moses Kotane, a giant of our struggle and one of the most brilliant leaders to have ever emerged out of our National Democratic Struggle. Comrade Kotane's thinking was far ahead of his time.

He was one of the most scientific thinkers of his time who understood how to execute different struggles, how

to combine all of them towards a particular common goal of our National Democratic Revolution.

As another veteran of our struggle and the Chairman of the South African Communist Party, Comrade Yusuf Dadoo, observed: “Comrade Kotane saw clearly that there could be no working class victory without black liberation and no black liberation without the destruction of capitalism in all its forms.”

Other illustrious Party leaders include Johannes Nkosi, a worker leader, a hero and a martyr of our struggle, killed by the South African Police during a protest march against the hated pass laws in Durban on 16 December 1930.

This anniversary therefore is a celebration of the calibre of leaders our struggle has produced.

Throughout their leadership they were principled leaders. You were always certain and confident about their views and their views gained them respect.

That is why it is said that Chief Albert Luthuli would always ask: “but what is the view of Kotane on this matter?” on all critical issues. This tells us that Comrade Kotane was dependable and could be trusted.

Like the ANC and Cosatu, the SACP continues to grapple with the challenges facing our country currently.

The Communist Party will assist us by analysing current conditions on the continent as well as in the entire world scientifically, to help us interpret domestic and world developments.

The Party must be in a position to interpret conditions in our country and what is happening within the trade union movement and other terrains.

The Party must therefore play an important role in ensuring the development of working class theory which

must clarify scientifically the complex class dynamics today.

This must be done not selectively but to protect all working class interests, not those in employment only but also those out of employment, in other words, the poorest of the poor.

The Party must also be heard on critical matters that affect our society. In a word, the Party must provide the analysis of class and different interests, even those disguised in revolutionary phraseology.

It must analyse what class interests are at play currently and how to make strategic interventions to guide the trade union movement and ensure that it protects not only its own class interests, but all working class interests.

There must be no poverty in theoretical understanding within the working class, and the Party must lead in this task.

We emphasise therefore that it is important for the Party to maintain its culture of deep scientific politics, not just politics in general. This point is very important to note as it distinguishes the Party and its policies from other political formations.

Science is defined as knowledge obtained through observation and is critically tested and experimented and brought under one principle. That is how we have understood the Party in all its existence.

There is a lot of work to be done by the Party to defend the revolution and to provide the scientific tools needed for us all to consolidate our gains and deal with counter-revolutionary tendencies in our midst.

We need to defend our freedom and National Democratic Revolution, which is continuously being challenged and

undermined by many forces and elements, coming in many forms and shapes for their own selfish and counter-revolutionary interests.

The Party must also play a leading role especially in articulating issues of non-racialism and the role of trade unions in the National Democratic Revolution, where a progressive and worker-sensitive government is in power.

How do we define our respective roles in the leadership of society? It is the manner in which we lead society as a collective that in the main defines who we are as the Alliance.

We also need to correctly analyse the various interests and elements that constantly seek to create obstacles as we try to move forward with social and economic transformation in the country.

We must understand the elements that seek to undermine the ruling party and the unity of the Alliance.

We are called upon to analyse the prevailing conditions better and come out with solutions, as it is the ANC and SACP that are the most qualified to do so as political organisations.

The failure of these two to analyse these conditions will lead others to occupy that space and reverse the gains of our revolution.

As we ponder the enormous work we must do, we are also celebrating.

We are celebrating the contribution of the Party to the struggles of our people, and the unity that has prevailed between the Party and the ANC, the leader of the Alliance.

We are celebrating a very unique relationship, which was described eloquently by Comrade Oliver Tambo on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the SACP when he said: “The relationship between the ANC and the SACP is

not an accident of history, nor is it a natural and inevitable development. For, as we can see, similar relationships have not emerged in the course of liberation struggles in other parts of Africa.”

We are acknowledging the tried and tested Alliance between the ANC, SACP and Cosatu. In the history of struggles across the world there are very few such relationships forged out of common struggles. It is an Alliance that our people look up to and trust, as they know it is the only formation that is capable of delivering them from inequality and poverty.

Comrade Tambo described this Alliance very accurately: “Ours is not merely a paper alliance, created at conference tables and formalised through the signing of documents and representing only an agreement of leaders. Our alliance is a living organism that has grown out of struggle. We have built it out of our separate and common experiences.”

We must today recommit to strengthening the Alliance even further, and to build the ANC, so that it can continue to play its role as the leader of the Alliance.

We are currently on a campaign to ensure that the ANC has one million members by the time it reaches its centenary next year.

We are confident of achieving this goal as the people’s movement is growing, and remains very popular amongst our people.

The ANC now has 914 852 members. During the National General Council, the membership stood at 749 112: the ANC has grown by 198 057 members in the past few months. We are very close to reaching our one-million membership target, and will work round the clock to achieve that goal.

As we consolidate the gains of our freedom and democracy, we have to unite the Alliance more than ever before, in tribute to the memory of the gallant fighters who have emerged from the ranks of the Party and the Alliance as a whole.

We have to unite the Alliance behind our existing programme of action, to deliver our people from poverty and inequality, and to improve the quality of life of all, especially the working class and the poor.

We will continue to work side by side with the SACP in strengthening this historic Alliance which has done so much in advancing the National Democratic Revolution.

We will continue working with Cosatu, to take forward the struggle against poverty, inequality and deprivation among our people.

On this important occasion, it is important to remember what the Communist Manifesto says: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.

“Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”

Happy 90th Anniversary to the vanguard of the working class! Amandla! ★

***Cde Zuma** is President of the ANC and the country. This speech was presented at the SACP 90th Anniversary Gala Dinner on 30 July.*

SACP 90TH ANNIVERSARY

Cosatu and the Party are, and will continue, fighting shoulder-to-shoulder

We rely on the SACP leading us back to our movement's core values and principles – selflessness and sacrifice – writes **Zwelinzima Vavi**

The Congress of South African Trade Unions on behalf of its more than 2-million members sends its congratulations and best wishes to the South African Communist Party as it reaches a new milestone as it celebrates its 90th birthday.

Cosatu and the Party of the Working Class are, have always been, and will always remain, staunch allies, fighting together, shoulder-to-shoulder and hand-in-hand in the trenches, to make a reality of our shared vision.

Throughout the 40 underground years, the SACP forged strong links with the African National Congress and the SA Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu), which laid the foundations for the tripartite alliance which remains as strong as ever today, with Sactu's successor, Cosatu.

Anniversaries are always a time for taking stock of the advances we have made and the setbacks we have faced in the struggle against national, gender and class oppression. How far have we travelled on the path that was set 90 years ago, and how much further do we still have to travel?

Despite much progress since 1994, for which SACP leaders like Moses Ko-

tane, Moses Mabhida, Joe Slovo and Chris Hani must be given a lot of credit, 90 years after the establishment of the Communist Party, we are still a long way from achieving all the goals the SACP has set for itself.

The struggle against capitalism and for an equitable and democratic socialist society is as necessary as at any time in those 90 years. We still live in a nation with appalling levels of unemployment and poverty and are the most unequal society in the world.

Despite much progress by successive ANC governments, millions of poor South Africans lack the basic necessities of a civilised society – decent education and healthcare, proper houses, running water and sanitation and affordable public transport.

The Party, as the vanguard of the working class, must lead us in the fight to transform the lives of the workers and the poor and to challenge the narrow and selfish interests of the rich big-business elite.

As the SACP marches to its centenary, it must give resolute leadership to the struggle for better living conditions in the townships, rural areas and informal

settlements and better wages and conditions for the workers. The Party should build on the legacy of the likes of Dora Tamana who led struggles against the threats of resettlement emanating from the apartheid government.

The vigour and commitment of comrades like Matthew Goniwe, a communist and grassroots organiser par excellence, should inspire the Party in leading working class struggles in workplaces, communities and many other areas.

This 90th anniversary must inspire all of us into defending working class gains against a well-orchestrated capitalist offensive. Cosatu and the Party must work together, and with our allies, the ANC, to intensify the campaign to build a strong developmental state, which will take us ever closer to the socialist South Africa we want to see.

We will not address all these challenges unless we defeat crime, corruption, the culture of self-enrichment, crass materialism, conspicuous consumption and the abuse of state power for narrow materialistic reasons. The SACP must lead us in the campaign against the new tendency that want to transform our congress movement and public service into a market place for tenders and business opportunities for a few and well connected elites.

We rely on the SACP leading us back to our movement's core values and principles – selflessness and sacrifice! Together let us end individualism that seeks to place narrow selfish individual interests above the common interests of the many.

The source of corruption is the capitalist system itself, which corrupts and tempts public representatives, and encourages the personal accumulation of wealth at the expense of the majority of

the people. If we do not unite to eradicate this cancer from our society, corruption will become routine, and far from building socialism we shall be descending into a lawless, immoral world where the pursuit of personal wealth is the only motive force in society.

The lesson that runs through the history of the Party is that the only defence that we have against all forms of bourgeois attacks on the working class is mass power. Only the working class and mass campaigns can defend the party of socialism and its trade union ally from attacks waged on it by the bourgeoisie.

The next ten years must be dedicated to building and reviving mass working class campaigns and waging a relentless struggle against corruption, capitalism and imperialism.

Cosatu's recent Central Committee has launched a number of campaigns, which we intend to pursue throughout this year and the coming years. Hundreds of thousands of our members are already battling against employers, demanding a living wage and the closure of the apartheid wage gap.

Workers are already marching in the streets demanding a total ban of the labour brokers – those human traffickers who have enslaved millions of workers. Unless an agreement can be reached in Nedlac soon we shall start a mother of all general strikes starting in every province in September and culminating in a general strike on 7 October 2010, the International Day on Decent Work – if the coming Cosatu CEC endorses this date or any other dates the CEC will determine.

We are relaunching our campaign against the scourge of corruption and we shall be marching in every street demanding that action be taken against corrupt elements that are hell bent on

hijacking our movements for personal gain.

We want action taken to ensure that our country has water security and we deal with the threat of rising acid levels in our underground water.

We demand an inquiry on the prices of the private hospitals so that we end their immoral and corrupting greed, seeking to generate massive profits from our ill health. We shall demand the introduction of the national health insurance now!

We demand that Walmart agrees to our demands so that its entry to our country does not lead to the destruction of our manufacturing sector and jobs. Unless we can find a solution with the department of transport, we shall be in the streets to demand a public transport system that is efficient, reliable, affordable and accessible.

We are opposed to the commercialisation of our roads and reject the introduction of tollgates in Gauteng and other elitist projects such as Gautrain or the much-talked-about fast train between Durban and Johannesburg when many workers take up to an hour travelling between their homes and their workplaces.

Lastly and most importantly, we demand decent work for the underemployed and the 7-million-strong army of unemployed workers. We, together with you our vanguard, must scale up our demand for the restructuring of the economy to end the domination of white monopoly capital and the mining/finance complex, and end its export orientation so that it can be placed on a new developmental path underpinned by an active industrial strategy capable of absorbing the millions who are unemployed.

- Let us rally together to protect

women and young workers across the economy from being exploited by unscrupulous employers in the retail, hospitality and service industries.

- Let us battle together to end the historic super-exploitation of farm workers and sea-going workers.

- Let us organise the migrant workers into our ranks and end their super-exploitation.

- Let us battle together against xenophobia and unite all workers to stand in solidarity with one another irrespective of their narrow differences that are used to divide and rule them.

- Let us together demand a better deal for the taxi drivers and all other vulnerable workers in the economy.

- Let us together campaign to change the ethos of the public sector workers so that they see themselves not just as employees but as revolutionaries who appreciate that they must play a different role if our commitment to build a better life is to be realised.

For we know that it is through winning all these demands that we can make a giant step towards realisation of the goals of the national democratic revolution that seeks to address all three inter-related and intertwined contradictions – the liberation of Black people and Africans in particular, ending the super-exploitation of workers and liberating women from their triple oppression. This is the only way we can make our slogan “socialism is a future; build it now” a living reality for the working class.

In you we know we have a reliable ally that we can rely on every day.

Forward to a strong SACP! Forward to socialism! ★

Cde Vavi is Cosatu General Secretary

SACP 90TH ANNIVERSARY

The history of the SACP is the history of us all!

Deputy President **Kgalema Motlanthe** argues that 'the SACP, based on this weight of history, will grow from strength to strength and remain relevant into the future'

I am honoured to join the many progressive formations and individuals in our country and beyond its borders in wishing the South African Communist Party (SACP) well on the occasion of its 90th Anniversary.

History tells us that throughout its existence, the SACP has not only been a source of inspiration for our struggle for freedom, but also, helped forge an enduring vision for our country. This vision envisaged a society free of racial domination and exploitation.

Our victory against apartheid owed much to the cross pollination of ideas, the overlapping membership and sharing of leadership between the SACP and the ANC.

For 90 years the SACP shared trenches with organisations of the African, Indian and coloured people, as well as being instrumental in the establishment of trade unions. In doing so it determinedly held aloft the banner of human rights, racial equality, democracy and justice; principles and values that underpin our democratic constitution today.

The first non-racial stirrings in South Africa

With the discovery of precious metals

in South Africa many fortune hunters and workers descended on our shores from the 1860s. Most of these workers belonged to craft unions. Soon after the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, these workers formed the South African Labour Party (SALP) to represent their interests in the body politic. From inception, the SALP not only made a conscious decision to exclude black members from its membership, but also, to collude with the Chamber of Mines to keep the wages of Africans low, as a matter of policy

In the Union parliament, SALP members supported measures to protect white workers, such as the Mines and Works Act, which introduced colour bar in the work milieu. Even in their own constitution party criteria for membership was predicated upon support for so-called "white standards".

However this thinking was rejected by some key leaders of the SALP who differed with its racial chauvinism as well as its support for the First World War. Consistent with the position of the progressive socialists around the world who considered the war imperialist, this break-away section of the SALP leadership refused to support the First World War.

What needs to be clearly appreciated at this stage in our history is that a few visionary leaders who rejected the ideological perversion of the SALP came to the realisation that a workers' party that excluded the African working class had no future. Understanding the relationship between class exploitation and national oppression, about 10 of the former leaders of the SALP formed the International Socialist League (ISL) in 1915. The ISL was thus born out of principles of working class solidarity that opposed an imperialist war and the SALP's refusal to embrace non-racialism. It proudly supported internationalism and concerned itself with the national question from conception. The founder members of the ISL, under the leadership of Cdes Bill Andrews, David Ivon Jones and Sydney Bunting, were men of deep conviction.

The formation of the CPSA, 1921

The International Socialist League's progressive, modernist outlook led to the formation of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in 1921.

Several unity meetings were convened in 1920 attended by Poali-Zion (Johannesburg), Communist Party (Cape Town), various Indian industrial unions (Natal), and individual members of the South African Labour Party, Federation of Trades (Cape Town), "native" workers' unions and unattached socialists.

With the formation of the CPSA in 1921 more Africans were drawn to the CPSA as industrialisation grew, fed by the inflow of African migrants from rural areas prised from their subsistence economy through a battery of oppressive laws.

The non-racial outlook of the CPSA was palpable immediately from its birth.

At this stage the Party members not only recruited African members but also participated in existing African organisations led by non-communists. By 1928 the CPSA had 1 600 African members out of a total membership of 1 750.

Once again, it is worth noting that Party cadres took part in many varied social formations, not with the intention of taking them over but to spread working class consciousness. It was clearly understood that to take over these organisations would lead to their demise. The point was to suffuse them with political understandings and to inject into such bodies the notion of the struggle.

Critically, the Party nurtured leadership. It recruited and educated particular individuals in grasping the Marxist theory; individuals who would in turn upscale the struggle and take political class consciousness to the working poor. These individuals included, among others, such struggle luminaries as Cdes James la Guma, Thomas Mbeki, Johnny Gomas, Albert Nzula, Edwin Thabo Mofutsanyane, Moses Kotane, J.B. Marks and Johannes Nkosi. These African Marxists were properly armed with working class theory, which enabled them to grasp the key elements of historical process and their role as members of the Party in it.

The importance of political education and grooming future leadership is yet another lesson that has come down to us. Leaders do not just materialise from nowhere.

We need to keep focus by imbibing political education. Once we have developed a clearer understanding of the theory of our revolution, we can be able to understand the underlying conditions that breed social, economic and political pestilences such as corruption.

Once again the CPSA was attacked by

the predominantly white, “left” membership for the non-racial cast it was assuming. This was trenchantly shown during the 1921 “Rand Revolt”, where white members demanded that “workers of the world unite for a white South Africa”. Clearly, in addition to racial prejudice, white workers were motivated by economic gain, as wage differential meant propping up the system of labour aristocracy that benefited them. Believing this to be incorrect, once again the CPSA held out, maintaining its position and working to spread a non-racial, class-consciousness. We learn from this that history will not judge us negatively if we advance political positions that may not yield fruits in the present but impact positively on the future.

The Black Republic Thesis, 1928

The adoption of the Black Republic Thesis in 1928 cemented the role of the CPSA as a political force in the liberation struggle. Through this move the Party elevated to the level of principle its thinking on the organic connection between national liberation and class struggle. The Black Republic Thesis states that: “while developing and strengthening the fight against all the customs, laws and regulations which discriminate against the native and coloured population in favour of the white population, the Communist Party of South Africa must combine the fight against all anti-native laws with the general political slogans in the fight against British domination, the slogan of an independent native South African republic as a stage towards a workers’ and peasants’ republic with full rights for all races, coloured and white”.

The light of cooperation between the CPSA and the ANC did not always burn

bright. From the viewpoint of some within the ANC the relations with communists amounted to selling out and were not acceptable. As a result the climate of conservatism within the ANC saw the organisation slide into a lull between 1930 and 1937. Yet this stagnation did not end with the ANC. The 1930s saw the emergence of a lull within the CPSA itself, partly driven by the effects of the Great Depression as well as the purging of some leading members.

Despite these conditions, the Party was not at a loss for direction and began to seriously consider a critical issue in its life: the question of Africanisation. Seeing the central attitude and approach of the Party as rather inconsistent with some of the key elements of the South African conditions, Cdes Moses Kotane, one of the key members of the Party, proposed the Africanisation of the Party. Cde Kotane argued that culturally and economically, South Africa was backward, without the 150 years of history of organisational tradition found within the European working class. He therefore held that: “My first suggestion is that the Party become more Africanised or Afrikanised, that the CPSA must pay special attention to South Africa, study the conditions in this country and concretise the demands of the toiling masses from first-hand information, that we must speak the language of the Native masses and must know their demands. That while it must not lose its international allegiance, the Party must be Bolshevised, become South African not only theoretically, but in reality, it should be a Party working in the interests and for the toiling people in South Africa and not a Party of a group of Europeans who are merely interested in European affairs.”

This new direction in thinking with-

in the Party reflected the application of Marxist thinking to address a concrete situation. It also showed the internal resourcefulness of the Party to give direction not only to society but to itself.

Apartheid and the banning of the Party

When the National Party came to power in 1948 with the electoral ticket of elevating racial discrimination into the state policy of Apartheid, the CPSA was one of its immediate targets. One of the first pieces of legislation they enacted was the 'Suppression of Communist Act'.

In anticipation, the CPSA took a preemptive decision to disband in 1950, among others with the aim of saving its assets from being expropriated by the state. Not everyone was happy with this decision however. A small grouping of the CPSA calling itself bafabegiya went against the decision to disband the CPSA and remained active. In so doing they had failed to understand the imperatives of the moment. As a consequence when the CPSA re-launched itself underground as the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1953 bafabegiya disappeared both as a group and as individuals. Given that the Party was re-launched underground, under conditions of illegality, their ill-discipline prevented them from rejoining the Party. Once again this stage of the struggle clearly demonstrated the ability of the Party to read current dynamics and act accordingly.

Even as a banned organisation the SACP continued to play a political role.

It participated in all the major political activities, including the tidal wave of mass mobilisation that led to the Defiance Campaign; then the Congress Alli-

ance which adopted the Freedom Charter in 1955. Moses Kotane, JB Marks and Dan Tloome were leaders in their own right within the ANC. At the same time Dr Dadoo, Dr GM Naiker and YA Cachalia, were also leaders of the South African Indian Congress. Many communists were also working for and leading trade unions, both white and black.

The SACP continued its work underground in South Africa. The impact it made through the cross-pollination of ideas, overlapping membership and sharing of leadership with the ANC, the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the African People's Organisation, Congress of Democrats and the South African Congress of Trade Unions was to shape the liberation trajectory of South Africa. This impact continued during the exile years. The progressive formations continued to benefit from the high-level political theory honed by communists, and leadership continued to be shared among most organisations.

The force of the message of non-racialism that they developed then remains compellingly relevant today. It is therefore important to appreciate the evolution of non-racialism in its historical context and the need to make a conscious effort to keep an eye on this pivotal element of our struggle. Cadres such as Cdes Sydney Bunting, Bill Andrews and others overcame prevailing cultural ethos to grasp the essence of the underlying social and political conditions that defined the challenges of their era. Critical to this was the realisation that the desired society could only be advanced by a united working class, black and white, as a social force and as the leading class in the immediate struggle to build a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa.

This is the tradition that history expects the SACP to continue to uphold at all times. It would indeed be the ironic if the SACP, a descendant and thus a product of pioneering non-racialism, failed society and by extension, history, in slackening its focus on championing this admirable course. Current efforts to strengthen a non-racial future should continue to draw inspiration from this glorious past.

Among other facets of social life for which society looks to the SACP's intervention with confidence is the scourge of corruption. Today, as we strive to build a non-racial, non-sexist, just, democratic and prosperous society, we do so aware that corruption is our constant menace across the spectrum of society.

Unfortunately, corruption is not the only challenge staring us in the face. Since the onset of democracy in 1994 we have had to battle against such aberrations as careerism, personal enrichment and abuse of office, patronage, bribery and so on.

Up to a point, our democratic environment has been polluted by greed that expresses itself in an underhand fashion as some individuals jostle for personal gain, often without regard for the general good.

At the same time, the climate of corruption equally bedevils the private sector and many other spheres of our national life. Innate to the logic of the mode of production we find ourselves in, corruption is not a phenomenon that is going to fizzle out now or in the future. This historically-based task is made much more urgent by the need for promoting people-centred, people-driven democracy. It would be a tragedy of historic proportions if we allowed the baneful fumes

of corruption to choke the soul of our democracy.

The emergence of all these challenges in post-apartheid society points to the fact that we are in danger of losing our bearings. We are moving away from the selflessness and commitment of leaders such as Cdes Sydney Bunting, Moses Kotane, Alex la Guma, Joe Slovo and Chris Hani, among others.

Just as the predecessors of the SACP helped set society on a non-racial track by dissecting underlying social conditions that led us astray, we rely on it today to continue with this tradition. The SACP must continue to kit us out with the theoretical apparatus that enables us to develop this deeper understanding of the nature of the complex challenges we face.

Some of the key traits that need cultivating to renew ourselves include developing the ability to feel pain very deeply whenever others are subjected to injustice, deprivation, exploitation and oppression. It is a measure of one's class consciousness to consistently fight against injustice wherever it manifests itself, even when it is visited upon one's adversaries.

The SACP and state power

We are living in a democratic society now, but that does not mean our challenges are any lighter than they were during the anti-apartheid struggles. Responding to post-apartheid imperatives therefore may mean re-structuring the SACP to deal with challenges arising from the state, the Party itself and other facets of society.

In effectively comprehending the objective and subjective conditions in which the SACP is working today, we should also boldly ask whether the Party

today can still play its historical role in keeping with its core principles unhindered by changed circumstances.

It may be advisable to reflect on whether the SACP in its present form and structure is well attuned to the imperatives of post-apartheid society in terms both of governance and leading the working class.

The question of whether the leaders of the SACP should be involved in government or not is pertinent, since all political parties are about state power. Perhaps it is time for the SACP to seriously consider amending its constitution to include positions over and above those of the current office-bearers. The new positions could include the elected positions of Secretary for the Central Committee and the Secretary for Administration, distinct from the position of the General Secretary of the SACP

The Secretary for Administration would take charge of the exacting daily operation of the Party while the Secretary for the Central Committee would coordinate the political work of the Party from the organisation's headquarters.

These observations are motivated by my belief that our tested ally, the SACP, based on this weight of history, will grow from strength to strength and remain relevant into the future.

To achieve the above-state heights, the SACP should heed the timeless watch words of Dr Yusuf Dadoo, one of its most redoubtable leaders, who advised that: "Of primary importance is ideological work at every level. We need to critically assess our effectiveness in this key area. To what extent have we taken our pol-

icy and programme to the masses? To what extent has it become understood by the people as their own policy? Have we made sufficient efforts to ensure our own cadres understand the Party's policy in present-day conditions, and, with such an understanding, do our cadres have a clear idea as to his or her duty in carrying our allocated tasks?"

Conclusion

During these 90 years of its existence, the SACP has remained true to its defining tenets of advancing the interests of the South African working class. From early on it has been alive to the reality that a socialist vision that did not take into account and respond to the national question was doomed before it could even begin.

In the words of the late Cde Joe Slovo: "A failure to understand the class content of the national struggle and the national content of the class struggle in existing conditions can hold back the advance of both the democratic and socialist transformations which we seek".

We are therefore duty-bound as progressives to base ourselves on this history of the struggle with the aim of taking our country to a qualitatively higher level. We have benefited a great deal as a country, directly and indirectly, from the history of the SACP, which, in effect, is the history of us all.

On this occasion let us all celebrate the 90th anniversary of the SACP with deserved joyousness! ★

Cde Motlanthe is Deputy President of the ANC and country.

SACP 90TH ANNIVERSARY

The debt we owe to the Party is immeasurable

The Party must remain the vanguard of the working class – a role earned in struggle for progressive nationalism and the construction of a new socialist society, writes **Buti Manamela**

I will be immortal if I see 2101 AD, the 180th anniversary of the SACP (South African Communist Party). In the same way, many of those who presided over the ISL (International Socialist League) in November 1915 and CPSA (Communist Party of South Africa) in July 1921 may have thought of themselves as they were launching what was to become the most important pedestal of South African history.

They may have imagined the defeat of colonialism of a special type within decades, maybe even years or weeks, considering how young some of them were. The ideal of uniting all communist formations in the Southern tip of the exploited continent for the advancement of the dream of Bambatha and in complementing the efforts of John Langalibalele Dube may not have been within their realm.

But as the toil of struggle took its toll, they may have realised that their intentions of national liberation are not as generally accepted as ours of socialism in our lifetime. They may have been scorned for their zeal of a change of heart in the early stages of native capitalism as we are now in its modern and more vicious imperialistic stage. They may

have been regarded as mad. And if they despaired, as we should not, the dream of freedom in the lifetime of others who came long after their deaths would have made them party to a long list of failed historical mandates as ours may be if we despair in the face of stronger and more sophisticated forces of capitalism.

But just as they gathered then, and as we are today gathered for the celebration of the SACP's 90 years of effort, the ideal of socialism remains a realisable dream that our collective effort should at all times seek to attain. Our task is not to hurry history and suffocate it with that which it has not planned, but to contribute to its becoming and aiding it into self-correction of the ills it has unleashed on the current generation. Indeed, as the universe seeks its balance, it will not only rely on the celestial powers afforded by the gods, but on us mortal beings who in the course of profit maximisation have raped it of its innocence and robbed it of sanity. We are over 90 years since the formation of the CPSA, and now the SACP, and are collectively suffering the capitalist guilt of pillaging the universe of its environment, exploiting its labour, and being party to two World Wars and a Cold War mainly for

the further accumulation of resources.

Although that which the SACP professes to be its societal destiny as a Party and for a country and continent was cleverly conceptualised by two young Germans, Marx and Engels, its organisational form was brought to life by those who have naturalised their citizenship and were party to both the plundering and victimisation of Johannesburg. A white political party for white workers, the ISL, and, later, the CPSA initially ignored the exploitation of the natives and sought to advance the needs, interests and aspirations of the white working class. All wars of the time, forms of exploitation, strikes, and any other signs of liberation were scanned through the lens of colour before cleansed through the lens of class.

Having found citizenship to no country, Marx and Engels were to influence the shape of history and the architecture of its content discovering that in all of humanity there is a desire for social justice, equality and prosperity. Their belief that all of these ideals could only be achieved if the nucleus they formed, the German Socialist Democratic Party, prospered into a force to be reckoned the world over is what makes all of us remain in the community of Communist Parties.

And thus, we subscribe to the ideals that pushed the first generation of South African communists which declared that: “If the League deals resolutely in consonance with socialist principles with the native question, it will succeed in shaking South African capitalism to its foundations. Then, and not till then, shall we be able to talk about the South African proletariat in our International relations ... Not till we free the native can we hope to free the white people”

(An appeal by David Ivor Jones to the SALP in reference to the final rupture on 1 October 1915, quoted in *A Delegate from Africa* – Baruch Hirson and Gwyn A Williams)

At the centre of the formation of the ISL, the predecessor to the CPSA, was a never imagined breakaway from the SALP (South African Labour Party) which ultimately dissipated in the shadow of history. The first leadership which stood at the launching of this colossal organ of the working class, more than 90 years ago, comprised of Cde David Ivor Jones, JA Clark, AF Crisp, W Light and SP Bunting. They were to issue a manifesto in Johannesburg that mainly oriented itself to the needs, interests and aspirations of the working class across the country and begin a 90-year journey that hundreds of thousands would join for its achievement.

Probably unknowing that the liberation movement and its success will at its centre rely on the dedication of communists, Cde Jones and his ilk began to respond to the call of history and preside over what has become a force to be reckoned with, the working class throughout our country.

Today, as we bellow every facet that constitutes the future of this country their names are reminiscent of a movement that could have died had it succumbed to the demands of its time, that of remaining a white political party in an evolving history.

The birth of the CPSA was highly significant in the history of the liberation movement in our country. Many of the formations, in their later conception, were to follow along the ideals identified by the committee of five, and their declaration that “if they can do this to the white worker, what more of the na-

tive working class” will forever ring in posterity as long as the liberation of the same working class, regardless of their colour, remains on the agenda.

Today, 90 years after the splinters of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town met in 1921 to form the CPSA, the deaths and torture of many communists who have traversed the liberation of our country cannot be seen in vain as we remain committed to the ideals which they sought to achieve.

Today, 90 years after the historic meeting of communist minds that began to shape not only the nature of the struggle millions delved in, but also the kind of society they sought to produce. We remain committed to the ideal of socialism and linger on in the realm of a society free of racial and class exploitation.

There is no way that the history of our country will be written without the history of the Communist Party. For anyone interested in telling the tale of how a struggle for national liberation and of the formation of a black republic turned into a struggle for the formation of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa will inevitably be coerced into telling the story of the first generation of communists in our country.

The modern day South African communist is experiencing both the joy of having been part of the ultimate victors in a just political war and of becoming a victim of its successes. It always becomes easier to shout the names of past communists such as Cdes Sydney Bunting, David Ivor Jones, Moses Mabida, Moses Kotane, Joe Slovo and Chris Hani without the obligation of advancing their cause and as an excuse for disagreeing with Cdes Blade Nzimande and Jeremy Cronin and the entire current

generation of communists. This is a very opportunistic use of past SACP leaders against the present. If we are to recount the ideals which past communists, patiently and with dedication, advanced and interlinked that with the current generation, we will be reminded of what Lenin said about how “nothing can happen in 20 years and how in a week 20 years can happen”.

The struggle for socialism in our lifetime, which the YCLSA has dedicated itself to, together with young workers in universities, factory floors, informal settlements, army barracks, prison cells and in many other sections of society remains a struggle not identified with individuals but for the ultimate liberation of our entire society. To this day, many young communists throughout the country are dedicated to the Communist Party and its ideals decades after these were declared archaic in the mainstream and capitalist media. This is because that which is being offered to us as the future of the Communist Party and society represents the worst crimes compared to what communists who came before us were accused of.

It is no mistake that at the height of repression, the apartheid regime chose the banning of the Communist Party not only because of irritation, but to serve as an example of what would happen if any of the mushrooming anti-apartheid formations pursued their goals. This was also because the clarion call for freedom and equality was identified with the Party and the ‘evil’ system of communism and therefore, anyone who called for such radical changes in the normal course of apartheid thinking, was a communist. The banning of the Communist Party and communists in 1950 was seen not only as a first sal-

vo against the communist movement, but also of the entire liberation movement and the weakening of its aim to radicalise society and the ANC.

It was not sheer genius that the banning of the CPSA coincided with the adoption of the ANCYL 1942 programme by the ANC in 1949, and its intention to become more radical and pursue a militant approach towards the apartheid regime. It may have partly been because of the determination by the Verwoerd regime to escalate repression, but also the nuisance that the communists were becoming could not wait until the 1960's when everybody was convinced that the just struggle pursued by the ANC was as dangerous to the whites as the anti-capitalist struggle pursued by the CPSA.

Like many other communists, I always hesitate to venture into predictions that are not based on an assessment of the balance of forces and the material conditions on the ground. However, the recent developments in our country fly in the face of doomsayers. There are 3-million young people who are unemployed and many of these are in suburban Soweto. Our country has surpassed Brazil as the most unequal in terms of incomes and we have far surpassed some of our African counterparts with regard to the number of people living on a dollar a day.

In the 17 years of democracy, the conditions of those living below the poverty line have not changed. The Communist Manifesto's focus on class struggle remains relevant today.

The conditions in housing, education, healthcare, spatial development, transportation and electricity have remained the same as was the case under apartheid. The number of protests

has increased over the last five years, although some are politically fuelled in the interests of those who want to climb the lucrative political ladder. The major source of a better livelihood remains for many of our people in finding work and ensuring that through their incomes they better their conditions. Like in many African countries, there is a rise of the so-called national black bourgeoisie and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the historical oppressors, whilst the popularity of the national liberation movement in the eyes of those it liberated is tainted.

The Communist Party, therefore remains relevant even without tainting itself with the frills of power but through remaining at all times on the side of the people. The work done by the Communist Party in ensuring that it takes up issues affecting the working class and the poor within the democratic dispensation remains necessary. Deepening the financial sector campaign, the demand for a national health insurance, the basic income grant, accelerated land redistribution and many other common and immediate demands of the working class poor championed by a Communist Party remain relevant.

Whether all of this will capture the imagination and need for action by the urban working class remains critical. But we know, guided by 90 years of heroic struggles, that the working class requires the attention of the Party in order to advance the struggle for hegemony in all sectors of society. As its bedrock, the poor will forever drive the slogan "socialism is the future" and will remain a dedicated force in "building it now" not because it is a romantic revolutionary rendezvous, but because it constitutes the ultimate liberation of our country

and the world from the cyclical crises of capitalism.

The celebration of these 90 years should, therefore, beyond cutting ribbons and celebrating, be about how the current leadership of the Communist Party galvanise the strength of the working class and the poor of our country for the ultimate attainment of socialism in our lifetime.

We have to ask ourselves whether the clarion slogan of an unofficially subscribed to “two stage revolution” will take us forward. We have to ask ourselves as to whether the approach of national liberation parallel to socialism helps us navigate the intricacies of class unity when it comes to the struggle for socialism. We have to ask ourselves whether we can be able to break away with the unpronounced vision our national liberation movement, the objective of building a non-racial capitalist society. We have to ask ourselves whether what those who came before us pronounced as the best developmental path, that of a non-capitalist liberation path, is what we need to pursue in our endeavours to reconcile that which our Soviet comrades advised us to pursue against what has eminently failed in many African and developing former colonies. We have to ask ourselves whether the call for socialism in our lifetime is rather not too late, and that the time for socialism is now and inevitable.

As we celebrate 90 years, we reflect on where we come from and where we are going. The formation of the YCLSA remains one of the many historic achievements of the communist movement in our country. The debt which we owe to a youthful Communist Party is immeasurable, for having regarded the formation of a League as part of its growing history

post-1994. The strengthening of the YCLSA, in a period in which the future of the country and the ideological positioning of the movement which is at the helm of this future is critical, cannot be overemphasised. We are living in a world where capitalist culture and sub-cultures such as profit-maximisation, greed and conspicuous consumption have targeted young people across all races in order to entrench the global nature and presence of the system. Our country remains the gateway to a continent that is impoverished and exploited albeit endowed with natural and mineral resources. This has made the continent vulnerable to super exploitation and the co-option of a selected few for the overall justification of the continuation of the system.

The capitalist sub-cultures imposed on young people through the media remains an overall challenge in the battle of ideas in our society. This battle, present both within the liberation movement and our society, remains a cancer which should be defeated by the SACP. We should take a leaf from collapsed national liberation movements and ensure that the fate of our glorious SACP is not sealed with a common fate of degeneration. Whilst maintaining our interest in the developments of the national liberation of our people, the SACP should at all times ensure that it remains, as it has, on the side of the working class and the poor.

The Medium Term Vision 2015, together with the *Path to Power (1989)* and the *South African Road to Socialism* remains the pillar with which the SACP should focus on in taking forward the struggle for socialism. But in doing so, we have to take into cognisance the challenges that face our people and continue to mobilise on these issues. Over the last

10 years, the SACP has taken up:

- Issues of land restitution which led to the Land Summit;
- Financial sector transformation which led to progress in access to banking and financial sector services;
- Support to co-operatives which led to the recognition of the co-op movement as an important trading partner with the state;
- Participation in elections and the unashamed deployment of SACP cadres in state and legislative institutions as part of the advancement of the vision of building socialism now.

Of course the history that the Communist Party has traversed over 90 years cannot be summarised in these paragraphs, but the real test lies in the next 90 years and what we want to make of it.

Firstly, dealing with unemployment, poverty and income inequalities remain the greatest and immediate challenges facing our Party. We cannot justify the continued existence of the Party if it does not advance these struggles. Our presence in the state and in mass struggles must be for the complete eradication of all of these inequalities.

Secondly, the complete transformation of the state economic sector, in transport, electricity, human settlement, rural development, education, health-care, and social security remain critical areas that communists should occupy themselves with. The approach to these tasks remains dual as we internally transform our cadres deployed in the various sections of the state as agents for socialism and as we mobilise the working class as an important pressure point and agents for change. These tasks are linked with

defining and asserting our influence on the redistributive functions of the state. Thirdly, engaging capital on its terrain, within the realm of real transformation and in the quest for its defeat, remains an important task. As our society progress, our national liberation tasks, there will be more contradictions within the motive forces of a national democratic society. Failure by the Party to constantly analyse this and lead the working class towards socialism would result in its irrelevance. Any engagement on the developments in society and within our movement should be guided by the aim of building socialism on our lifetime.

The SACP remains the vanguard of the working class. This role has been earned in struggle and has seen the SACP lead in the struggle for progressive nationalism and the construction of a new socialist society. Throughout the years, many have questioned the role of the SACP mainly because of their dislike of what it represents, and have labelled the Party names solely because some within and outside the movement wanted to isolate it as a movement and the individuals at its helm. On many of those occasions, the Party, because of what it steadfastly stood for, has continuously remained an important force within the total liberation of our people. This 90th Anniversary must be about the confirmation of all those values, tasks and visions that those who formed the Communist Party had in mind. This must be the SACP at the helm of cadre development whether at war or in the construction of a different society. Without this, there is no hope. ★

Cde Manamela is the YCL National Secretary

SACP 90TH ANNIVERSARY

90 writing years – and we're still going strong

Jeremy Cronin reflects on the history of communist media in South Africa – and the fact that, 90 years on, the capitalist media cannot ignore our existence

This isn't going to be a systematic, blow by blow, chronological account of publications associated with the Communist Party in South Africa starting from 1921. That is an inspiring story that has been told before, and told better than I could tell it here. What follows are some anecdotes in rough historical order, connected to a political reflection on the complex and shifting relation between our Communist Party and the media.

Back in the late 19th and early 20th centuries the formation of radical left-wing parties was often indissolubly linked to the appearance of a (typically a weekly) newspaper. The Party "organ" would announce the new organisation and become its official voice. The editorial board would be interchangeable with the party leadership itself. When Lenin established the Bolshevik faction within the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, for instance, the new arrival (later to become the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) was heralded by the launch of *Iskra* (Spark). Lenin insisted that the Party "paper is not only a collective propagandist and agitator, but also a collective organiser" in its own right. The regular Party publication provided

"the line", while its editorial preparation, its production and distribution (often in clandestine circumstances) were the key day-to-day organisational tasks of the cadre of "professional revolutionaries" called for by Lenin.

'Iron discipline'

This Bolshevik model of the Party organised around its official media organ was to have a lasting impact on emergent Communist Parties around the world, including here in South Africa. It was a model that had great strengths – not least in conditions in which Communists so frequently played a courageous vanguard role in the face of severe persecution. Communist parties became tough and resilient professional formations. But it was also, as we shall see, a model that had potential weaknesses and dangers.

Following the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Communist (or "Third") International was established in 1919. At the Second Congress of the Communist International in Moscow in 1920, in the midst of a raging civil war instigated by hostile imperialist powers, the *Twenty-One Conditions for Admission into the Communist International* were adopted. Given the sense of siege that hung over Moscow, it

is not surprising that delegates voted on a text that laid considerable stress upon “iron discipline”. The 12th condition, for instance, insists that “Parties belonging to the CI must be built up on the principle of democratic centralisation ... At the present time of acute civil war, the communist party will only be able fully to do its duty when it is organised in a sufficiently thorough way, when it possesses an iron discipline and when its party centre enjoys the confidence of the members of the party, who are to endow this centre with complete power, authority, and ample rights.”

Interestingly, underlining the fact that party media was seen as absolutely central to everything else, the very first of the 21 conditions for joining the Communist International directed itself to party propaganda and agitation. “All periodical and other publications, as well as all party publications and editions, must be subject to the control of the presidium of the party, independent of whether the party is legal or illegal. It should in no way be permitted that the editors abuse their autonomy and carry on a policy not fully corresponding to the policy of the party.”

The launch of the Communist Party in South Africa

This was the immediate context for the launch one year later in Cape Town of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). It was formed out of disparate socialist groupings from Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town – the largest and most coherent being the International Socialist League (ISL). The ISL had split from the South African Labour Party in 1915. True to the traditions of the time, the formation was announced in an editorial (“The Parting of the Ways”) in the first edition of what was to become the ISL’s weekly

publication The International. Despite the complexities of communication, The International was unique in South Africa in popularising, analysing and celebrating the unfolding Russian Revolution two years later.

With the formation of the CPSA in 1921 *The International* continued on a weekly basis, now as the official organ of the Party but with key writers like Cde SP Bunting still in place. In 1926 the weekly publication changed its name to *The South African Worker*, and then with the 1929 adoption of the national democratic revolutionary strategy associated with the Black Republic Thesis, the newspaper was re-named *Umsebenzi* in 1930.

However, even before the strategic re-orientation and name-change, the Party’s newspaper had not been confined to English language articles. From the late 1920s it published regular articles in all the African languages of South Africa, and also Afrikaans. Many local correspondents were developed, among them Cde Alpheus Maliba who regularly contributed articles in TshiVenda on the struggles in the far north of our country. Other notable Party members who combined organisational work with journalism were Cdes Eddie Roux, Edwin Mofutsanyana and Moses Kotane.

Selling the weekly Party newspaper was a key responsibility of all Party cadres. This contributed greatly to building activism and a sense of ideological cohesion. However, sometimes things could be carried too far, as is illustrated by a story that Cde Ray Alexander recounted to me back in 1990 when we were preparing *The Red Flag in South Africa – a popular history of the SACP 1921-1990*: “In those years [the early 1930s] we spoke of the ‘Bolshevisation’ of the Party. The idea was to tighten up on inner-Party

discipline; To make our structures more task-oriented, and not just loose gatherings. This was not in itself incorrect. But, unfortunately, the manner in which this ‘Bolshevisation’ was applied was often dogmatic and intolerant.

“For instance, in 1931 the Party executive in Jo’burg sent a representative down to the Cape Town district committee. He said: ‘The executive is very disappointed with the lack of seriousness displayed by the Cape Town district. We have been going through your records for the last 12 months. In that whole time you have failed to expel a single Party member.’

“Well, the Party executive representative from Jo’burg (his name was Lazar Bach) was being put up in a house of Cape Town comrades. Under the bed he was sleeping in he found three unsold copies of the Party journal, Umsebenzi. They were part of a batch given to comrade Joe Pick to sell. Pick had already returned in full the sum of money for these three unsold copies obviously out of his own pocket. Nevertheless, he was expelled from the Party for failing to carry out his duty to the full! That’s how things were in those days!”

As Cde Ray Alexander’s story reminds us, through the first half of the 1930s the CPSA (like many other Communist parties at the time) was beset with an excessively bureaucratic authoritarianism and a great deal of internal factionalism. The “iron discipline” envisaged by Lenin and the Communist International had become a self-defeating end in itself – rather than the means to developing an effective left vanguard.

Fortress Party...or Party with wide influence?

With the rise of fascism in Europe, the Communist International belatedly

changed its left sectarian line and in 1935 called for broad anti-fascist United Front strategies. Responding to the change in line, here in South Africa in 1936, the CPSA converted the name of its weekly publication back to *The South African Worker*. The CPSA clearly believed at the time that combating fascism amongst the strata most disposed to it (the white sections of the working class and petty bourgeoisie) would be best served by toning down on its black African image. But in 1938, after 23 years of regular weekly publication (counting back to 1915 and the ISL), the Party newspaper stopped appearing. This reflected the general crisis within the Party at the time – its lack of an independent identity, the lack of clear Party tasks, and the impact of factional squabbles.

But as often happens in politics, the change of line to a broader United Front perspective also brought its own advantages and challenges. While the Party’s publications were beginning to falter and even disappear for a time, Communists were intimately involved in the launching of a non-official Party paper, the radical, socialist weekly the *Guardian*, which appeared first in 1937. The *Guardian* was the first truly progressive, relatively mass-circulation, independent newspaper in South Africa – pioneering a role that was later to be emulated by others in future decades. By 1945 it had achieved a weekly circulation of 45,000. Among the Communists who played a leading role in the *Guardian* were Cdes Betty Radford (its first editor), Brian Bunting (editor from 1947), Lionel Forman, Ruth First, Govan Mbeki and MP Naicker.

Although it was not an official Party publication, the *Guardian* made no secret of its sympathies for the CPSA and

the progressive trade union movement. For instance, in 1946 the newspaper played a leading role in supporting the miners' strike. As a result, the offices of the *Guardian* were raided in Cape Town and Durban and material seized. The issue of 26 September 1946 had one page half blank and it carried the following statement in capital letters: "With acknowledgements to Mr Harry Lawrence, Minister of Justice and the freedom of press in democratic South Africa and apologies to our readers. Cape Town, Durban and other news which should have appeared on this page is in the hands of the police."

In later years, in the 1980s for instance, progressive newspapers were also to protest at censorship and harassment by publishing largely blank pages. But, according to Les Switzer (*South Africa's alternative press: voices of protest and resistance, 1880s – 1960s*) this was "perhaps the first such act of defiance in the history of the South African press".

Following the 1946 mineworkers' strike, 52 "strike leaders" (more than half of whom were Party members) were put on trial for sedition. The *Guardian* continued to report defiantly on the court proceedings. On October 3 1946, for instance, it quoted Advocate Bram Fischer, then a member of the CPSA Johannesburg Committee and one of the accused, saying that he had not been in Johannesburg when the strike broke out, but he "pleaded guilty because if he had been in town he would naturally have helped distribute leaflets when called upon".

When the CPSA was banned in 1950, the *Guardian* continued to be published weekly, ensuring that a radical socialist voice did not disappear. When the *Guardian* itself was banned, it was succeeded by a string of alternatives, *Advance*, *Clarion*, *Peo-*

ple's World and *New Age*, each in turn suffering the same banning fate as apartheid repression of all opposition deepened.

In the three decades of its existence, the CPSA and the publications with which its militants were associated had pioneered progressive journalism in our country. Of course, there were ups and downs, but always media work was taken seriously. One of the questions these decades raise for us in the present is: How do we achieve a correct balance between consolidating inner-party ideological and organisational coherence on the one hand, and a wider influence beyond the fortress walls of our party, on the other? In principle, these matters should be complementary, a strong and well-disciplined party should be able to more effectively reach out to a wider public. But, as we have seen, in practice it is not always easy to achieve the correct balance.

In many ways, although in very different circumstances, these challenges are still with us today. They reverberate in the debates around SACP independence and SACP participation in an ANC-led NDR (National Democratic Revolution). They are present in the debate around the deployment of our leading cadres – how do we achieve the right balance between full-time deployment within the Party and communist deployment in other strategic centres of power and influence? And these debates are also present in the current hypocritical commercial media offensive against the SACP, falsely suggesting that we are bent on a purging rampage of Party ranks – but notice how it is the same media that is constantly bewailing the ANC's and ANC-led government's real or alleged failure to instil discipline and deal decisively with chronic disruptiveness!

Party media and the mainstream commercial media

Related to all of this is another matter, how in the present should the SACP and its publications engage with the mainstream commercial media? Do we ignore it? Do we treat it simply as the class “enemy”? Or do we spend all of our time engaging the mainstream media with a daily stream of press statements and regular press conferences – to the relative neglect of our own publications? Obviously, it should be a question of getting the right balance – but, again, that is not always easy.

When the *Guardian* was launched back in 1937, the mainstream commercial media of the time was largely stolid and complacent and very much linked to mining and finance capital interests. After the Communist Party’s banning and secret re-emergence as the SACP in 1953 there was no official Party publication. SACP underground activists immersed themselves in activism within the Congress movement. When *The African Communist (AC)* was launched clandestinely in 1959 it did not, initially, announce itself as an official organ of the SACP – that was only to come later. Soon after the AC editorial collective and production were forced into nearly 30 years of exile. The editorial team was based in London and the printing and layout was done in the former German Democratic Republic. For much of those three decades of exile the AC was virtually the only public face and testimony of the SACP’s continued existence. Great efforts were undertaken to post miniaturised and otherwise disguised versions of the AC back into the country. But the strategic defeat of the national liberation movement in the mid-1960s had taken its toll and the visibility in South Africa of all of the com-

ponents of the ANC-led movement was greatly reduced.

A personal memory

From the late 1960s I was an avid reader of local newspapers. It might be hard to imagine this now, but if the initials ANC, let alone SACP, appeared more than three or four times in a year in the local media (and always negatively of course – usually in a brief reference to a political trial) then that was a lot. At the end of 1971 I worked as a junior journalist on the *Cape Argus* for some seven months. I enjoyed the frenetic rush. I admired the daily collective production processes involved in bringing out a newspaper in a relatively large capitalist media operation. (Remember what Marx said about capitalism’s inherent contradiction? Private appropriation, but the immense collective and disciplined organisation of production.) I think I learnt a fair amount about the journalistic trade. But this was the early 1970s and the *Cape Argus* newsroom, like all the other newsrooms in South Africa, was a conservative place. I once submitted a brief story noting that, although the apartheid government had said it had crushed Swapo, Reuters continued to report police deaths in northern “South West Africa”. I was summoned to the news editor who advised me to stick to stories scheduled on the news diary. He added kindly: “By the way, I really liked your story last week about the suburban dog trapped down a man-hole.”

But despite their timid conservatism the mainstream newspapers of the day had their uses, as I was to discover a few years later. That was when I was working in a three-person underground SACP cell responsible for laboriously typing onto a wax stencil and then rolling off on an old Roneo machine several thousand copies

of *Inkululeko-Freedom*. It was the “Organ (as the mast-head described it) of the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party”. The text for different issues of the publication was smuggled through to us from London and we then printed it out and mailed it off to thousands of South African township addresses – as well as to a few prominent personalities and local newspapers.

Of course the newspapers ignored the newsletter (and it would have been illegal for them to have done otherwise). But here’s the beauty of the thing – back then (it would have been the mid-1970s), Inkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi of Inkatha had a regular weekly column in several English language newspapers. At the time, fairly frequently the SACP Central Committee launched scathing attacks against Buthelezi, describing him as an imperialist tool being groomed by local and foreign business interests as a third force alternative to the ANC-led movement. Buthelezi was on our mailing list, and being Buthelezi, he could never resist quoting in his weekly column at great length from *Inkululeko* in order to respond. And so, thanks to the Times Media Ltd Newspaper group, thanks to the Oppenheimer family (I assume they were shareholders), and thanks to Buthelezi, the effective circulation of *Inkululeko* would sometimes soar into several hundred thousand countrywide – at least when the Central Committee in London had the good sense to include some jibes at the Chief in its smuggled in text.

The popular ferment and the media

From the mid-1970s right through the 1980s and into the negotiations period of the early 1990s there was wave after wave of semi-insurrectionary struggle in South Africa. It was also a period of flour-

ishing radical media of all kinds. Community newspapers like *Grassroots* in Cape Town, and *Saamstaan* in Oudtshoorn carried news of community struggles written by grass-roots activists. News and theoretical journals linked to the progressive trade union movement, like the still running *SA Labour Bulletin*, first appeared at this time. *Work in Progress* was a progressive discussion journal appearing monthly. Other radical news magazines made a brief appearance, like *New Era*. Radical commercial weeklies in the tradition of the *Guardian* also emerged – the *Weekly Mail* (predecessor to the now much tamer *Mail & Guardian*) and the radical Afrikaans weekly, *Vrye Weekblad*. There were also the official publications of the mass democratic movement – notably *UDF News*, and the theoretical discussion journal of the UDF, *Isiswe*. In all of these (and many other) legal and semi-legal media activities, Communists and SACP sympathisers were active, along with many other progressive comrades. These various print media initiatives overlapped and interacted with a wider outburst of popular revolutionary creativity (screen-printing of posters and T-shirts, performance poetry and songs, documentary photography and film-making, and street graffiti).

Meanwhile, the banned ANC and SACP also stepped up their media work directed at the ferment within the country. *Umsebenzi* was re-launched in 1985 under the editorship of Cde Joe Slovo. The ANC’s *Radio Freedom* broadcast from studios in Ethiopia and Madagascar enjoyed a loyal listenership huddled over crackling short-wave radios in many township homes. The ANC also published a theoretical journal *Mayibuye* and MK brought out *Dawn*, while the AC continued to appear on a regular quarterly

basis. Communists like Cde Mzala wrote actively for all of these publications. In the specific case of Cde Mzala he would write a polemical article in *Dawn* and then respond to it critically in, say, *Mayibuye* but under a different name, and then quote the debate and disagree with “both” previous participants in a third article, again under another name, in the *AC !* Mzala was passionate about debate, not for its own sake, but because he believed that comradely debate was essential for cadre development and for the vitality of our organisations.

Which brings us to another challenge, related to those already considered: how to achieve the right balance between strategic coherence (“the line”) and dynamic policy debate and development. Different circumstances no doubt call for different emphases, but too much of a top-down “line” can result in organisational stagnation and the reduction of our media to the repetition of formulae to be parroted by branch members. Using our journals as forums for comradely debate, for exploring new ideas, and for critical self-review is absolutely essential. On the other hand, we must never allow our Party to become little more than a debating society or, worse still, a formation riddled with factionalism in which debates are really pseudo-debates not actually about policy but in fact about personal or factional positioning.

Post-1994

Generally, the SACP has managed to find the balance between these different challenges relatively well over the past two decades. After the unbanning of the Party in 1990, with the influx of new members, and in the midst of the crisis in the former Soviet bloc, it was important to at once reaffirm the unity (and even the relevance)

of the SACP while at the same time enriching ourselves with the experience of thousands of new members who were, nonetheless, mostly steeled activists from the 1980s and long-time party supporters. *The AC* and *Umsebenzi* became important strategic and mobilisational organs. It was in these Party publications that self-defence units were popularised, the complexities of the unfolding negotiations process debated and analysed, and it was also here that for the first time the apartheid regime’s low intensity conflict strategy in the midst of the negotiations was named and unpacked.

After the 1994 democratic breakthrough, SACP publications continued to advance the perspective of a mass-driven transformational struggle to complement and reinforce the new democratic state. This emphasis and our mass campaigning around social and economic issues did not always endear us to some within the ANC. With the consolidation of the “1996 class project” agenda within the leading circle in the ANC and government from the mid-1990s, an important ideological battle opened up within the movement itself. Several well-resourced ideological attacks were launched against the Party, much of it probably authored by former President Thabo Mbeki himself. This necessitated the appearance of a new Party occasional publication – *Bua Komanisi*, a 24-page or so pamphlet issued in the name of and sanctioned by the Central Committee. This was important, because while our attackers were always well-placed ANC individuals, their polemics were made in the name of persons (i.e. they were factional and could not win unifying collective support from within the ANC itself). The Party’s extensive responses were always collective.

Since 1990 the Party has not neglected

work in the commercial and community media. The mainstream commercial print media is dominated by three major capitalist conglomerates. As the second largest membership political party in South Africa and with considerable influence on and within government, the labour movement and within township communities, the commercial media finds it difficult to ignore the SACP. Compared to virtually every other country in which a Communist Party is not the ruling Party, the SACP probably gets a surprising amount of commercial media coverage. But the coverage of the SACP is invariably grudging and usually squeezed into one or another pigeon-hole – “the Party as an anachronistic dinosaur from the past”, or “the Party as a grim purger of all dissent” (a current favourite). Often we get back-handed compliments when the commercial media imagines we are about to walk out of the Alliance. Just how grudging our coverage is, can be seen from the manner in which some leading newspapers decided to cover our 90th anniversary. The *Sunday Times* printed a severely edited piece by me, but for “balance” placed it shoulder-to-shoulder with a piece by a former and now disaffected SACP member. And, for good measure, the following week they gave great prominence to a letter which said, basically, that I was a very nice person **but** (pigeon-hole number one) the “Party was an anachronistic dinosaur from the past”. The *Mail & Guardian* carried a nasty little piece, a personalised attack against our general secretary, cde Blade Nzimande (in this case, pigeon-hole number two: “grim purger of dissent”). Following protest, the next week, the *Mail & Guardian* published a response by two comrades from the PB, Yunus Carrim and Ben Martins. But, again, for good measure, the newspaper gave even great-

er prominence to another pigeon-holing letter to the editor attacking the SACP.

Yet, despite all of this, Party comrades need to continue to engage the commercial media, which is a key way of reaching a wider working class and general audience. Communists also need to actively engage community radio stations and mainstream radio phone-in programmes.

Perhaps what is most instructive in the present is the way in which ideas first developed by the SACP in our own publications increasingly get appropriated by mainstream commentators (as if they were their own discoveries). Have you noticed how the word “tenderpreneur”, first popularised in SACP publications, is now widely in use as a critique of compradorism and parasitic rentier activity? Have you noticed how several leading commentators have recently pronounced that the ANCYL leadership is not really left-wing after all? (Wasn’t that something the SACP said back in 2009 at our Special National Congress?). Have you noticed that suddenly all our smug economic journalists are saying that perhaps the global capitalist economy has not resolved any of its structural crises and that a double dip might be looming? But we said that three years ago.

Fortunately, we are Communists and we haven’t patented or copyrighted any of these concepts or perspectives. But we have been active on the terrain of the South African media for 90 years now. Even the commercial media, dominated by capitalist oligopolies, can no longer ignore our existence. It cannot even avoid appropriating our ideas. That’s fine. It’s what that great Marxist Antonio Gramsci called “hegemony”. ★

Cde Cronin is the SACP Deputy General Secretary

AUGUST CC: POLITICAL REPORT

New possibilities and new fronts to consolidate the NDR

At our 2009 SACP Special National Congress the SACP stood almost alone in breaking the “Polokwane spell”. At the time, the dominant line within the ANC was to continue to seek to preserve a balancing act between the unholy alliance of different tendencies that had come together at the ANC’s 52nd 2007 National Conference. We were seen as “rocking the boat” and of indulging in “public spats”. There were (although more unevenly) inclinations from some quarters within Cosatu to be in denial about the class character of the emergent “new” tendency and particularly its demagogic populist “vanguard”. There were also illusions (which might have been real illusions or just plain opportunism) in a faction within the YCL about the revolutionary credentials and progressive potential of the right-wing demagogic populists in control of the ANCYL.

It was in this context that the SACP in 2009 boldly (and correctly) began to characterise this right-wing demagogic tendency for what it was and is. We pointed out its underpinning class support, and characterised it as a “new” tendency that had certain proto-fascist

features. We noted that it was deeply embroiled in tenderpreneurship and other parasitic primary accumulation tendencies. We linked its appearance in part to the impact of the global capitalist economic crisis on our economy and its resulting effects on BEE deals (not least, but not only, in the mining sector). We linked it to the persistent chronic levels of youth unemployment, marginalisation and a growing sense of youth alienation. We also noted that, in part, all of these things were symptoms (rather than solutions) of the failure of the “1996 class project”.

For its part, back in 2009, much of the former 1996 class project “middle” ground within the ANC, government and among the liberal commentariat in the media tended to sit back and enjoy the “spectacle” of the former components of the Polokwane alliance bashing it out. In part relishing the division and in part intimidated by the populists, these forces (and even big business in South Africa) held back, for instance, on critiquing the vacuous and self-interested versions of nationalisation being advanced by the ANCYL. This was left to the SACP, almost alone at first.

The liberal commentaries (and the

opposition political parties) sought to portray these critical ideological struggles as a “fall-out among unprincipled thieves”. We were all equally “anti-constitutional”, “anti the rule of law”, and anti-media freedom. We were all equally “corrupt”, “racist” and “sexist”. Our battles were, so these forces attempted to claim, little more than an unprincipled game of palace politics, a struggle on both sides for positions in 2012 and 2014.

Initially, the SACP was considerably on its own in these ideological battles, playing a necessary vanguard role. However, the fact that we were considerably on our own, and that Party members (particularly our chairperson and GS) were being singled out by the populist demagogues (who were hoping to build a broad anti-SACP alignment within the ANC), meant that this front of struggle often occupied a necessary but disproportionate amount of our own time and energies.

Have things changed?

From within the ANC and broad movement there has, indeed, been an important shift. Of course, vigilance remains in order, but over the past year, a substantial middle-ground shift has occurred within our movement. Those seeking to “strike a balance” (in some cases as a way of disguising their complicity with the demagogic trend) have either moved away from this position, or have become increasingly exposed and isolated. This was partially evident at the ANC’s NGC, and it has been consolidated at the past weekend’s ANC NEC. An increasing accumulation of media revelations and state-led investigations into tender fraud has added to this very positive development.

From within the ANC itself there is a much wider emergent consensus that corruption must be dealt with firmly, and that narrow BEE requires major review. Increasingly the media commentariat adopt positions first advanced by the SACP – mostly without acknowledging us (or even being aware of where the idea originated). Even our campaign of ‘Red Card to Corruption’ has now even been stolen by sections of the liberals as theirs. But that is okay, it shows the impact we have, and continue to make on all these fronts.

The idea that “militancy” and “populism” might, in fact, be right- (and not left-) wing in character has now emerged as common sense – whereas just a year and two back, we were all being tarred with the same brush. The understanding that the timing and content of the ANCYL’s “nationalisation” call had much to do with BEE mining deals being underwater is announced as if it were a fresh discovery by a range of economic commentators.

However, and more encouragingly, in the battle of ideas there are even (once more after a gap of several years) academic and political commentary voices actually acknowledging and developing theses advanced first by the SACP. See for instance the excellent recent intervention by Professor Jane Duncan, *The turn of the fascist*, or Ibrahim Fakir’s, *Nationalisation of assets versus socialisation of wealth*, both originally published on the SACSIS.org.za website, but subsequently published in mainstream newspapers).

How do we consolidate gains made? It is critical that we realise that the “new tendency” and its demagogic “vanguard” have their roots in **objective** factors – simply dealing with personalities

will certainly help to destabilise this tendency, but we also have to address the material conditions and the sense of social alienation particularly amongst black youth that is the breeding ground for the phenomenon. In line with the MTV we need to set specific tasks for the SACP across a range of sites of power:

The MTV speaks of building “working class hegemony” in all sites of power. But what is hegemony? It doesn’t mean the naked exercise of narrow class power – although hegemony might require that from time to time. Hegemony is essentially about building a broad consensus, a narrative and a practical programme of action that is widely accepted; makes sense of the lived reality of the widest range of popular forces; empowers the working class and allied popular forces to be in practice, and not just by way of declaration, the key protagonist (the key motive force) for change.

Apart from more favourable developments within our movement, there is also the persisting global capitalist crisis. Together, these two factors should enable the SACP to much more actively advance an alternative, working class hegemonic perspective.

The global capitalist crisis, South Africa and the African continent

The sovereign debt crisis in Europe, the declining economic hegemony of the US, the sluggish or non-existent growth in most of the developed world, the possibility of a “double dip” global recession are all symptoms of a structural and systemic crisis in the global capitalist system. As the SACP we have analysed the key multi-dimensional features of this crisis previously. This persisting crisis is having a devastating impact, particularly on our industrial sector. So

what can be done? We definitely need to point out how capitalism is ruining the lives of millions of South Africans, but we also need to move beyond analysing why people are victims and advance an agenda to address these challenges. One (not the only) aspect of a strategic agenda is our region and continent.

What is clear is that global economic dynamism and leadership are shifting to key developing economies – and notably China, India and Brazil. Both India and Brazil have survived the global crisis relatively well, in large measure because both economies have placed considerable emphasis on their domestic (and, in the case of Brazil, its regional) markets – they have been less locked into an export-oriented (to the developed North) growth path. China, of course, has developed dramatically on precisely such an export-oriented growth path. But that strategy is now seriously in question, and the CPC is very actively moving towards a greater focus on its own national market, with a major focus on infrastructure development and even actively promoting wage increases.

China, India and Brazil have the advantage of very large domestic markets – (with populations over 1-billion in the former two, and over 200-million in Brazil). South Africa, with a population of only 50-million, cannot expect to be able to sustain development and growth that is simply based nationally. This is where our region and continent become absolutely crucial. (Imagine where China would be today if colonialism had divided it into 54 separate countries – which was the fate of our continent). The recently signed Tripartite Free Trade Agreement (SADC-Comesa-East African Community) has a population of nearly 600-million.

What this all means is that, especially in the face of a persisting global capitalist crisis, the SACP has an important role in advancing a different African agenda. The “African Renaissance” and Nepad initiatives (whatever their partial merits) were too much based on the assumption of a trade-off between the developed North (and particularly the EU) and Africa. The underlying assumption was that in exchange for “good governance” (involving not just multi-party electoralism and the rule of law but also “good” macro-economic governance) the developed North would invest in and trade with Africa. Domestically, this agenda coincided with the class interests of our banking and mining capitalist sector, as well as of a parasitic, emergent BEE compradorial stratum – to the relative detriment of our manufacturing and agricultural sectors. It was also a paradigm that informed many other things – including the arms procurement package and its assumptions about a European-African strategic alliance, and misguided attempts to steer SADC into an EU-style monetary union.

The SACP needs to actively advance a **different regional and African agenda** – that places *development*, inter-regional trade, regional industrial policies, and infrastructure that serves these objectives (and not the continued un-beneficiated export of minerals and agricultural products out of our region/continent). To get a sense of the challenge – Southern African inter-regional trade amounts to only 10-12% of all trade from the region – far behind the rest of the world (Europe’s inter-regional trade is 60%, North America 40%, Asia 30%).

From a class perspective we should understand that a strategic agenda of

this kind will help to consolidate and expand a regional/continental working class. Without being mechanical, the numerical weakness of this class is one of the key factors underpinning the shallow, volatile, often compradorial nature of many African political parties and institutions. Of course, such a strategic agenda needs to mobilise local productive capital (especially in agriculture and manufacturing), as well as a range of petty producers, workers’ resources and intellectuals, etc. A regional/continental strategy as briefly elaborated above is, in other words, not just a South African “growth” strategy – it needs to be the core component of the African NDR (a better concept, surely, than “renaissance”?).

What does this mean practically within South Africa? Many things – but just to flag some current issues: We need to re-align the mandates of key public sector entities. For example, how do we focus Sanral away from effectively building infrastructure (eg the Gauteng Freeway e-tolling project) that perpetuates class and race inequalities towards a developmental agenda in the region (and, of course, within our country)? How do we focus Transnet on playing a leading role in connecting the region, rather than focusing on more export-directed iron ore lines, or restructuring premised on bringing in private rail operators (and their aspirant BEE partners)?

Building hegemony on the ideological front

Here there are at least two key tasks: We need to more consistently reclaim the moral high ground for a **radical NDR perspective**. Our association (real or assumed) with the “new tendency” in the run-up to Polokwane and in its

immediate aftermath, has enabled a whole range of anti-majoritarian liberals (from Afriforum through to the DA) to present themselves as the “defenders of our Constitution and Bill of Rights”, of non-racialism, gender sensitivity, and of general moral decency. They have even sought to present themselves as the true defenders of Nelson Mandela’s, and of late the UDF’s, legacy. The demagoguery of the populists has played directly into this agenda – but so, too, has the anti-people behaviour of sections of the trade union movement in the course of the public sector strike last year, or the present Samwu strike.

Now that the lines between a principled left perspective and the right-wing demagoguery are being more clearly drawn, it is important that we consolidate this division by presenting the SACP (and its allies) as *defenders* of our Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the rule of law. We have allowed anti-majoritarian liberals to appropriate and re-interpret this terrain. What they have done is to *reduce* the Constitution and Bill of Rights to one dimension – namely those (necessary but limited) aspects of the Constitution that involve checks and balances on the executive (and to a lesser extent on Parliament – a site that the opposition, by the way, despite its lesser numbers, continues to hegemonise).

We need to restore the Constitution and Bill of Rights to their fuller meaning – they are clarion calls to ongoing radical national democratic transformation. Even the Property Clause is *not* a traditional liberal property clause – it allows for expropriation “for a public purpose or in the public interest”. While compensation is required, that compensation does not *have* to be based purely on market value – but must have regard to:

- “the current use of the property” (an absentee landlord? A speculative investment? A water-guzzling golf estate?)

- “the history of the acquisition and use of the property” (colonial dispossession? Group Areas removal? Former apartheid army land? Hurried privatisation?)

- “the extent of direct state investment and subsidy in the acquisition and beneficial capital improvement of the property” (apartheid-era and post-1994 subsidisation of Sasol, or of white farms, or of former Iscor property??)

In short we have failed to actively test the limits of these requirements, instead we have sometimes given the impression that we are ambivalent about what is (in fact) a radical national democratic Constitution underpinning what should be our rule of law.

Another related area where we need to *re-position* the debate is on the whole **media and information** front. The media itself (and a whole range of anti-majoritarian liberals) have succeeded in centring the debate on the proposal of a Media Appeals Tribunal. In this way, they have displaced the fundamental issues (media ownership and control, the exploitation of media workers, the gutting of the public broadcaster, and the juniorisation of the newsroom and the dumbing-down of news content). These latter, fundamental, issues have a social and class content – by centring the debate on the tribunal the media and anti-majoritarian liberals have turned the discussion into a liberal “freedom of speech” discussion. Given that this debate coincided with the ongoing Information Bill fiasco and with the demagogic attacks on the media by the right-wing populists, it was not exactly

difficult for our opponents to suggest that we were all bent on covering up corruption and wrong-doing in the state. The SACP does not have to abandon its support in principle for the ANC's proposal of a Media Appeals Tribunal, but we should certainly actively re-position the discussion.

A second key ideological task for the SACP in the current conjuncture is to much more dynamically expose the ideological, moral, political and practical bankruptcy of capitalism globally. While we have been doing this, we need to invigorate this aspect of our work by reaching out to a wider range of forces impacted upon by (or disgusted by) the ongoing global capitalist crisis and its impact— the environmental lobby, students, small businesses, faith-based formations, academics, etc. This work requires that we do not simply repeat anti-capitalist slogans and well-worn Marxist clichés, but that we connect our Marxism dynamically to current realities.

The necessity and challenge of building a bigger, better, SACP

At our first Congress after our unbanning, in 1991, we decided to establish a “vanguard party with a mass character”. Since then, we identified the building of a bigger SACP as integrally linked to the realisation of our MTV. The building of a bigger SACP comes with enormous challenges. The building of a bigger, yet quality SACP is an untraveled route, to which we must pay very close attention and from which we must learn appropriate lessons. If we are to effectively exercise our vanguard role, and be able to lead the struggle to build working class hegemony in all key sites of power, it is

necessary to make the Party bigger. We have correctly set ourselves the target of 500 000 members by 2014 (an equivalent of 1% of South Africa's population).

Indeed the decision to grow the SACP, after 1994, and especially since the 10th Congress has helped enormously in increasing the influence and visibility of the SACP. Our campaigns have been possible through an enlarged membership, and in turn have contributed to the growth of our Party. Our size also helped us enormously to weather and roll back the offensive of the 1996 class project which, in its many guises, tried everything to liquidate the SACP.

In building a bigger Party and deciding how to take this forward, it is important to remind ourselves about what our party is, and what it is about. The SACP is a political party of South Africa's working class. It seeks to recruit the most politically advanced from the ranks of the working class and its allies, as well as the most committed to the struggle for the overthrow the capitalist system. However it is not only the already politically advanced who are recruited into the Party. The Party also has a duty, in widening its presence in all key sites of power, as well as its geographical presence, to also recruit many cadres who are not ready-made, but require further ideological development, through active participation in struggle and further exposure to the theory of our Party in particular, and Marxism-Leninism broadly. In this regard the Party seeks to identify those with potential to develop into reliable party cadres. Such potential includes moral integrity, hard work, hatred for corruption, inclination towards activism and commitment to advance the inter-

ests of the poor and the downtrodden.

It is indeed important to remind ourselves of these qualities, as it is often in the identification and recruitment of cadres that sometimes mistakes are made. To try and minimise such mistakes, the SACP Special Congress introduced a new category of membership – ‘candidate membership’ for one year in order to adequately prepare comrades for full participation in the life of the Party. It is therefore important that all candidate members are carefully nurtured with intensive political education and active participation in party activities. This is our own innovative attempt at creating something between probation and automatic membership right from the word go. It is going to be important that clear organisational guidelines are drawn up to guide our party structures on recruitment and development of new members.

In building a bigger and better SACP, it is important that we also pay attention to the ideological development of all our members on an ongoing basis. We have already reached 130 000 membership, and continuing to grow. There is a danger that we can simply increase numbers without simultaneously paying adequate attention to ideological development. It is important that in the lead up to our 13th Congress we aim to reach all our members to discuss and engage, from now onwards, with our 90th anniversary messages and a key discussion document towards Congress.

It is important that we especially reach out to all of our leading cadre (national, provincial, district, and branch executives), to empower it as a commissariat to educate the general membership of the Party, and act as the principal ideological anchor of a bigger party.

This will enormously contribute towards building a bigger, but better, SACP!

The next 12 months must in addition aim to mobilise our members to actively participate in the ANC’s centenary celebrations, and use this important occasion to emphasise the importance of our alliance, as well as the role the SACP has played in building a strong and revolutionary ANC.

The class terrain(s) upon which we seek to build and strengthen the Party as a vanguard

Recruitment into the ranks of our Party also requires special attention, especially given the current context within which we recruit cadres. It is a phase of the national democratic revolution facing the maturing of the many threats that have confronted other revolutions, especially a decade or so after the defeat of an oppressor regime. This is a threat that the ANC has characterised as the ‘sins of incumbency’ – temptations of use of political power for self-enrichment and to dispense patronage. At such stages of democratic revolutions, imperialism also intensifies its manoeuvres to capture ruling political elites, including their political organisations, in order to further subject the often dependent and vulnerable economies of developing countries to imperialist designs.

In so many ways, these features are manifesting themselves in all the key sites of power identified in the MTV. Contrary to what liberals often project as the inevitable character of liberation movements to wilt and collapse under the weight of corruption and patronage, there is nothing inevitable about this (“Look at the north of Limpopo” liberal and right wing refrain). It depends on the balance of class forces. However, it is

at such moments that the class struggle sharpens, often with the emergence of new class alliances and new strata in society that are contested by the principal class forces.

Let us re-state some of the observations we have made in recent times about the changing class composition of our society. There is the consolidation of a new bureaucratic bourgeoisie, located in the higher echelons of the civil service and government, which becomes parasitic on the state, especially when there are no other meaningful avenues for accumulation in the broader capitalist economy. At the same time, such a bureaucratic bourgeoisie uses its location in the state to try and enter the broader capitalist economy. What we have correctly characterised as *tenderpreneurship*, represents the worst form of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie in our context – often brash, extremely corrupt and liable to counter-revolutionary tendencies, and the most vulnerable to co-optation by imperialism. It is the most dangerous in undermining and seriously rolling back the national democratic revolution. It often seeks to replace the principal motive force of our revolution, the working class, as the leading class force in our revolution. It is for this reason that the principal adversary of this stratum is our Party.

Another stratum of the bourgeoisie to emerge from within the ranks of the previously oppressed is that sponsored and nurtured by the established sections of the bourgeoisie, with the assistance of the state. This is represented by the small stratum of beneficiaries from narrow BEE. The political outlook of the core of this stratum is that it is cosmopolitan and often seeks to advance its class interests through the normal rules

of capitalism, often against the corruption of tenderpreneurship, albeit often overlapping with the bureaucratic bourgeoisie. However, it is a small and compradorial class that has not developed anything remotely close to substantive ownership of the means of production.

It is during such times that socialist propaganda and activities need to be intensified, as well as the struggle to build maximum unity within our movement and isolating and defeating threats to the NDR, both inside and outside our movement. This is what is required of a principal motive force of the revolution, the working class, rather than becoming a principal motive force only on paper and through resolutions.

There are many threats to our revolution. The principal threat is that of letting the capitalist class continue its dominance of our state and economy, including through its many ideological weapons, one of the most prominent being the print media. Similarly, there is fairly widespread understanding within the ranks of our movement that corruption and the capture of the state by tenderpreneurs would mark a massive defeat for the national democratic revolution, with possibly an end to our revolutionary alliance as we have known it. This, of course, would mark a new and difficult struggle to wage against what would have possibly become a compradorial, and even kleptocratic, state. The current ideological slogan of tenderpreneurship is that of ‘economic freedom in our lifetime’, seeking to exploit and direct the poverty of our youth towards an agenda that has **absolutely** no connection to the genuine economic emancipation of the overwhelming majority of our people.

The emergence of different shades

of civil society initiatives which are liberal in character, or at best liberal social democratic, are the latest attempts to discredit or even displace our liberation movement through some kind of 'coalition' of so-called 'civil society' initiatives and formations, whose goal will be to leave capitalist power untouched but attempt to introduce some of kind of a 'welfare' state, and a strong petty bourgeoisie beholden to the imperialist interests of its funders and backers, under the guise of fighting corruption and protection of our constitutional state and democracy.

It is an initiative that seeks to exploit the damage being caused by tenderpreneurship to the fabric of our society and movement. It is important to note that some of these initiatives are now being funded by some of the former backers of the liberation movement, but who are now being threatened by the staying power of our liberation movement and its alliance. Some of these initiatives seek to reach out to sections of the labour movement in particular, with an aim of trying to either position it against our movement or seek to take part of the organised workers with it.

It is indeed important that, as part of the broader battle of ideas and mass mobilisation that we contest the space that normally gets presented as 'civil society'. Clearly the media itself is part of this struggle for hegemony in 'civil society'. The question that this Central Committee will have to debate and answer is how should we seek to contest this space? Do we try to beautify ourselves before the media or engage it robustly, or both?

In one way or the other, the domestic capitalist class is also operating on all these terrains, seeking to strengthen its

power and influence. One of the major instruments of the domestic capitalist class is the media it owns. This liberal offensive is also intensifying its attempts to capture the public broadcaster. Ironically, though not surprisingly, the role of the media tends to elevate both the new tendency and the liberal offensive against our movement. In many ways it also makes the two tendencies reinforce each other. It is a media that is also populated by petty bourgeois commentators who seem to be very angry about the dominance of the ANC in our democracy.

On the other hand there are important opportunities and avenues for a paradigm shift around the new growth path, and emphasis on industrial priorities and the five priorities of our revolution at this point in time. The existence of our Party with a clear Programme and activities to mobilise the working class around our programmatic slogan of 'Socialism is the Future, Build it Now' still has enormous support and respect amongst the ranks of the workers and the poor of our country. It is this organic connection between the SACP and the workers that some of our detractors are seeking to break, as part of weakening the influence of the SACP.

The ANC has an overwhelming presence and popularity as a multi-class movement deeply steeped in its own institutional memory of a heroic struggle against apartheid. However, as we have learnt from other broadly similar revolutions, as the memory of the struggle against an oppressive regime begins to fade, new and creative ways of reproducing that memory and consciously translating it into the ongoing transformatory tasks of the day becomes absolutely essential.

The most critical task for the left under these conditions is to unite its power both inside and outside the state, in the economy and the community, to drive a revolutionary agenda to consolidate the NDR.

The state

It is time that we open the debate about the character of the South African state today, rather than a matter that conveniently gets thrown up by this or that class force in pursuit of its own agenda. For the liberal offensive, the emphasis is on a liberal state, which should build institutions that are as independent as possible, and often to act to undermine the capacity of government to govern. It seeks to subject all governmental actions, a necessary component of our democracy, to malicious scrutiny that serves to undermine the electoral choices of our people. It is an attempt to subvert the fundamental notion of 'the people shall govern', inverting it to mean 'the people shall vote, but the liberals shall, using institutions of democracy, govern'! It is a project whose fundamental aim is to undermine majority rule. It is seemingly a well-resourced project both financially and with intellectual resources, including the media.

It is for this reason that in so many ways this liberal agenda intersects and seeks to reinvent itself as 'civil society'; the only repository of reason and moral superiority over an otherwise a 'corrupt' state.

It is important that the SACP consistently articulates a revolutionary approach to our constitution and democracy. While liberals only put a one-sided emphasis on constitutionalism to mean the right to vote, freedom of expression, and the right to oppose government, we

should emphasise that at the heart of our constitution is also socio-economic rights, and the struggles to fight poverty, unemployment, disease, access to land, housing, education, and the right to a decent income and livelihoods. The latter issues are hardly ever mentioned or taken up by the liberals' 'civil society' campaigns.

Our ultra-left detractors, sections of whom have found common cause with either the liberal offensive or the new tendency, have already dismissed the state as a bourgeois, if not a predator, state. It is a position that argues, using neo-Marxian language, that all that has to be done is to smash the state or at the very least be engaged only from outside, and in opposition, to government. It is also from this standpoint that we are beginning to hear arguments that the national democratic revolution has lost its course and is no longer on track. But it is not clear from these voices what then is to be done. Is it to smash the state? Remove what is seen as a predator elite? To immediately embark on a socialist revolution? Or what? Yet the daily political practice vacillates between dismissing the current state and intense engagement or even participation in some structures and processes of the state and capital.

But seemingly buried beneath all this are simultaneously bourgeois or petty bourgeois business and other similar interests, beneath the rhetoric of fighting against corruption and the bourgeois state.

It is therefore opportune for the SACP to open the debate on the character of the state. The current South African state is a reflection of a number of intersecting and often distinct class interests and struggles. Of course in a capitalist

society any state will strongly exhibit the features of a bourgeois state, whose role is to create conditions for capital accumulation. The South African state obviously does have these features, but this is not all, which is where the ultra-left element has got it wrong.

The South African state is simultaneously a highly contested state between the bourgeoisie and the working class, as well as by other strata of society, principally linked, often as subordinate strata, of the capitalist class; whether it is narrow BEE beneficiaries or the tenderpreneurs. It is a state whose government remains deeply committed to position the state to play a leading role in society, in favour of the interests of the overwhelming majority of our people. The very assumptions behind a new growth path and an industrial policy are for a strong, interventionist state aimed at tackling poverty and unemployment.

It is therefore wrong to simply characterise the current state as a conventional bourgeois state, controlled and dominated by a bourgeoisie without any serious struggles and access to state power by elements of the workers and the poor. It is a state that is also buttressed by a highly organised working class, which has played a pivotal role in fighting against the pillaging of the state in the interests of the bourgeoisie eg, the struggle against privatisation and outsourcing in which workers have a constitutional right to strike. It is a state with a government that is committed to free education for the poor and a comprehensive national health insurance scheme. Surely, some will argue, many bourgeois states have had these 'reformist' features. However, in our case these measures are not simply reformist (albeit liable to such co-option), but repre-

sent important revolutionary advances that require the rolling back of the logic of capitalism and a bourgeois state.

At the same time, the state still, in a number of ways, reflects its apartheid past. Some of its major apparatuses, whether in education, health and other facilities, reflect institutions that were designed to serve the minority white population in our country. It is still absolutely essential to fight the racist and patriarchal features of the state as an essential component of the national democratic revolution.

A correct revolutionary approach to these struggles would be to see them as necessary for the further consolidation of the national democratic revolution as our direct route to socialism. Characterisations of the state can have the consequence of either leading to calls for immediately smashing the state (a matter not on the cards at the moment, unless we are truly infantile) or simply to disengage the working class from such critical struggles both inside and outside of the state! Or even worse, to seek to narrowly position the working class as an opposition to government.

The SACP must, in a principled manner, critique all notions that see the character of the South African state as a 'fixed given' – a bourgeois or a predator state – rather than a contested terrain. This has the consequence of demobilising the working class in important struggles to contest and change the character of the state, as a necessary component in the struggle for socialism. Such postures for instances blinds us to the very real possibilities and openings for deepening the NDR. By their very nature, such postures are in fact tantamount to the abandonment of the national democratic revolution, and take us down the

route of failed ultra-left, infantile experiments.

It is often the failure to recognise the contested nature of the state that leads to simplistic characterisations of the state and the failure to exploit working class power to build a developmental state. Failure to properly characterise the state and properly appreciate the main content of the class struggle in the evolution of the national democratic revolution can lead to wrong strategic and tactical choices on the part of the working class. It is also important to properly grasp the threats to the national democratic revolution at all times, rather than to equate these threats to a national democratic revolution that is no longer on track.

This brings us back to an important question of what is the national democratic revolution, and what is the main content of this revolution at this point in time? The NDR is not a socialist revolution-in-waiting, but a terrain on which to struggle to create a momentum for and the capacity for socialism in the here and now. Conceptualising the NDR as a 'socialist revolution-in-waiting' is tantamount to waiting for socialism to come like the Gautrain at a station, rather than building working class power to deepen and consolidate that national democratic revolution as our most direct route to socialism. Such postures either demobilise the working class or position it as an opposition to the state. Indeed the working class can both work both the state *and* at the same time oppose some of its stances, guided by our goal of consolidating and deepening the NDR.

It is for these reasons that our MTV provides the best guide to a principled working class approach to the current struggles going forward.

The fact that it is the working class that has struggled for and won the space for a developmental state, and in fact won over large sections of our own movement to this concept, is a victory we need to build upon rather than to abandon to the new tendency or the liberals. While progressive forces fiddle with wider tactical inconsistencies, the liberal offensive and capital are trying hard to occupy that space and reduce our struggle to constitutionalism instead of a revolutionary struggle to consolidate the NDR.

Our MTV therefore correctly enjoins us to build working class influence and hegemony in all key sites of power, including the state. The most critical question is how we harmonise the mass power of the working class to support, strengthen and direct progressive state policies to achieve the key priorities of our revolution. It is the combination of working class power both within and outside the state that will act as a key lever to consolidate the national democratic revolution. Seemingly, it is this tactical positioning that is causing confusion among some within the ranks of both our Party (albeit less so) and Cosatu. It is a failure to go beyond the state whose government was controlled by the 1996 class project, to a state whose government is controlled by forces we ourselves propelled into power, operating under the Polokwane mandate. Failure to understand this will hand our very own victories to our class detractors and enemies

The economy

The SACP has correctly characterised the South African economy as being characterised by a semi-colonial growth path, premised on export of minerals and

importation of manufactured goods. Its growth spurts have largely been driven by an unsustainable rise in domestic consumption by the middle classes and export of minerals mainly to China, Brazil and India.

The capitalist class has also embarked on a sustained campaign of restructuring the workplace to undermine the many progressive labour laws secured through decades of working class struggles. This includes outsourcing, casualisation and now labour brokerage. In the wake of the current global capitalist recession, which seems to be on the throes of another deeper crisis, the capitalist bosses have escalated the mechanisation of the workplace thus throwing even more workers into the poverty of structural unemployment. All this has weakened the bargaining power of the organised working class, fragmented it and threatened to weaken it further.

The response of government to this crisis, as well as an attempt to break with the endless economic cycles of a semi-colonial growth path, is the New Growth Path. As the SACP we have correctly grasped this Path as marking an important paradigm shift away from the neo-liberal path of the 1996 class project to a growth trajectory in which the state plays a central and leading role. The New Growth Path document is not perfect, but nevertheless provides an important platform through which to build a more developmental and responsive economy for our country.

Despite the setbacks of the organised working class, it is still a powerful force in the economy, whose muscle, properly directed, can still play an important part in redirecting our economy and transforming the current growth path.

Between the consumption path of

our economy and the export of raw material, the manufacturing sector has been hugely haemorrhaging in our country. This decline in the manufacturing sector has also been fostered by the neo-liberal and narrow BEE path government pursued prior to 2009, in the process privileging the financial sector over building the productive capacity of our domestic economy.

Arising out of this, a key obstacle to creating a new growth path, is the nature of our macro-economic policies that have not substantially changed from their trajectory under the 1996 class project. The jobs drivers of the NGP have already identified as manufacturing, fiscal and monetary policies. The suffocating role played by the financial sector as critical issues that must be addressed.

As we posed the question in relation to the working class and the state, similarly the most critical question facing the working class is how it uses its power in the economy to remove all the key obstacles to breaking with our job shedding semi-colonial growth path, in partnership with the state. In other words how we use working class power in the economy to drive our economic objectives, rather than lamenting on the sidelines.

The social structure of the South African economy since 1994 has changed, but a lot still remains the same. Apart from a small black section of the bourgeoisie, and rapid growth of a layer of black civil servants, the racial and gender composition of the managerial strata in our economy has changed very little. As Marxist-Leninists we must not only check on the gender and colour of the managerial corps in our economy, but also agree on the kind of agenda we

need to be advancing on the economic front. We need a managerial cadre that properly grasps the direction we would like our economy to take.

Despite the increased numbers of black faces especially in the public sector, we need to ask: have we produced a rent-seeking petty bourgeoisie and professional class, whose focus is more on advancing on to the bigger stakes of capital accumulation, than on driving a developmental agenda? Judging by the behaviour of the BMF, the picture does not look rosy at all. It is also a fact that middle management in our economy is still dominated by white males with some marginal increase in the participation of white females.

The black working class remains largely unskilled, and at best semi-skilled, coupled with an aging white artisan stratum.

The above are a reflection of a BEE policy that has been narrowly focused on shareholding with no significant emphasis on skilling the working class. Even the massive skills development resources set aside through the skills levy system have themselves been consumed by a rent-seeking professional class of mainly white consultants, worsening skills shortages in our economy. Unfortunately our organised working class has not prioritised skills development for the working class. Instead, some are being co-opted into a skills development system that has reproduced an unskilled black working class. A skilled working class is central in building working class power in the economy and the workplace. In fact, one glaring feature of the colonial character of our economy is the racialised and patriarchal labour force.

Building working class power in the economy must also include the transfor-

mation of the labour market, not only to represent our demographics, important as this is, but principally to skill the working class as part of a job-creating effort.

The struggle for a living wage must integrally involve intensifying skills development for the working class. While we must reject the slave wages being paid to unskilled and semi-skilled workers, there is a close relationship between a skilled working class and a living wage. Skills development must therefore become an integral component of working class struggles in the economy and the workplace.

The SACP, working with the progressive trade union movement, must also intensify the struggle for an increase in the social wage (housing subsidy, affordable transport, new human settlements, the National Health Insurance and access to both basic and higher education). In joining the Cosatu living wage campaign it is critical that we also place a better social wage at the centre of these struggles.

In the coming months, the SACP needs to revitalise its campaign for the transformation of the financial sector. This campaign has become even more significant now in the light of a new growth path, especially on how to mobilise resources both in the private and public financial sectors for investment into a job creating and productive economy. While we must not lose sight of the consumer issues in the financial sector (access to banking, etc), we must broaden this campaign to link up with the broader struggles to transform the semi-colonial character of our economy.

The economic struggles of the working class in the current phase of the NDR should perhaps involve a combination

of struggling for a radical implementation of a new growth path, including the tripartite struggles for a living wage, a social wage and skills development.

However, it is essential that we also understand and deal with the co-optive nature of the capitalist economy. South Africa's capitalist class has more than one-and-a-half centuries of experience of how to influence and co-opt not just government, but leadership in various other formations. Clements Kadalie's expulsion of communists from the ICU in the mid-1920s was as a direct result of his co-option by liberal capitalist interests who were fearful of a powerful and progressive trade union movement representing black workers.

The danger of co-option by capitalist interests in a society like ours is not only a challenge facing government leaders. It is a problem that equally faces leadership of political organisations and all of other significant leaders, including the trade union movement. A one-sided emphasis on co-option of politicians in government may blind us into how in the history of our movement many leaders, inside and outside of our movement and government, have been co-opted by capitalism. The dangers for the trade union movement are not less significant given the fact that, from the standpoint of capitalists, trade unions today control billions of Rands in pension, provident fund and many other insurance business interests that are a target of capitalism.

It is a fact that some of our trade unions today are seriously split and weakened as a result of the resources in the hands of the trade unions, not least in union investment companies. The struggle for building working class power in the state and economy must involve a principled struggle against

'business unionism' and the capture of union leaders by capitalist interests. A key bulwark against business unionism is to strengthen worker democracy and worker leadership in the trade union movement.

The community

Our MTV identifies the community as one of the key sites of power in which we should struggle for working class hegemony. The "community" (or more precisely, communities in urban and rural townships) was the key site of popular power in the semi-insurrectionary uprisings of the late 1970s, through the 1980s and early 1990s. At present, however, this site of struggle has been largely abandoned by all of our formations. Of the Alliance formations, the SACP almost alone during our Red October campaigns has been active, but even we have battled to sustain a mobilising presence in these key sites of popular power.

This relative political vacuum (apart from election-time campaigning) in a site that is undergoing immense strains as a result of persisting crises of unemployment, poverty and inequality is a ticking time bomb vulnerable to all manner of messianic, xenophobic and demagogic influences. At any time of day during the week, large numbers of people (particularly youth) are just hanging about.

It is absolutely imperative that, as the Alliance, we work together, building our local structures around concrete campaigns that take up issues that directly affect communities. At the most recent Alliance secretariat we agreed in principle to take up two Alliance campaigns that will be localised at branch level – a campaign around schools and

against corruption. The objective will be to empower communities to be active protagonists in transforming failing schools, and in compelling transparency at the local level on municipal tendering, amongst other things.

Apart from using this campaign to rebuild local civic structures, and to transform the nature of ANC branches (from an unhealthy focus on lists and tenders) – an Alliance PoA focused on township localities will also help Cosatu and its affiliates to escape the trap of a narrow focus on the economic wage (which affects their own members) to a broader *social wage* focus (issues like housing, public transport, crime and schools) that impacts upon the broader working class, including the rural and urban poor.

**Our immediate programme of action:
Building people's (economic) power on
the terrain of parliamentary politics**

All the above theoretical and programmatic perspectives must cohere into an intensified struggle for people's power, with the working class at the heart. Building people's power must be about building working class hegemony in all key sites of power, with a particular attention on the state, the economy and people's power in society as a whole.

Mass activism led by the SACP in particular, and our liberation movement in general, has been informed by the need to build people's power from below. We have refused, and still resist, to being drawn into liberal struggle and notions to build a 'civil society' movement. These have often been movements of elites directed at weakening the majoritarian power of the liberation movement. Of course, the SACP must engage in all terrains of struggles, including the NGO

and other 'non-state' sectors. But our engagement outside of the state, in the space defined as "civil society" is aimed at building people's power, representing both the common struggles of all the workers and the poor, and the legitimate sectoral struggles of the majority of our people, in residential areas, in the workplace, in the households, for clinics and for better education. Most of the people that the liberal civil society movement claims to represent are our own constituents – the working class and the poor. We need to reach out to them and mobilise them as part of our commitment to re-build the mass democratic movement and strong organs of peoples power.

Through its nine decades of struggle the SACP has sought to build working class and people's power from below: street committees, a progressive civic movement, a co-operative movement, community policing forums, a shop stewards' movement on the shop-floor (including Cosatu locals), truly progressive youth and women's movements of the workers and the poor, and generally a people-driven movement representing the aspirations of the ordinary workers and the poor of our country.

In all these struggles we must place at the centre the clarion call of the Freedom Charter: the people shall govern. Our campaigns must not be calls from above, but must be owned, resonate and be driven by the people themselves.

Through the SACP's (and working class) location in various sites of struggle, we must ensure that all these become tributaries of one overarching working class struggle, to consolidate and deepen the national democratic revolution as our most immediate route to a socialist South Africa. We are duty bound, as communists, to ensure that

we take co-responsibility for our revolution, without sacrificing the independence of the SACP.

The principal terrain on which to deepen and consolidate the national democratic revolution in the current period, and indeed for some time to come, is that of parliamentary electoral politics and struggle. This is not only the terrain that faces the working class in South Africa, but globally as well. Parliamentary elections in multi-party democracies have gained ground and even hegemony, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. This is a reality that as communists we will have to grapple with, and seek to build working class power and hegemony this terrain.

To acknowledge and understand the reality does not mean that as communists we abandon our analyses and critique of liberal multi-democratic dispensations. These are often won by well-resourced and funded political parties that often represent the interests of the bourgeoisie or alliances with a variety of elites. There is also always a danger that in such dispensations the mass and activist character of progressive parties and organisations are sacrificed on the altar of narrow parliamentarism. However in approaching these realities, we must be guided by what Lenin said on ‘forms of organisation’ in 1906:

“Let us begin from the beginning. What are the fundamental demands which every Marxist should make of an examination of the question of forms of struggle? In the first place, Marxism differs from all primitive forms of socialism by not binding the movement to any one particular form of struggle. It recognises the most varied forms of struggle; and it does not “concoct” them, but only

generalises, organises, gives conscious expression to those forms of struggle of the revolutionary classes which arise of themselves in the course of the movement. Absolutely hostile to all abstract formulas and to all doctrinaire recipes, Marxism demands an attentive attitude to the mass struggle in progress, which, as the movement develops, as the class-consciousness of the masses grows, as economic and political crises become acute, continually gives rise to new and more varied methods of defence and attack. Marxism, therefore, positively does not reject any form of struggle. Under no circumstances does Marxism confine itself to the forms of struggle possible and in existence at the given moment only, recognising as it does that new forms of struggle, unknown to the participants of the given period, inevitably arise as the given social situation, changes. In this respect Marxism learns, if we may so express it, from mass practice, and makes no claim whatever to teach the masses forms of struggle invented by “systematisers” in the seclusion of their studies. We know –said Kautsky, for instance, when examining the forms of social revolution –that the coming crisis will introduce new forms of struggle that we are now unable to foresee.

“In the second place, Marxism demands an absolutely historical examination of the question of the forms of struggle. To treat this question apart from the concrete historical situation betrays a failure to understand the rudiments of dialectical materialism. At different stages of economic evolution, depending on differences in political, national-cultural, living and other conditions, different forms of struggle come to the fore and become the principal forms of struggle; and in connection with this, the second-

ary, auxiliary forms of struggle undergo change in their turn. To attempt to answer yes or no to the question whether any particular means of struggle should be used, without making a detailed examination of the concrete situation of the given movement at the given stage of its development, means completely to abandon the Marxist position.

“These are the two principal theoretical propositions by which we must be guided. The history of Marxism in Western Europe provides an infinite number of examples corroborating what has been said. European Social-Democracy at the present time regards parliamentarism and the trade union movement as the principal forms of struggle; it recognised insurrection in the past, and is quite prepared to recognise it, should conditions change, in the future – despite the opinion of bourgeois liberals like the Russian Cadets and the Bezzaglavtsi. Social-Democracy in the seventies rejected the general strike as a social panacea, as a means of overthrowing the bourgeoisie at one stroke by non-political means – but Social-Democracy fully recognises the mass political strike (especially after the experience of Russia in 1905) as one of the methods of struggle essential under certain conditions. Social-Democracy recognised street barricade fighting in the forties, rejected it for definite reasons at the end of the nineteenth century, and expressed complete readiness to revise the latter view and to admit the expediency of barricade fighting after the experience of Moscow, which, in the words of K Kautsky, initiated new tactics of barricade fighting.”

The above does not necessarily mean that new conditions may not arise that may call for other forms of struggle to deepen the NDR as our most direct

route to socialism. Similarly it does not mean that we abandon the principle of other forms of struggle as required by different periods. As pointed out above, struggling to consolidate the NDR as our direct route to socialism is not a *fait accompli*, but it is something that has to be struggled for through a mobilised and politically conscious working class. Such struggles will have to be informed both by the current terrain of struggle and other forms of struggle that are possible in the current period going forward.

The terrain of electoral parliamentary politics has for more than a century been the political ground for liberals and their democratic experiments, including the social democratic parties in many other parts of the world. It is a form of struggle that has, since the triumph of the Russian revolution in 1917, often been despised, condemned and relegated to irrelevance by most 20th century Marxist-Leninist and communist parties; often rightly so as the politics of the bourgeoisie and its various fractions, whose outcome has often been determined by money rather than the interests of the working class, have tended to be dominant.

Indeed, the terrain of electoral parliamentary politics has also been contested by many communist parties, especially in Western Europe, with some significant gains being made by communists especially circa the Second World War. Between the 1920s and the 1980s, communist parties in Europe have often been in coalition governments with significant electoral muscle. Often this electoral participation had been condemned by other communist parties, especially in the former socialist Eastern Europe as a struggle doomed to failure given the dominance of bourgeois po-

litical parties in such electoral ‘democracies’ – with such politics often derisively condemned as ‘Euro-communism’.

It must however be noted that as from the 1980s, with the rise and consolidation of neo-liberalism globally, communist and left parties have suffered heavy defeats, especially in Europe, to the extent that now there is a spectre of the rise of a right-wing, (neo) fascist movements in many centres of advanced capitalism.

Perhaps the most significant advances made by left forces under parliamentary democracy in recent times have been over the last decade in Latin America. Left-wing governments have been voted into power in many countries, leading to significant advances in addressing the socio-economic conditions of the workers and the poor, and holding a promise of more humane alternatives to the barbarism of capitalism and its current neo-liberal policies. Of particular importance with the victories in Latin America is that such advances have not been led by communist or leftwing political parties as such, but by coalitions and alliances of usually sector-based mass organisations. We have indeed in the past posed a question around the sustainability of such advances in the absence of strong communist or leftwing political parties.

In the 1980s, communist parties in India had made enormous gains through electoral participation to the extent of being part of national coalition governments and even running states in that country.

It is therefore imperative for the SACP to study closely the experiences of left parties in parliamentary politics globally, both in instances where advances have been made and in those where there have been losses. In particular we

would need to study the European, Indian and Latin American experiences closely to better inform our own strategies in the South African (and indeed African) context.

One of the most immediate tasks of the SACP, an indeed our entire liberation movement led by the ANC, is that of defending the national democratic character of our democracy rather than slipping into liberal democracy. One of the principal sites of struggle for the SACP and the working class is that of fighting against a liberal takeover of the direction of our constitutional democracy. It is a challenge of imposing the national democratic character of our revolution over liberal conceptions and practices in our democracy. What we refer to as the liberal offensive against the majoritarian character of our democracy is ultimately aimed at securing South Africa as a liberal democracy.

An uncomfortable but necessary question communists globally will have to answer today is whether, given the current principal terrains of struggle, there lessons we need to learn from ‘Euro-communism’, and indeed, in our case, from the history of electoral participation by the SACP in South African parliamentary politics both before and after 1994? And, similarly, whether there lessons we need to learn from our heroic mass struggles against apartheid, between the 1940s and the 1980s, that can decisively advance our struggle for socialism in the current political terrain?

It is therefore important that a large part of the work of the Commission on State Power between now and our 13th Congress must focus on experiences of communist and left parties in parliamentary elections. In all our interna-

tional engagements from now onwards, we must seek to engage our fraternal parties on this question, on the relationship between the party and state in such conditions, and the relationship and balance between electoral and mass struggles.

One of the most important challenges for the SACP and the working class as whole in the current period is that of ensuring that parliamentary politics are indeed underpinned, driven and buttressed by, and dialectically linked to, building people's power from below through sustained and focused mass struggles and mobilisation. Such mass and political struggles must also take advantage of an ANC government that is in power, such that the working class struggles in our country are waged both inside and outside the state, and also make use of the resources and opportunities generated by an ANC-led government to assist the workers and the poor.

To talk about building people's power from below must not be confused with a call to a mechanical return to the mass struggles of the 1980s. While we can learn much from those struggles, they cannot be recreated today in the manner in which they emerged in the 1980s.

In today's conditions, the principal platform on which to wage mass struggle and build people's power from below must be to mobilise the workers and the poor of our country to wage a struggle for their genuine economic emancipation through, among others, the mobilisation of resources in the hands of the organised working class and the poor to decisively change our economic trajectory. There can be no sustainable mass working class movement that is not premised on the immediate change and

improvements to the socio-economic conditions of the overwhelming majority of our people!

The most immediate terrain on which to build people's power, with the working class at the head, is that of a principled struggles for a social wage in our country, especially the use of workers' pension and provident funds, to create a housing subsidy and new human settlements for the working class; access to higher education; for the progressive implementation of the National Health Insurance schemes; and for safe, accessible and affordable public transport. As we have said, in supporting Cosatu's living wage campaign we must bring these matters to the fore, so they are firmly incorporated into current working class struggles.

Most critically for us, it is important that we therefore resuscitate our financial sector campaign, but now much more concretely connected to the struggle for a new growth trajectory in our country. Our focus must be both on the public and private financial sectors, and on renewed mobilisation and the call for a second financial sector summit to kick-start this campaign.

Closely related to this, must be the mobilisation of the resources directly in the hands of the working class, as part of building working class power in the economy. This must be a renewed effort to form workers and community co-operative banks that improve savings in our economy and, much more critically, support the many other economic activities of working class communities, not least other types of co-operatives.

Our approach must be informed by the fact that building working class power in the economy is not only about the formal capitalist sector and its la-

bour market, but also about mobilising resources in the hands of the working class and communities, not as mere survivalist activities on the margins of the mainstream capitalist economy, but to grow these into significant economic activities.

This will assist in moving away from abstract economic debates about changing the economic lives of the workers and the poor, towards concrete activities that begins to change the lives of our communities for the better in the here and now. It is through such activities that we can expose the demagoguery of the ‘new tendency’ and the hollowness of the liberal offensive, demonstrating that neither can change the lives of our people for the better.

The key challenge for this Central Committee is to translate this into a few concrete campaigns that can be pulled together for our 2011 Red October Campaign. It is important that such campaigns are linked to transforming our townships into centres of working class economic activities, and for our rural based districts and branches to link these to the pressing challenge of rural development.

In addition the Alliance has decided to pursue two campaigns over the coming period – to make our schools functional and to intensify a joint campaign against corruption. Our SACP structures will have to play an important role in this regard. In relation to the campaign against corruption, it is important that all our campaigns are underpinned by this.

A critical terrain of struggle that must buttress all our mass struggles must be the intensification of the battle of ideas. A number of related activities need to be undertaken in this regard.

- **Firstly**, we need to intensify political education within the party cadre, especially at district and branch level – our commissariat programme. But we need to extend this cadre development to include some critical skills that are lacking in the Party, especially reading and writing skills as well as project management. These skills are vital in the professionalisation of the SACP as a vanguard Party.

- **Secondly**, we must deepen our joint political schools with the trade union movement.

- **Thirdly**, the SACP needs to move closer to some of the worker colleges that are in existence. This is a task that must be taken in earnest at national level, and by relevant provincial secretaries.

- **Fourthly**, we need to make the war-room a permanent activity and reproduce these in all our provinces.

The SACP will now have to enter a new phase of building relations and linkages with progressive think-tanks and research organisations to influence these structures and ensure that our own cadres become part of these institutions. We cannot postpone this task any further. The current political environment presents possibilities for us to make real breakthroughs. All it requires are consistent efforts, and perhaps to identify progressive individuals in such institutions and start by convening meetings with them, followed by provincial engagements.

The three principal, but deeply inter-related, tasks are:

- **let us get even closer to the working class and the poor,**

- **let us make our campaigns more visible by taking them to higher levels, and**

- **let us intensify the battle of ideas.** ★

AUGUST CC

Statement of the Central Committee

On Sunday 28 August the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party issued the following media statement

The SACP Central Committee (CC) met in Johannesburg over the weekend of 26-28 August 2011. The CC discussed a comprehensive political report on current national and international realities. The CC also discussed various sectoral reports on health, the manufacturing sector, public transport, and land reform. Finally, the CC discussed a comprehensive organisational report and reached decisions on the Party's forthcoming Red October Campaign.

The centrality of a principled and disciplined Alliance unity

While the SACP has no intention of interfering with internal processes within the ANC, the CC nonetheless warmly welcomed moves by the leadership of the ANC to assert authority, and to reaffirm the core principles of our ANC-led movement – non-racialism, non-sexism, and a respect for organisational democracy and discipline. Together with our Alliance partners the SACP has a collective responsibility to advance and defend the revolutionary morality of our movement.

The CC warmly appreciated the statement released last week by Cosatu's CEC, and in particular Cosatu's reaffirmation of the statement from our bilateral that "the

unity of the SACP and Cosatu constituted the bedrock for advancing, consolidating and defending the national democratic revolution, the most direct path to a socialist SA based on meeting social needs and not private profits".

The CC agreed that, while remaining vigilant about the dangers of factionalism and indiscipline, it was important for the SACP not to become overly inward-looking at the expense of keeping our focus upon the persisting structural crises of unemployment, poverty and inequality that afflict the broad working class in South African. In this context the Alliance secretariat has reaffirmed our common programme of action with a particular focus in the coming period on joint common action at the branch local level focused on empowering communities to adopt schools in distress, and to address the scourge of corruption.

In line with the Alliance Secretariat programme, the CC agreed that one of the core themes of this year's SACP Red October Campaign will be education – not just schools, but also the wider challenges of skills and training, with a particular focus on the girl child.

The SACP continues to support Cosatu and its affiliates in their struggle for a liv-

ing wage, and we salute those affiliates that have recently led successful actions. We call for a speedy resolution of the municipal workers strike. The CC joined Cosatu in condemning undisciplined action in the course of the Samwu strike, and particularly attacks on street traders in Cape Town. Actions like these can de-legitimise just struggles, and can divide the broad working class and popular forces. We call upon the trade union leadership to act decisively in such instances.

A common Alliance programme will allow us to work with the organised working class in struggles around social wage issues (including education, health-care, public transport and housing) that affect a wider range of workers and the unemployed urban and rural poor.

As part of empowering popular forces to practically wage struggles for a social wage, another core component of this year's Red October campaign, we will take up a struggle to build a cooperative banks movement.

Challenges in the health sector – towards an NHI

The CC received an update report on challenges in the health sector and the recently released government National Health Insurance policy paper from Minister of Health, Cde Aaron Motsoaledi. The CC welcomed progress that is being made towards the progressive roll out of a solidarity-based NHI that will help to de-commodify the basic human right to health care for all. The CC however expressed concern that in the draft policy the idea of a “multi-payer” principle has been smuggled in.

The CC agreed that while an NHI will help to revitalise an often ailing, poorly-managed and demoralised public health care sector, it was also imperative to im-

mediately and urgently address existing problems before the roll-out itself. These problems include inappropriate appointments at senior management level in many public hospitals, neglect of facilities, and widespread demoralisation among health-care workers.

At the same time, it would be wrong not to note the unsustainable current trajectory of health-care provision in private health-care. Essentially, we are seeing the increasing Americanisation of private health care in South Africa. There are diminishing numbers of South Africans who can afford medical aid and those who are on medical aid frequently find their cover running out long before the end of the year. Medical aid schemes are themselves under serious pressure, and many ordinary GPs are also battling to keep their practices sustainable. The key beneficiaries in all of this are private speculative investors in the increasingly oligopolistic private hospital business and the highly paid specialists who occupy rooms in these facilities.

Another worrying development is the sudden boom in health-care litigation with the attendant impact on health-care providers' increasing insurance costs, preemptive over treatment of patients, with a further impact on ballooning treatment costs. Much of this recent Americanising trend in the health litigation has been driven by unscrupulous legal firms whose multi-billion rand businesses have been squeezed by recent amendments to the Road Accident Fund and the impending establishment of a no-fault Road Accident Benefit scheme.

Grave threats of increasing de-industrialisation

The CC discussed a report by CC member and Minister of Trade and Industry, Cde Rob Davies: South Africa's de-indus-

trialisation threat and the need for a decisive set of policy responses. The report noted that manufacturing has led almost all cases of sustained, high post-1945 growth – from Brazil, China, through Japan, Malaysia and Singapore. By contrast, the manufacturing sector in South Africa has lagged seriously, and has recently suffered the double-whammy of currency overvaluation and the impact of the global capitalist crisis. Manufacturing employment remains well below 2008 levels in South Africa. Growth in South Africa remains unsustainably consumption-led, with finance, insurance, real estate and business services making a disproportionate contribution to GDP.

This imbalance reflects continued structural imbalances within our growth path, and the over-weening influence of the financial sector on our macro-economic policies. Faced with the prospect of a persisting global capitalist crisis and the possibility of a double-dip recession, it is absolutely imperative that government reviews macro-economic policy to find ways to address our over-valued rand through, among other things, transaction taxes. In addition, and following the example of Brazil, for instance, we need to release many more targeted resources to assist ailing sectors of our manufacturing sector.

All of these challenges also point to the possibility (and necessity) of striking tactical alliances between government, working class formations and capital in the manufacturing sector. The assumption that the finance sector represents the interests of capital in general is misplaced.

The struggle for public transport

The CC further received a report from deputy general secretary and deputy minister of Transport, Cde Jeremy Cronin, on challenges and progress made in the struggle for affordable, safe and accessible

public transport in our towns, cities and rural areas. The CC saluted the role of the SACP in Gauteng province for joining Alliance partners and others in criticising the impending e-tolling on Phase A1 of the Gauteng Freeway Improvement Project (GFIP). The CC noted that the R20-billion public debt on this first phase of GFIP was yet another example of massive spending on wrong priorities. The ostensible rationale for the GFIP project was to address congestion challenges in Gauteng. However, internationally, it is widely recognised that the expansion of freeways seldom resolves congestion challenges, and often, through a process known as “induced demand” actually worsens congestion in the short to medium term. The provision and prioritisation of public transport, the shifting of freight from road to rail, and a concerted effort to build more compact towns and cities are much more effective means to addressing congestion.

Apart from this, the CC agreed that spending over R20-billion on freeway improvement when there were much more pressing transport infrastructure challenges was problematic.

A much greater focus needs to be placed on rural roads, township roads, and public transport infrastructure. In this regard, the CC noted that only 2% of the vehicles currently travelling on Phase A1 of GFIP were public transport vehicles. The class bias of this R20-billion expenditure is all the more apparent if we remember that only 31% of South African households have access to a car.

The CC agreed that the public outrage directed against GFIP should be used to halt any further phases of GFIP. It also agreed that it should be used as an opportunity to mobilise a much wider popular struggle, particularly at the local level, for the prioritising of the rolling out of inte-

grated public transport systems and infrastructure that has a real impact on the lives of millions of workers and urban and rural poor.

Draft Green Paper on Land Reform

CC member and deputy minister for Rural Development and Land Reform, Cde Thulas Nxesi, briefed the CC on government's Draft Green Paper on Land Reform, released earlier this month. The CC welcomed the strategic thrust of the Green Paper, notably its emphasis on a reinvigorated land reform programme to de-racialise our rural economy, breaking with the past without significantly disrupting agricultural production and food security. The Green Paper correctly strikes a dynamic balance between the imperative of redistribution and productive work, emphasising that redistribution that does not generate sustainable livelihoods, employment and incomes must be avoided.

The CC welcomed the proposal to establish a Land Management Commission and a high-powered institution, a Land Valuer-General to overcome many speculative distortions and corrupt practices. The CC also agreed that, rather than complaining about the Property Clause in the Bill of Rights, popular forces, including government, should show much greater political will in using the considerable space provided by this Clause.

As a welcome judgment last week in the Constitutional Court implicitly recognised, the Property Clause is not a traditional liberal property clause – it allows for expropriation “for a public purpose or in the public interest”. While compensation is required, that compensation does not have to be based purely on market value – but must have regard to:

- “the current use of the property” – does this not impact upon absentee land-

lords, or speculative property investors, or water-guzzling golf estates?;

- “the history of the acquisition and use of the property” – does this not require us to consider colonial dispossession, Group Areas removals, land used by the apartheid army, or hurried privatisation before the democratic breakthrough of 1994?; and

- “the extent of direct state investment and subsidy in the acquisition and beneficial capital improvement of the property” – does this not have a direct bearing on apartheid-era and post-1994 subsidisation of Sasol, or of white farms, or of former Iscor property?

As the ANC leadership moves to assert its authority, it is also critical that we draw a clear line between the great majority within our ANC-led alliance and those forces who talk recklessly about the rule of law and our progressive Constitution. Failure to draw a clear line between ourselves and the demagogues plays directly into the hands of a range of anti-majoritarian conservative liberals, from Afriforum, through the FW De Klerk Foundation, to the DA, who now pose as the “true defenders” of our Bill of Rights and Constitution. They do this by dumbing down the Constitution into a narrow check-and-balance watchdog over the executive and a defender of existing powers and privileges. In fact, our Bill of Rights and Constitution represent a clarion call for radical transformation.

The CC resolved that another core component of our Red October campaign will be to build local people's committees for comprehensive rural development, with a particular emphasis on building a women's rural movement.

The anti-corruption campaign

CC agreed to take forward our anti-cor-

ruption campaign on the ground. In particular we will seek, in the course of our Red October campaign, to give greater practical content to this campaign. The “tenderisation” of the state, including the local state, has become a major source of corrupt behaviour. Increasingly the state has abandoned its responsibility to be an active doer working closely with the energies and aspirations of popular forces – instead, state responsibilities are tendered-out with a great deal of rent-seeking and corrupt behaviour. As part of a corrective to this problem the SACP will be campaigning for a massive expansion of the expanded public works and community works programmes. Why package everything into a tender? Why should the local state and local popular capacities not be harnessed jointly so that government and communities work together to build their own housing, their own schools, maintain their own roads and infrastructure? The struggle against corruption is not just a moral struggle, but also needs to address systemic features in the state, and increasingly give ordinary citizens a productive role.

Libya

The CC strongly condemned NATO’s illegal and aggressive role in Libya, driven by a regime change and a predatory economic agenda. NATO deliberately abused and flouted the spirit and letter of the no-fly-zone UN Security Council vote 1973, going far beyond the provisions of that vote. The CC notes that in the course of the unfolding Arab Spring, our South African government has consistently supported the democratic rights of the people in the face of autocratic governments. We

welcome this stance.

The CC condemned grave human rights abuses that appear to have been committed by both sides in the conflict and agreed that any sustainable way forward towards peace, stability and democracy will need to be guided by the AU road map championed by the South African government.

Swaziland

The CC noted our government’s agreement to transfer the first tranche of Swaziland’s Sacu finances with certain conditions. While appreciating that even greater socio-economic collapse in Swaziland is not guaranteed to produce a progressive outcome, and may well have a negative impact on our own country, the SACP is disappointed that much more stringent requirements were not placed upon this so-called “bail-out”. In particular, it is outrageous that the banning of political parties persists in Swaziland, and that there is still no serious commitment to a well-defined transitional process to democracy is in place.

The CC noted growing worker and popular activism in Lesotho, Malawi and Botswana and resolved to support all progressive movements in our region seeking to defend the interests of the workers and the poor.

The CC welcomes moves in the United Nations to recognise the state of Palestine as a full member of the international community of nations and the UN.

The CC wishes the Springboks well in the forthcoming World Rugby Cup campaign, and congratulates Banyana Banyana on their victory against Ethiopia. ★



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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased from 10.5 million to 12.5 million, and the number of people in the public sector who are employed in health care has increased from 2.5 million to 3.5 million (Department of Health 2000).

There are a number of reasons for the increase in the number of people employed in the public sector. One reason is that the public sector has become a major employer in the UK. Another reason is that the public sector has become a major employer in the health care sector. A third reason is that the public sector has become a major employer in the social care sector. A fourth reason is that the public sector has become a major employer in the education sector.

The increase in the number of people employed in the public sector has led to a number of changes in the way that the public sector is organized. One change is that the public sector has become more decentralized. Another change is that the public sector has become more market-oriented. A third change is that the public sector has become more customer-oriented. A fourth change is that the public sector has become more performance-oriented.

The increase in the number of people employed in the public sector has also led to a number of changes in the way that the public sector is funded. One change is that the public sector has become more dependent on government funding. Another change is that the public sector has become more dependent on private funding. A third change is that the public sector has become more dependent on user fees. A fourth change is that the public sector has become more dependent on donations.

The increase in the number of people employed in the public sector has also led to a number of changes in the way that the public sector is managed. One change is that the public sector has become more professionalized. Another change is that the public sector has become more bureaucratic. A third change is that the public sector has become more hierarchical. A fourth change is that the public sector has become more centralized.

The increase in the number of people employed in the public sector has also led to a number of changes in the way that the public sector is evaluated. One change is that the public sector has become more subject to external evaluation. Another change is that the public sector has become more subject to internal evaluation. A third change is that the public sector has become more subject to self-evaluation. A fourth change is that the public sector has become more subject to peer evaluation.

The increase in the number of people employed in the public sector has also led to a number of changes in the way that the public sector is perceived. One change is that the public sector has become more respected. Another change is that the public sector has become more valued. A third change is that the public sector has become more trusted. A fourth change is that the public sector has become more admired.

The increase in the number of people employed in the public sector has also led to a number of changes in the way that the public sector is viewed. One change is that the public sector has become more visible. Another change is that the public sector has become more accessible. A third change is that the public sector has become more transparent. A fourth change is that the public sector has become more accountable.

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