



# Bua Komanisi!

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SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

## SACP 2015 May Day message to the South African working class



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# Let's unite and reclaim our democratic breakthrough from monopoly capital

## SACP 2015 May Day message to the South African working class

May Day 2015 is being marked in a South Africa and in a world in which the working class is under attack. We also remember that seventy years ago on 2nd of May 1945 the victorious Red Army defeated fascism.

Yet today we live in a world in which capitalism's unceasing war against the proletariat is being waged with intensified aggression.

Here in South Africa the triple crisis of poverty, inequality and unemployment for millions still persists.

On this May Day it is absolutely critical that South

Africa's working class – and particularly its best organised sectors within COSATU - understand with absolute clarity what the nature of the problem is, and therefore what needs to be done.

In the capitalist controlled media endless attempts are launched to confuse us, to misdirect us, to turn us against each other, to divide the working class, to fragment our organisations, to separate shop-floor struggles from community struggles.

It is important that together we open our eyes, that we close ranks, and that we advance, deepen and defend our democratic revolution.



### Monopoly capital has hijacked our democratic breakthrough

This past Monday we once again marked South Africa's national Freedom Day. 21 years ago we finally abolished white minority state-rule in our country. But we DIDN'T abolish the capitalist economic system that had been incubated within that white minority rule.

21 years ago, on April 27 1994, millions of South Africans exercised one of the most fundamental democratic rights – the right to vote as equal citizens in the country of their birth. This democratic breakthrough also brought many important constitutional and legislative rights to the working class – a constitutionally entrenched right to organise

and to strike, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Labour Relations Act, and the Employment Equity Act.

However, the defeat of the apartheid state didn't represent the defeat of monopoly capital in our country. It didn't mean the defeat of an especially oppressive capitalist system. It still left Anglo American, De Beers, SASOL, SA Breweries (now SA Breweries Miller), Naspers (which today is threatening to take over and privatize the SABC), Old Mutual, and the big banks dominating our economy.

For monopoly capital – the 1994 democratic breakthrough represented a threat, but also an opportunity.

The threat for South African monopoly capital was that they were now having to deal with a new political reality, with majority rule under the leadership of the ANC and its alliance. They were taking a risk.

For over a century South African monopoly capital had enjoyed the support of white minority regimes. It was the big mining houses and white commercial farms (and not so much, other than being agents, Verwoerd, or Vorster, or PW Botha) that invented the corner-stones of what became apartheid – migrant labour, pass laws and influx control, racial curfews, native reserves (later called Bantustans), mining compounds and the terrible hostel system. You won't find this story being told in most of the anti-majoritarian liberal media, owned still today by the mining houses. Until this year, even in a new democratic South Africa, a statue to one of the pioneers of this barbarous system, Cecil John Rhodes, could still occupy pride of place on a university campus.

Monopoly capital and white minority rule worked hand-in-glove for over a century. Together they oppressed the majority of South Africans. Together they amassed super-profits for themselves, through the racialised super-exploitation of black workers.

But by the 1980s this system had become dysfunctional. The national liberation struggle had grown in strength. The apartheid regime could no longer assure monopoly capital that its private property and profits were secure. The repression of national liberation and working class struggles in South Africa led to a powerful world-wide, anti-apartheid movement. Financial sanctions, economic sanctions, oil sanctions were applied. The profits of South African monopoly capital suffered.

Monopoly capitalists began timidly to test the idea of a negotiated settlement. It was not because they liked the ANC, but because our collective struggle, and their growing isolation forced them in this direction.

Twenty one years ago our struggle finally defeated white minority rule in our country. That was the moment when we should have immediately embarked on a second radical phase of the National Democratic Revolution. In 1994 we should have moved decisively to roll back the monopoly power of the white bourgeoisie. They were off balance at that time.

But for several reasons there was a failure to move decisively at that point. South African monopoly capital was given a breathing space. It was given the time to re-group.

And monopoly capital has not been idle. In response to progressive labour legislation they have actively under-cut our gains through casualization, through labour brokers, through mass retrenchments, through the employment of desperate illegal immigrants.

In response to our new majority-rule ANC-led government's attempts to advance reconstruction and development – South African monopoly capital has launched an investment strike.

Monopoly capital has used the ending of anti-apartheid economic and financial sanctions to run away from our country, disinvesting billions of Rands of surplus created by South African workers. SASOL was once a publicly owned South African company. It is still a company subsidised by all of us every time we buy petrol at the pump. But SASOL is now busy making its biggest investment by far not here in SA – but in Louisiana, in the United States. Most of the major South African monopolies have dual listed – Old Mutual, Investec, Anglo, De Beers, etc. This means that they pay millions of Rands ever year in dividends to foreign investors. ABSA bank is 68 percent owned by foreigners. Monopoly capital has run away from non-racial democracy in South Africa.

Over the past 21 years there has been massive capital flight – reaching some 20% of our GDP in some years. All kinds of tricks are used to maximise monopoly profits and to minimise any responsibility for developing South Africa. There is transfer pricing and mis-invoicing. There is tax evasion, there is the use of tax havens, and there is collusion. Thanks to the work of our democratic government's Competition Commission, we now know that all of the major construction companies in SA colluded to rip-off South Africa of billions of Rands in the run-up to the 2010 World Cup. Most of them have paid admission of guilt fines. We say: This is not enough. A heavy reparations package must be exacted from the colluders. Individual senior executives involved must go to jail.

But why has monopoly capital been so successful in regrouping, in recovering its balance, in hijacking so much of the promise of our 1994 breakthrough?

Part of the explanation is that monopoly capital has often succeeded in infiltrating into our own organisations.

They have used narrow BEE. They have used bribes and all manner of fronting to find entry-points into government departments. They have fostered a class of vultures, the tenderpreneurs.

Monopoly capital – in the shape of the old apartheid, broeder-bond, media giant Naspers and its off-shoot Multi-Choice have even swallowed up what was supposed to be democratic South Africa's public broadcaster – the SABC. They have done this with the connivance, of course, of their bought lackeys in Auckland Park. We say that those in senior positions in the SABC who have lied to parliament, who have lied about their qualifications, who have sold the public broadcaster's archives to Multi-choice, they must be dealt with!

Trade unions control (in theory) vast retirement funds and these have been used to leverage union investment arms. In principle these union financial resources could be used to fund useful things for the working class – like public transport, affordable housing, and improved training opportunities for your children. There are some inspiring examples of union funds being used in this way. However, all too often, these retirement funds and investment arms have been the entry-point for a capitalist agenda to strike into the very heart of the union movement itself.

*This is why on this May Day 2015, as the SACP we say:*

**Defend worker democracy and worker control within our unions!**

**Defend the unity of COSATU. Defend the unity of the working class!**



Let us never under-estimate the global offensive that is being waged by the bosses against trade unions. Here in South Africa the bosses have smelt blood. The difficulties and divisions within COSATU are being deliberately stirred up.

It is important that the organised working class closes ranks. We cannot allow different political agendas to fragment our unions. We can see very clearly how the bosses and the commercial media are happy to promote anyone who causes splits and divisions. They don't care if it's a right-wing vigilante union

like AMCU, or pseudo-ultra-leftists like the current NUMSA leadership clique. They all become overnight heroes in the commercial media.

Opportunism is everywhere. The DA has announced that it is in talks with NUMSA's so-called United Front in Nelson Mandela Bay metro in order to unseat the ANC in next year's local government elections. The Numsa leadership clique is also now talking to the EFF on electoral collaboration, proving what we have long said, that this faction and the EFF are part of the same agenda against our movement.

Those who remain committed to the unity of COSATU are portrayed as uncritical government supporters who want to turn the federation into a so-called "labour desk". So let us all be very clear. As all alliance partners have made it very clear, a "labour desk" COSATU is no good for any of us. The ANC can set up a labour desk if it wants to. But what's the point? What our alliance needs, what the ANC-led government needs, what our country needs is a powerful, militant, independent and progressive trade union movement under the umbrella of COSATU.

A tame, conveyor belt COSATU will simply be outflanked and out-organised by all manner of demagogic pseudo-unionists, left and right.

*The conditions for re-building COSATU and its affiliates are:*

- daily service to members on the shop-floor;
- re-building worker control and worker democracy;
- transparency and clear worker-mandated approaches to union investment funds;
- the defence of the founding principles of COSATU, and especially the principle of one-industry, one-union. The NUMSA leadership clique's free-market approach to recruitment, encouraging competition and rivalry is a recipe for worker division. It feeds worker-on-worker violence as is now happening in a reign of terror at Medupi.

Also critical for re-building COSATU and its affiliates is a close working relationship with alliance partners. Large numbers of South Africa's working class are casualised and informalised. Capitalism has always sought to weaken the power of the working class by creating a large pool of surplus labour.

And this is where our Alliance becomes important. It is absolutely critical that we COMBINE work-place and community-based struggles of the broad working class. It is very hard for unions to reach the mass of

casualised and informalised workers through shop-floor organisation alone.

But this means that our Alliance must be much more than just an Alliance for election purposes. It must be an active alliance with a common, campaigning program of action that takes up the broader issues of the working class and of working class households and communities –

- The struggles for affordable housing, decent public transport, access to land.
- The struggles against the mashonisa and the Credit Bureaux.
- The struggle against the exorbitant charges of the cell-phone companies.
- The struggle for access to quality education and health-care for our families.
- The struggle against corruption in the public and private sectors.
- The struggle to transform and capacitate the police to ensure that our communities are safe.

All of these struggles need to be COMBINED with struggles at the work-place for better wages and working conditions. We need to re-build our alliance on this kind of active engagement.

## Xenophobia

In the past weeks in Durban and in parts of Gauteng xenophobic violence once again reared its ugly head. The overwhelming majority of South Africans have spoken. In marches, in social media, in radio phone-in programs we have condemned xenophobic violence. COSATU, the SACP and the ANC in joint statements have spoken loudly and clearly against violence directed against foreign nationals. Government under the leadership of President Zuma has immediately set in motion a wide array of initiatives.

These initiatives seem to have halted the turn to violence for the moment. There have been seven reported deaths (of which three were South Africans) and several thousands have been temporarily displaced.

It is good that the majority of South Africans have condemned xenophobic violence. Unlike in many parts of Europe, for instance, here in SA every political party in parliament condemned xenophobic violence. By contrast, in Greece, for instance, the third largest party in the Greek Parliament, New Dawn, currently has some of its leadership on trial for inciting anti-

migrant murders. In Germany, in France, in Belgium there are powerful anti-migrant political movements. We don't find that here in SA. The idea – that is promoted in some middle class circles here in SA – that the majority of South Africans (and particularly black South Africans) are prone to xenophobic violence is a lie.

We should be glad that there is an overwhelming majority in our country that has come out to condemn the xenophobic violence.

But to condemn it is one thing. To provide a clear understanding of what lies behind it, and therefore what needs to be done – that is another matter.

*And here we find all manner of opportunisms.*

That arch-opportunist and demagogue – Julius Malema - lost no time in blaming xenophobic violence on the ANC, and on President Zuma in particular. He told a refugee camp in Durban that foreign nationals are not “stealing jobs from South Africans” because “there are no jobs to steal”. Government, he says, has failed to create any jobs.

Let's be very clear. It is not foreign nationals who are stealing jobs from South Africans. It is profit-maximising bosses who are exploiting the desperation of immigrants fleeing poverty and civil war in their own countries. Foreign nationals, especially those who are here illegally, are prepared to work for a pittance, and to work for long hours.

It isn't foreign nationals who are stealing jobs. They are not the criminals. It is the bosses who employ them who are the thieves.

Malema and the neo-liberal South African Institute of Race Relations sing the same tune.

Asked on SABC who or what was to blame for the xenophobic violence, the Institute of Race Relations Mienke Steytler said: “People must blame government”. “Why?” the interviewer asked. “Because government creates unemployment by failing to implement a flexible labour market”, she replied.

This stupid Steytler was too ideologically blind to see that the latest flare-up of xenophobia was directly related to concerns that there was the employment of desperate (that is flexible) foreign nationals as strike-breakers in an industrial dispute in Isipingo in Durban just days before the violence. The community of Isipingo was wrong to blame the foreign nationals. They should have blamed the flexible labour market and those who profit from it.

We must condemn xenophobia and ALL forms of chauvinism – xenophobic chauvinism, racial chauvinism, royal chauvinism, ethnic chauvinism, sexist chauvinism.

But we must also deal with the underlying causes that create a fertile soil for xenophobia.

First we need to understand that in South Africa we are not alone.

Capitalist globalisation over the past 40 years has produced massive waves of migration by desperate work-seekers. Every year now, over one billion migrants are crossing national boundaries, many of them are illegal. In the week that 7 people were killed in South Africa in the latest xenophobic violence – 400 and then another 700 desperate illegal immigrants drowned in the Mediterranean Sea as they tried to reach Europe.

It wasn't an okapi in the hands of a criminal tsotsi in Alexandra, but they died just the same and in their hundreds. And in the end it was the same criminal system that caused their deaths – the crime of capitalism, the crime of imperialist globalisation.

What were they fleeing those eleven hundred who drowned in one week? They were fleeing poverty and unemployment in their home countries. It was poverty caused by IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programmes. They were fleeing from civil war caused by imperialist regime-change agendas in Syria, in Libya, in Somalia.

They were fleeing the same evils that have brought millions of desperate migrants into our own 21-year old, new democracy here in South Africa. In some of our public hospitals today, over 60 percent of patients are foreign nationals many of them without legal status. But they are human beings and we must treat them as fellow human beings. They are not the enemy.

In hotels and restaurants, on the farms in South Africa, many workers are now foreign nationals, many of them illegals. The bosses say that South Africans are not prepared to do this work. Actually, because South Africans have hard-won citizenship rights they should not be prepared to work for below the minimum wage, they should not be prepared to work illegally for 18 hour shifts in the security sector.

Some foreign nationals (not the majority) become involved in criminal activities. But let's also be honest, foreign nationals don't have a monopoly over criminal activities like drug smuggling or child trafficking. Criminal syndicates – whether they are South African or non-South African must be dealt with decisively. This is the message that government sent last week

with the combined police and army raid on Jeppe Hostel in Johannesburg.

The bosses say South African workers are lazy. We are not lazy, we have rights and we will defend them.

The middle classes, the chattering classes in South Africa think that it is the poor who are xenophobic and prone to violence. They are embarrassed on our behalf. We say that the great majority of working class South Africans have shown amazing tolerance and patience in the face of huge challenges.

But the root of these challenges must also be addressed. We cannot just preach morality to the poor, and forget the immorality of the rich and their capitalist system.

*This means:*

- Government must greatly improve its border control systems, not to turn back desperate and genuine refugees, but in order to properly document and process them. We need to know who is in our country – we don't even know this basic fact.
- The exploitation of vulnerable immigrants – whether by bosses or by corrupt officials – must be dealt with severely.
- But abuses don't happen only or mainly at the border. The Department of Labour must greatly increase its labour inspectorate capacity. The Department of Labour must have the capacity to visit farms, hotels, restaurants, factory workshops, security companies. The trade union movement has an important supportive role to play in this regard.
- Hostels and inner-city buildings that have been taken over by criminal syndicates – whether they are South African or non-South African must be cleared out. Criminals must go to jail.

And, finally, on this May Day 2015, International Workers Day, let us also understand that we cannot solve these challenges within South Africa alone. As long as imperialism wreaks havoc in our continent, as long as corrupt anti-democratic regimes oppress their peoples – there will be streams of migrants flowing into countries like SA where there are democratic rights and relative social peace and stability.

The beneficiation of our minerals, the re-industrialisation of our economy, the building of economic and social infrastructure – these are not just South African revolutionary tasks. A radical national democratic revolution is required throughout our sub-Saharan region, throughout our African continent, throughout the Third World.

## **Let us build our organisations to serve our people**

Today the SACP is making a clarion call to the workers and trade union leaders to ensure that we revitalise service to workers in all workplaces. Let the President of Cosatu and all affiliates' Presidents lead a campaign to intensify service to workers in the workplaces. Let us not allow our unions to be used to pursue business unionism and individual egos of leaders. Let us build trade unions that truly serve the workers!

Let us strengthen the SACP to serve and unite the working class as a whole – employed, unemployed or under-employed. Let our Party structures intensify political education amongst workers, especially at this time when political and opportunistic vultures are encircling and seeking to divide Cosatu. Let the SACP also intensify its important campaign to transform the financial sector, fight omashonisa and exploitative practices of the credit bureaux and against the ease with which banks are evicting people from houses. Let us build an SACP that serves the people and working class communities, an SACP that does not allow its structures to be used to fight personalised battles in the ANC and the Alliance.

Let us also build ANC branches that truly serve their communities. Let us not allow ANC branches to be captured by tenderpreneurs who use them to win conferences in order to capture and dispense patronage. Our ANC branches must not hide corrupt people who are serving their own selfish interests. ANC branches must selflessly serve their communities.

Let us build a SANCO that is rooted in real and live civic and other residential organisations. Let us not allow SANCO to be held hostage by individuals whose sole focus is to become local government councillors in every local election. Let this progressive civic movement serve our people and attend to their many local needs.

Workers have an important role to play in all this, as they are found in all the structures of our Alliance and liberation movement as a whole.

## **Which is why we say:**

### **An Injury to One, is an Injury to All!**

### **Let us intensify solidarity for the freedom of the oppressed the world over!**

The SACP has always cherished and advanced the

spirit of international solidarity. The past year we have seen the Cuban struggle being advanced. We are not apologetic for being in solidarity with the people of Cuba!

We are not apologetic for being in solidarity with the oppressed people of the world, Swaziland, Western Sahara, Kurdistan, Palestine, among others.

We are not apologetic for being in solidarity with all the people of the world who are facing imperialist aggression which is manifested in various violent and non-violent forms.

We will continue to advance the struggle for international solidarity, peace and justice; for without victory in this struggle there can never be freedom to any of the world's people.

In the Middle East, the Israeli Foreign Minister recently accused the SACP of supporting the Palestinian people because "like attracts like". He was negative regarding our relationship with the Palestinian people. However, we must agree, "like attracts like". We stand in solidarity with the heroic people of Palestine because they are facing a genocidal, apartheid Israeli oppression; they are facing Zionist racism and occupation – a similar oppression that we suffered in our country under colonial and apartheid oppression.

The SACP will intensify the solidarity struggle for the freedom of the Palestinian people. Israel must vacate Occupied Palestinian Territories. The people of Palestine must have their own co-existing state, based on the June 1967 borders in terms of international law with East Jerusalem as the capital.

***Which is why we say:***

## **Workers of the World Unite to Fight our Common Enemy – Monopoly Capitalism and its Imperialist Agenda!**



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