



African Communist

First Quarter 2023

Issue 206

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

Build a powerful socialist
movement of workers and the poor!





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Send editorial contributions to: communications@sacp.org.za,
or to African Communist, PO Box 1027, Johannesburg 2000.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

Urgent decisions on the economy and elections

SACP contesting elections, as part of a reconfigured Alliance or of a popular front, is the major issue before our Party

This year, as with many before, South Africa's focus must be on an economic turnaround and growth, job creation, food security and the reduction of class, race and gender inequalities. But the challenges in achieving this are considerably compounded by the persisting electricity crisis, rampant crime, corruption, and sabotage of parts of the state and public infrastructure. So the prospects of advancing the NDR (national democratic revolution) and the struggle for socialism are reduced by these and other challenges.

Through our campaigns, building our organisational strength and working within and outside the Alliance, we must create the space to advance our key tasks on the economic turnaround, jobs and reducing inequalities. This means effectively implementing the Party's 2023 *Programme of Action – Intensification of the work to build a powerful socialist movement of workers and the poor*. It is anchored in the mobilisation of the different strata of youth of the working class and poor, the women of the working class and the poor, the organised and unorganised workers, the employed, the self-employed and the unemployed.

We are in an extremely perilous economic situation. Aspects of this are endemic to capitalism. But others flow from subjective choices. The multiple crises of our economy are substantially a reflection of the gov-

ernment's neoliberal approach since the adoption of GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) in 1996. In fact, the domestication of neoliberalism goes back to the apartheid era, to about the mid-1970s. Instead of challenging the neoliberal paradigm, the ANC deepened and widened it. Among the reasons for GEAR, the government referred to the currency depreciation. For the government this was "largely a purchasing power parity correction". But then there were "movements in the foreign exchange market" which "reflected more fundamental economic uncertainties"

A major reason for the growth in the South African economy in the early 2000s was the commodities' boom based mainly on the huge growth in the Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Indian economies. The rapid liberalisation of the South African economy without increasing the country's domestic productive capacity made the economy highly vulnerable to the vagaries and destructive effects of global capitalism, particularly since the 2008 global financial and economic crisis. De-industrialisation, which started in the 1980s, accelerated and was worsened by Covid-19. The contribution of manufacturing to national output has been substantially reduced and there have been huge job losses in this sector, as well, of course, as in others.

In terms of the neoliberal macroeconomic framework, the South African Reserve Bank used interest rate increases to enforce a strict inflation targeting regime. This is among the reasons for the reduction of domestic productive capacity and particularly affected those who needed affordable finance and a predictable, low interest rates framework. The inflation targeting regime has also contributed to the high unemployment rates.

In 2019, the National Treasury published the IMF and World Bank-backed OECD policy reforms in their paper *Towards an economic strategy for South Africa*. As with GEAR and other ANC economic policies,

the SACP and Cosatu were not seriously consulted and our views were not taken into account. The same applies to the current “economic reconstruction and recovery plan”. Daily, the government deepens its commitment to privatisation, though the ANC rhetorically dismisses it. The 2023 Budget also reflects this.

We need, as the General Secretary pointed out, to more clearly explain why socialism is more necessary than ever in the context of the current crisis and what exactly we mean by socialism. We must be clear how, together with Cosatu and the broader trade union movement, we can more effectively deepen working-class consciousness about socialism.

The SACP needs to take the policy discussion on the economy out of the boardrooms and do far more to campaign for the ANC to change its increasingly neoliberal economic policies. We need to act now more than ever.

And we need to assert our independence more. A key issue in this regard is the need for the Party to take much further the reconfiguration of the Alliance and our approach to the 2024 national and provincial elections and the 2026 local government elections. The special and augmented Central Committee meetings in March need to make significant progress on the 15th Congress resolution to “contest elections, more effectively, with or without a reconfigured Alliance”.

We decided that the first augmented Central Committee meeting after the Congress must “...conclude a review of progress and assess its experience on the reconfiguration of the Alliance, the renewal and unity process, and related to these and after relevant factors, finalise the roadmap and modalities to contest elections.”

Contesting elections is one of the SACP’s strategic tasks reflected in the 15th Congress declaration, resolutions and our Party programme, The South African struggle for socialism.

There is significant disaffection with and loss of confidence in the

ANC among its supporters, not just the broader public. The signs are that it may fall below 50% in the 2024 elections, which will be a major setback for the NDR.

The SACP has been taking part in elections since 1994 as part of the Alliance, and the modalities of how we have participated has also changed over the nearly 30 years of democracy. We need to draw lessons from this. But we also need to draw lessons from the international experience of communist parties and left formations contesting elections in other capitalist societies.

The Party posture has been that the ideal electoral modality for the SACP to contest elections is through a reconfigured Alliance, founded on a joint programme of action, including elements of an electoral agreement. This may involve a common approach to coalitions post-elections. A re-configuration of the Alliance should be closely tied to the renewal not only of the ANC, but of the SACP and the all the forces of the NDR. And, for the SACP, it will be mainly dependent on building a powerful socialist movement of the workers and the poor. Experience has shown clearly that reconfiguration of the Alliance cannot be achieved through agreements in documents and boardrooms. A significant view within the Party is that by contesting elections independently, the SACP will very effectively contribute to reconfiguring the Alliance.

Given our assessment that a reconfigured Alliance may not materialise in the near future, what other modalities should we use? The popular front the Party is pursuing should not be merely understood as an electoral modality but also be a strategic task for advancing the NDR.

For the SACP, the electoral campaign platform will need to be built around an anti-neoliberal, anti-corruption, pro-worker and pro-poor agenda, a platform guided by the South African struggle for socialism.

All our electoral considerations, whether through a reconfigured Al-

liance or popular front or some other modality, will impact on our collective relations with the ANC. We therefore need to strengthen maximum unity within the Party on our electoral position and our ability to mobilise resources for contesting elections.

We will need to embark on an extensive and intensive process of engagement and consultation to advance our position on electoral participation, beginning within the Alliance and going into broader society. We need to do so in a manner that enhances the unity of the Party and serves to build a powerful socialist movement of the workers and poor.

Some of the relevant issues to what is raised here are covered in the documents and articles in this issue of African Communist – the December Central Committee political report, on approaching elections, on a universal basic income grant and a review of a book on South Africa’s history. We welcome responses to all articles published in this edition. ●

CC POLITICAL REPORT

Building a powerful socialist movement of workers and the poor

The political report of the second meeting of the SACP 15th National Congress Central Committee, held in December, focuses on building the new cadre for the socialist movement of the workers and the poor

The Second Plenary of the SACP 15th National Congress Central Committee takes place in the context of events and processes with far-reaching implications for our country.

We had just entered the peak period of the Red October campaign, were in the advanced stage of preparations for the Alliance Economic and Energy Summit, with just few weeks to the 55th National Conference of the ANC and this Second Plenary of the SACP 15th National Congress Central Committee.

Our Politburo was about to wrap up its last session late on Friday 18 November 2022, when a notice of the same date from the apex court of the land, informing us that the Constitutional Court would hand down its judgment on Monday, 21 November 2022 at 14h00, on whether Janusz Waluś should be placed on parole.

The Constitutional Court ruling to release on parole Janusz Waluś, the right-wing fascist assassin of our General Secretary Chris Hani.

The weekend of Saturday and Sunday, 19 and 20 November 2022 left out, the Constitutional Court literally gave us a notice period of

less than 24 hours. The first thing that came to mind was whether the short notice represented the best administration of justice by the Constitutional Court. This was triggered by the fact that the Constitutional Court heard the matter on 22 February 2022, about eight months ago. Surely, the Constitutional Court had more than enough time to give us reasonable notice period.

To be selectively critical when the other arms of the state and public institutions engage in worrying conduct can undermine the protection and development of our system of democracy. To appreciate the profundity of this point, one needs to remember and take to heart the message by Chief Justice Mahomed in *The independence of the judiciary*, the title of his address to the International Commission of Jurists on 21 July 1998 in Cape Town: “Judicial power is potentially no more immune from vulnerability to abuse than legislative or executive power but the difference is this: the abuse of legislative or executive power can be policed by an independent judiciary. There is no effective constitutional mechanism to police the abuse of judicial power. It is therefore crucial for all judges to remain vigilantly alive to the truth that the potentially awesome breadth of judicial power is matched by the real depth of judicial responsibility. Judicial responsibility becomes even more onerous upon judges constitutionally protected in a state of jurisprudential solitude where there is no constitutional referee to review their own wrongs.”¹

Judges and their judgments must “not [be] less immune to public scrutiny than members of the Executive and Legislature”, as the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development states in its paper “on the transformation of the judicial system and the role of the judiciary in the developmental South African State” issued in 2012. In this regard, the long standing and ongoing Chris Hani case has taught us a lot for more than two decades about judges and their judgments.

In this process, even the judges did not agree in their judgments and interpretations of legislation, policy and the constitution.

What the Hani case in its historical context has clearly underlined is that there are situations where there is a difference between the law and its interpretation by ordinary members of the public and by the lawyers and the judges themselves. It would be wrong to suggest that the interpretation of the law is always either the law itself or the rule of law.

We have seen in the process one judgment authored by a judge or judges overturning another. It would be to our own peril to not strengthen our effort and imperative to build activism to scrutinise judges and their judgments, and to not freely and openly exercise our informed freedom of expression. The effort and imperative must include mass mobilisation activities and broader political action to achieve necessary changes in the legal framework, including the parole system and how the Parole Board exercises its powers and functions.

In the Chris Hani case, we have been fighting for a full inquest into his assassination, towards full disclosure of the truth and all the circumstances surrounding the assassination. In this context, we have been fighting against amnesty and parole for the assassins, who permanently deprived Chris Hani of his right to life when they assassinated him in cold blood on 10 April 1993. The assassins were defending the racist apartheid regime. They were determined to see its perpetuity and to block our transition to a democratic dispensation and its further development.

For two decades, the Chris Hani case strengthened the consciousness and imperative to scrutinise judges and the judgments they produce in the context described by Justice Mahomed. We need to look at the context Justice Mahomed described, with a view to strengthening and further developing our democratic system and accountability by

all arms of the state without exception. While we have a mechanism such as the Judicial Conduct Committee it falls short of sufficiently addressing all the weaknesses identified by Justice Mahomed regarding judicial power and its exercise as being “in a state ... of jurisprudential solitude where there is no constitutional referee to review their own wrongs”, especially, at the apex level.

The Alliance Economic Summit

Another key development occurred on the eve of this Central Committee, while we were still seized with preparations for the meeting, the Alliance Economic and Energy Summit, the ANC conference, and with our response to the Constitutional Court judgment on Waluś. On Wednesday, 30 November 2022 the panel looking into the ‘Phala Phala farm heist’ handed its report to the Speaker of Parliament. Parliament established the panel as part of a process to assess the grounds for a motion of no confidence that has been brought against President Cyril Ramaphosa by an opposition MP following the heist at his farm.

These are among the key political and legal developments that characterise the time at which the SACP 15th National Congress Central Committee is taking place today and in the next two days. We must respond comprehensively, even if we are dealing with a moving target. Because of the hastening pace of changes and the disproportionately slow rate of appropriate response, this scenario has effectively characterised the response of the movement and even of the government to the political and moral decay, factionalism and other degenerate and regressive tendencies in the movement to corruption, cronyism, poor services and entitlement in government. We have almost culturalised things we should be ashamed of, like unemployment, which has not received appropriate attention by government. Unfortunately, we describe the problem correctly, theorise it correctly – then largely or most

of the time do nothing about it. The Kevin Carter syndrome – the photographer who took the 1994 Pulitzer Prize Winner photo during the Sudan famine. The photo depicts a terribly emaciated child struggling towards a United Nations food camp just a kilometre away. With the vulture at the background waiting for the child to die, when she was left by her parents under the tree so they can hustle to be on the queue to find her food. No one knows what happened to the child. Kevin Carter committed suicide three months later due to depression after being asked many times wherever he went about what happened to the child. He had indicated that he chased the vulture away but the fact that the child was never accounted for may suggest the vulture took her. This is the attitude we seek to change if we are to be relevant as a party of the working class, not merely a party analysing the living conditions of the working class. Our Red October campaigns are meant to bring us into activist communist action. We must end making other human beings mere statistics: that would make us soulless.

The Central Committee needs to analyse these and other key political developments covered in the Political Report and the pertinent matters covered in the State of the Organisation Report, the Financial Report, and in other reports it is to receive and consider, to enrich and give direction on the immediate tasks and the programme of action for the year ahead and beyond. All these should be guided by the outcomes of our 15th National Congress. It is a key task of the Central Committee to articulate and lead the Party structures and membership in the implementation of the outcomes of the National Congress that elected it; in fact that is its primary function.

That said, the Political Report now turns to assessments of the key developments that characterise at this time.

The economic situation

Our economy has been unable to address the high levels of unemployment which rose in our democratic dispensation from below 20% in 1995, fluctuating and worsening above 20% starting in 1996, the year in which the government adopted the neoliberal GEAR policy. Similarly, economic policy in South Africa has been unable to address the interrelated high levels of persisting poverty and inequality. Hand in hand with the inability to overcome the high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality, many working-class and poor households live in a crisis of social reproduction.

We have anchored our contribution to the Alliance Economic and Energy Summit process on the fact that the economy and the economic policy trajectory followed in South Africa in our democratic dispensation since the adoption of GEAR in 1996 have failed to address the persisting high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality. In other words, our principal argument is that we are not only faced with the persisting legacy of the past but also with post-1996 economic policy failure. Unless we confront this reality, we argue, South Africa is unlikely to address the high levels of unemployment, poverty and equality. In fact, it will become a typical failed state with services only available for the rich and some sections of the middle strata straddling the rich section of our society.

As just indicated, not only have the systemic problems of high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality persisted but have also grown in both extent and impact. Every major global crisis, such as the 2008 global economic crisis, the busting of the global commodity super-cycle that peaked in 2011, the Covid-19 pandemic and its economic crisis, contributed to growth in the extent and impact of the high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality, and the economy following a stagnantly low, more exclusive path. This is not unrelated to

domestic economic policy failure since the adoption of GEAR in 1996 and institutionalisation of its underpinning assumptions in our policy space, including social policy, among others through “fiscal consolidation” or austerity. The shock therapy implemented under GEAR had a long-lasting counter-productive impact.

The South African economy started experiencing de-industrialisation in the 1980s, as highlighted by scholars and policy practitioners in the book edited by Antonio Andreoni, Pamela Mondliwa, Simon Roberts, and Fiona Tregenna and published in 2021, *Structural transformation in South Africa: the challenges of inclusive industrial development in a middle-income country*. De-industrialisation did not occur only as a result of the political crisis of apartheid, in the face of our intensified liberation struggle, but notably started as a direct result of the domestication of neoliberal policy prescriptions by the apartheid regime starting in the 1970s.

That South Africa has a small open economy exposed to volatilities emanating from the global economic crises and pressures of the associated competitive struggle did not come about naturally. It is a socially constructed reality.

The rapid liberalisation of the South African economy, in many areas deeper than the commitments made under the Uruguay Round of international trade talks, and without first building, expanding, diversifying and strengthening domestic productive capacity with adequate protection and capability to withstand the impact of the global competitive struggle contributed not only to de-industrialisation continuing but also to South Africa dominated by imports of finished products in many areas, including the household. This is one of the structural and policy factors behind the country’s policy inability to create employment at scale to reduce unemployment radically. The shock therapy implemented under GEAR and institutionalisation of its impact in

our policy space enabled de-industrialisation to continue.

Building, expanding, diversifying and strengthening domestic productive capacity is a key source of national revenue through taxation and public investment in the economy and job creation. This is one of the proposals we have been advancing on the revenue side of fiscal policy, properly understood in its connection to production. Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels drew attention to the same imperative of building domestic productive capacity in a broader context covering overall development when they insisted that the proletariat must, as one of its foremost tasks after winning the battle of democracy, “increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible”.

Our approach to the Alliance Economic and Energy Summit is that it must produce a basis through its outcomes to advance South Africa towards a new, inclusive and just economy, as agreed by the Alliance in its Framework Response to Covid-19. The Alliance adopted that response in May 2020, to follow a joint process to come up with a document on economic reconstruction and development. As the tenets “new”, “inclusive” and “just” in the Alliance Framework Response to Covid-19 indicate, the purpose of the process is not limited to recovery from the impact of Covid-19 includes reconstructing, transforming and developing the economy to go beyond the crisis that affected the working class and poor before the Covid-19 crisis. What we called an economic crisis before the crisis.

To address its economic problems, including, notably, those just summarised, South Africa needs a major policy overhaul encompassing a radical review of the macroeconomic framework, both fiscal and monetary policies, international trade policy, and the adoption of a comprehensive, high impact industrial policy, as well as a review of the sectoral master plans to strengthen their employment-creating impact as part of consolidating the overarching industrial policy, and more ef-

fective provincial, district and local economic development strategies.

The policy scenario we propose considers social policy towards a comprehensive social security for all as a macroeconomic issue, for example fiscal policy. In this context, we proposed that the government should not terminate but should extend the Social Relief of Distress Grant as a foundation for a universal income grant. In this framework, macroeconomic policy and its determination must support the overarching industrial policy to achieve industrialisation and the need to advance towards a comprehensive social security. This summarises the gist that underpins our proposals towards the Alliance Economic and Energy Summit.

We have tried to move in that direction during the preparations that have started towards the Alliance Economic and Energy Summit, stressing that resolving the crisis-high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality, as well as addressing the crises of social reproduction and energy production and supply must be the clear targets of the summit and its outcomes. We have proposed that based on the spirit of evidence-based policy-making the Alliance must immediately move the government to follow alternative paths and proposals including recommended heterodox approaches when insufficient progress is being made on reducing unemployment, poverty and inequality.

Among others, transformation of ownership patterns including through socialisation approaches, as is the transformation of the financial sector, advancing mineral beneficiation and manufacturing localisation, accelerated land redistribution and agro-processing, and the importance of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy cannot be overemphasised. We have also reasserted the question of prescribed assets requirements, among the policy instruments we have recommended to mobilise and strategically direct investment into infrastructure, the productive sector and integrated human settlement in both

rural and urban areas, also linked with accelerated land redistribution.

Together with Cosatu, we have also expressed concern about South Africa embarking on a drive to accumulate foreign denominated currency debt. To clarify this question, we are in no way suggesting that the foreign currency denominated debt is the majority of South Africa's debt. If you follow our documents at least going back to *Going to the Root*, we have made the point that South Africa had some advantage compared to numerous countries in terms of its debt as its overwhelming majority was in the domestic currency, the Rand.

The concern we have expressed regarding South Africa embarking in the drive to accumulate foreign currency denominated debt relates both to foreign exchange disadvantages, their connection to exposure to volatility in capital markets, its associated impact, and the untransparent manner associated with how the foreign currency debt is accumulated. We all know the destructive effect of the neoliberal conditionalities that the IMF and the World Bank attached to their loans.

Not only did the neoliberal conditionalities imposed by the IMF and the World Bank affect policy, but also democracy in the affected countries. In many affected countries, the conditionalities took hold of the domestic policy space, becoming policy dictates or prescriptions from without, transmitted through uncritical national treasuries and central banks, among others. This dealt a heavy blow to meaningful policy consultation around policy formulation and to participatory democracy, making mockery of what was called democracy, let alone freedom. Highlighting this point does not mean we are blind to the challenges of the depth of our domestic capital markets. What we want to stress through the legitimate concern is that the Alliance must discuss the conditions for foreign borrowing, if necessary, which at all times must never be allowed to undermine our domestic policy sovereignty and exploit us as a country in any particular way.

Besides that, one of the proposals we have made is that the Reserve Bank should make use of its balance sheet as an active monetary policy instrument. This could involve, among others, purchasing primary government bonds and bonds from development finance institutions in a strategically guided way. Industrialisation and infrastructure development should be among the apex priorities in that regard.

The concern we have raised regarding the government embarking on the accumulation of foreign debt also relates to the financialisation of the transition from fossil fuel sources of energy to low-carbon and renewable sources of energy and even carbon capture research initiatives. It would be uncritical to not notice and analyse the dangers associated with the financialisation of the transition as an accumulation regime. It is important to scrutinise the foreign loans associated with the transition and determine whether they will or will not impede the realisation of a just transition.

While still in the energy sector, it is also critical to reflect frankly on our approach to an energy mix given our national resource endowments, which are now handsomely benefitting the European powers that have been insisting that we must abandon the use of coal.

Related to this, we have proposed that our approach in the energy sector and the just transition must include public investment in clean coal technology given the massive coal endowment of our country. We need measures that will bring load-shedding to an immediate end. We need transition with a great dose of justice to local communities and the people and their countries not the one meant to service the whims of Europe and the north countries.

The government has embarked on a path in which it is accumulating a mountain of debt in foreign-denominated currency, predominantly the dollar. As the SACP, we should take issue with this short sighted developmental path, which the government has also embarked on in

the name of a just transition. Yes, we are for a just transition, but let us be clear, for there can be no just transition through exploitation. South Africans need to discuss frankly what will happen to the foreign-denominated debt either when the dollar appreciates or when the rand depreciates against the dollar. Our society could find itself locked into a debt trap or crisis, in which future generations might be born without policy sovereignty.

In a just transition, we must move at a pace that will not result in injustice. Let's re-emphasise that the government must make full disclosure of the terms, conditions and implications of borrowing money in foreign-denominated currency. The resources that can be accessed in our national currency and monetary policy must be leveraged to guide our approach.

Also, we need to invest in clean coal technology, given the massive coal endowment that we have as a country. We should meet the energy security needs of the country before anything else. This does not deviate from our commitment to a green economy and a clean environment.

The political atmosphere: the Chris Hani campaign

We have to a great extent covered our response to the Constitutional Court ordering parole for the assassin who assassinated Chris Hani in cold blood on 10 April 1993.

We have consulted with the Alliance partners and started implementing our two-pronged response to his parole. The response comprises legal considerations and strategy on the one hand and mass mobilisation activities on the other.

We have developed a programme of action covering the over 135 days towards the 30th anniversary of the commemoration of Hani's assassination. In this regard, we need to intensify on all fronts the mass mo-

bilisation, political education and communication campaign activities that we have started, moving in an inclusive way. This process should welcome those who come from outside our Alliance movement as well, towards a new era of our struggle, transformation and development. It is important to appreciate that the order for the assassin to be placed on parole reactivated the old divisions in South African society. This is the real terrain on the ground in communities where the failures of our transition have been terribly exposed.

On the one hand, the unrepentant and unremorseful beneficiaries of colonial oppression and apartheid went on rampage, celebrating the order for the assassin to be placed on parole. In the process, the Chris Hani Memorial Site at Thomas Nkobi Cemetery in Boksburg was vandalised on the first weekend of the order. We characterised this as an act of continuing to assassinate Cde Hani even in his grave.

On the other hand, the victims of apartheid were left deeply disappointed. In real terms, it clearly appeared that the victims of apartheid have been the ones seeking reconciliation, while its unrepentant and unremorseful perpetrators do not care. This has sharpened the national question in South Africa and the black majority feel uncared for and are beginning to disdain government by their mean attitudes towards the ANC. This has the potential to further drift further away from the inclusive democratic united and nation building mission of the liberation forces. The point is the ANC and even with its allies now the main stumbling block from a cohesive and united society when electoral outcomes show the ANC losing support in non-African communities.

On the legal front, we have filed papers with the Constitutional Court seeking reconsideration and rescission of its judgment. There is a strategy around this approach. In addition, we have filed papers with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights on the grounds covered by its scope. We have also written to the ministers of Justice and Correc-

tional Services and Home Affairs to seek clarity regarding the assassin's nationality status and the associated conditions. This was also part of the legal process and remains, depending on the latest developments on the matter.

Inquest into the Hani matter

Welding together our approach, we are pushing for a full inquest into the assassination of Chris Hani, towards full disclosure of the truth and all the surrounding circumstances, while insisting that the assassin must complete his sentence in South Africa. We should use this mobilisation to expand our call for inquests into, among others, the Cradock Four and Nokuthula Simelane and repeat our call for full steam investigations and funding towards resolving the unresolved cases from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We should support the call for reparations for the victims of apartheid. That gesture is important for the country and the surviving families of the liberation struggle victims and others.

Based on our experience in the Chris Hani case, it is also clear we need to push for changes in our parole system.

55th National Conference of the ANC

First, we should wish the ANC national conference great success, unity and discipline. Hoping that a greater portion of our own congress will rub off on the ANC as envisaged.

Discourse around the 55th National Conference of the ANC, starting from within the ANC itself, is dominated by who will be elected rather than by policy considerations, content and direction to change the material conditions of the people for the better. Yet documents have been prepared for this. There has been a different kind of renewal by the ANC electoral process and others.

Still, the question of who will be elected and the manner in which it is moving is in reality dominated by factional politics and manoeuvres, as opposed to true renewal and the principled and purposeful unity of the ANC as well as the reconfiguration of the Alliance. So far none of the presidential candidates have demonstrated enough courage against the neoliberal economic trajectory, Alliance reconfiguration and renewal.

There are no clearly visible policy differences between those nominated to contest the same positions. If the outcomes of the ANC National Policy Conference are anything to go by, those contesting and the new leadership to be elected will continue with the reigning neoliberal policy paradigm. This continued possibility does not augur well for good Alliance relations. If this scenario persists, it will surely bring new tensions to those already existing.

The key question for the SACP, Cosatu and the working class broadly is where that will place principled and programmatic Alliance unity with the ANC going forward. How, at this advanced stage, can we intervene to assert true renewal and the principled and purposeful unity of the ANC based on policy and the interrelated reconfiguration of the Alliance towards securing a watershed 55th National Conference of the ANC? This is another question.

In its reflections, the Politburo resolved that we should prepare a written intervention, similar to that we produced for Polokwane, which called for a change of leadership or change of heart by the leadership. The intervention needed must move with the times in respect of its content, direction and articulation given latter-day challenges, problems, opportunities and strategic tasks that not only the ANC but also the Alliance and South Africa faces at this moment and going forward. This Plenary Session offers the Central Committee an opportunity to shape and mould the proposed intervention, of which key elements should also go into the statement of the key outcomes of this meeting.

Not unrelated to our expectations of the 55th National Conference of the ANC, its renewal and unity, the reconfiguration of the Alliance and, broadly, our country's shifting political landscape, is the important issue of the SACP and electoral contestation, the 'State and popular power' debate.

At our 15th National Congress, we resolved that we should not place all our hopes in a favourable outcome of the renewal and unity of the ANC as well as the reconfiguration of the Alliance, preferable as these may be. We further resolved to contest elections more optimally with or without a reconfigured Alliance. In the same vein, we resolved to build a powerful, socialist movement of the workers and poor. We also asserted post congress that we should contest the ANC as a class and called for a proper coordination in this regard. This does not seem to have succeeded, even though several of our members are contesting the top six and NEC positions. We will await and welcome the conference outcomes. We should find time to engage on the new left strategies and tactics inside the broad movement because, while we do not denounce progress made by our comrades in nominations and the effect they continue to have on ANC structures, if truth be told we have not been organised as a class towards this conference.

The road map and modalities for electoral contestations

Our mandate is to finalise the modalities and our implementation roadmap regarding these interrelated strategic and tactical questions of our time at the first Augmented Central Committee Plenary after the 15th National Congress. We raised the matter of our resolution with the ANC in September, we could not meet with Cosatu as they were preparing for their own Congress and have had no possibility for structural meetings. We do however welcome the Cosatu Congress outcomes and hope to treat that with humility and respect. We should use it to unite

the federation and not divide it understanding and accepting its internal democracy.

The Politburo resolved that the Central Committee would consolidate the work and convene the first Augmented Central Committee Plenary in the first quarter of 2023. In doing this, we need to factor in the resolutions from the Cosatu 14th National Congress held in September 2022. To this end we have established a process and the work-in-progress document will be presented to this sitting of the Central Committee for discussion, towards being clear by the time the first Augmented Central Committee takes place. If necessary, we may have to convene a Special Central Committee Plenary dedicated to this question before the First Augmented Central Committee takes place in the first quarter of 2023.

On the electoral path as agreed by the 15th Party Congress

The General Secretary's statement at Umzimkhulu during our Red October Campaign bears repeating: as members and leaders of the Party we should first seek to unite ourselves and not quarrel on congress outcomes. Our first task is to unite behind our resolutions even if you don't personally agree with them.

On resolution number four of the State, popular power and electoral options the Congress resolved: "At the first augmented Central Committee plenary following the 15th National Congress the SACP must conclude a review of progress and assess its experience on the reconfiguration of the Alliance, the renewal and unity process and related to these and other relevant factors finalise the road map and modalities to contest elections more effectively with or without a reconfigured Alliance".

We have to always be conscious of the appropriate assessment of the moment concretely, not merely consider our subjective factors. Be-

cause a revolution is not ready made like a cake you prepare in the oven and you can time its appropriate temperature and readiness. The social revolutionary process is prepared and executed systematically and even that doesn't give a quarantine, equally its preparations can not be a permanent process – otherwise the ripened conditions will change and become stale.

The subjective factors cannot be the principal consideration on deciding this matter. The obtaining material condition facing the working class primarily should be the principal factors. And this should be elevated in our political and organisational posture as opposed to largely tactical considerations at the helm of our strategic approach.

Theoretically, both should be subjected to thorough analysis and even alignment where necessary.

The 'Phala Phala farm heist'

No matter what happens, we need to maintain consistency in our approach to this question, as on all questions. There should be no different outcome should the President be charged except that he will have to step aside. To this end, we will have to play the consistent leadership role that we have played after others were charged, ensuring that the strict stance that we have adopted against corruption if any wrongdoing is established to have been committed remains thoroughly uncompromised – this is at a strategic level.

That said, the Central Committee needs to discuss the SACP's approach to the recommendation of the panel, which suggests that the President "may" have a case to answer. Giving direction to the process to be followed and, in our view, what the ANC and the President should do within the framework of the Alliance will be crucial. It will be equally important to ensure that nothing throughout what may unfold takes place without consultation. In our last bilateral with the ANC,

we established a task team to look into this question. To this end, it appears that the best possible alternative is to strengthen our efforts to give collective Alliance leadership at a high level and in Parliament on the outcome of the panel's report.

Crucially, we need to discuss the possible implications and scenarios for the ANC, Alliance and government leadership given the development that may arise from the implementation of the panel's report.

The Panel Report preview

Equally, we need to consider legal, economic and political issues in dealing with the outcomes of the Section 89 Independent Panel into the Phala Phala matter. Firstly, there is a wide of range of legal opinion that suggests that the report of the panel was deeply flawed. For instances, in terms of rules of evidence, the panel relied on documentary evidence without seeking any corroboration, thus making the submitted documents hearsay. Secondly, the report heavily relied on the submissions by Fraser of events who had sourced same, and the EFF and ATM.

The perceived or real absence of balanced treatment of evidence may give an impression the panel had a pre-determined outcome. Would it be worthwhile for the report to be taken on review by independent court of law and if so with what implications for the ANC and government?

Now that the panel has concluded its report, parliament will consider the report to determine if it will constitute an Impeachment Committee to inquire into these allegations. We need to have a view on whether we support the impeachment inquiry or not. It can serve as a platform for the President to clear his name if he is innocent or it can be abused for political reasons, as already demonstrated given the poisoned political and organisational atmosphere in the movement,

including the visible factional divisions even in parliament and on this report and other allegations, especially against those contesting senior positions at the coming conference.

Are these enough reasons to force the President to resign or can he be forced to resign?

The outcomes of the Section 89 panel report continue to have negative economic consequences. The domestic yield (which is the interest that government pays for borrowing in the capital markets to finance its deficit) and the rand have been doing badly. Yesterday, the rand was trading at R17.63 against the US dollar. The increase in the bond yield increases the debt service costs, which affect the government's ability to spend on other important expenditure items. On the other hand, the depreciation of the rand, will make the cost of importing oil higher, thus increasing the cost of living since oil is important for production.

By its own rules, the ANC cannot demand its President to resign. The step-aside rule requires those who are criminally charged to step aside. The ANC President is not criminally charged, therefore, on account of the ANC rules, it will be baseless for the President to step aside. But is the voice of a parliamentary inquiry not critical enough even if not the court of law or demonstrable of being charged? However, this will not stop forces that had a predetermined agenda to get rid of the President as part of their attempts to fight back against renewal and avoid jail. They seek to capture the ANC as a precondition to capture the state, even with a declined electoral majority, and use state power to roll-back the advances in fighting corruption, and the legacy of corporate state capture and some considerable progress made in rebuilding the state albeit on moral and governance platforms. But as Fidel Castro asserted when addressing our Parliament that: "Great crisis always create great solutions". Let's hope that this moment accords us the possibility to drive a more radical transition towards a people's economy and meet

popular socio-economic needs.

On building a cadreship for a socialist movement

The historic, and even perhaps epochal, significance of the Party's programme to build a socialist movement of the workers and the poor, possibly marks a major shift in the Party's thinking in its struggles to deepen a NDR as a direct route to socialism. This programmatic conception and set of actions build on the evolution of the SACP's thinking especially in the wake of the 1994 democratic breakthrough. It builds on the Strategic Perspectives of 1995, the 1998 programme that evolved into the South African road to socialism, and now the new programme on the South African struggle for socialism. While the evolution of this thinking has not been just a straight line and inevitable evolutionary perspectives, it draws heavily on the practical experiences and lessons of the SACP over the now close to 30 years of a democratic South Africa, led by a government headed by the ANC, supported by its immediate allies and broad array of democratic forces.

The thread that runs through the evolution of the current programme (as well as its strategy and tactics) is overcoming of whatever elements of stageist thinking about the NDR and socialism. Our 1995 Strategic Perspectives marked an important shift, that in the pursuit of the objectives of the NDR we need to simultaneously struggle for elements of, capacity for, and momentum towards socialism. This began to evolve into the fundamental thrust of SARS, that of building working class hegemony in all key sites of power. This emphasised and strengthened the important role of the working class as the leading motive force in the national democratic revolution, and seeking to concretise this responsibility programmatically, rather than claiming it rhetorically. But it was also informed by the deepening global consolidation of neoliberalism and the class aggression of capitalism and

imperialism in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and socialist bloc of countries. It was an aggression informed by the notion of the 'end of history'.

Historically we have always spoken about the 'movement' in reference to the broader liberation movement of which we are a part, but the current challenges and based on our experience we are making an important shift, not of abandoning the broader liberation and revolutionary movement, but to building a socialist movement, as a key component of this broader liberation and democratic movement. This is an important shift in the strategic thinking and programmatic perspectives of the SACP, and in this sense it is a new responsibility for the SACP in particular.

Building a powerful socialist movement of the workers and the poor is a new task for the Party, and therefore calls for new ways of organising and thinking about the NDR itself and the struggle for socialism. It locates this socialist movement as a key force in driving a second, more radical phase of the NDR by uniting a broad range of socialist forces in society as a conscious force for revolutionary changes, with the SACP playing (and not claiming) its true vanguard role. If anchoring this movement on the organised workers we need to pose a critical question of the SACP and the relationship to the working class forces, the unions etc. because we struggle for their emancipation and in their name, of course to free ourselves too.

There are many practical implications of this.

This means a conscious ideological and political education programme to train a cadre to build a socialist movement. The starting point is obviously training Party cadres to properly understand all the dimensions of this task (ideological, political, organisational). It means preparing Party cadres who will understand both the theory and practice of building a socialist movement, and also concretely contribute

to the theorisation and the kind of new organisational work and tasks needed to perform this task.

It means learning to organise, perhaps for the first time for many of the Party cadres, a socialist base or cadre beyond just recruiting for the SACP and working with Cosatu members (a significant majority of whom are either members sympathetic to the SACP and/or the ANC) This is a new kind of task.

Building such a movement requires new kinds of organisational and campaigning activities, albeit guided by the SACP's programmes.

This also requires building the capacity of both our cadres and members to build left fronts as we resolved at our 14th Congress. Building left popular fronts may as well be the primary organisational and campaign form that a fledgling socialist movement takes.

That we need to build a cadreship that understands the distinction and relationship between the SACP and a socialist movement, as well as the distinction and relationship between a broad liberation/democratic movement and a socialist movement.

This also means ability to protect the Red October Campaign as an SACP-led campaign, but at the same time use it as a platform for building, in action, a powerful socialist movement by reaching out beyond Party membership and its traditional constituency.

At the same time, building a socialist movement must not only be seen as an outward and outreach task beyond our traditional movement, but must also be a means of strengthening and building the unity of socialist forces within our traditional movement and Alliance.

We need to take all our leadership collectives from the CC, PECs, DEC, and BECs through the Party programme, declaration and resolutions adopted at our 15th Congress. And we need to ensure that all these structures also go through the political report to the 15th Congress, especially the parts that deal with the financialisation of the

economy, the task of building a socialist movement and its tributaries, as well as on the very important matters of the unity of our Party. In fact all our structures need to go through that political report so as not to assume that all our Party leadership collectives and our membership understand our programme and line of much, when in fact there is an uneven understanding of this. This means that the Jack Simons Party School must play its role in this regard.

Context and background, including lessons from 1994

Despite important advances notched up in the wake of the 1994 democratic breakthrough, the economic trajectory of the post-1994 period has fundamentally failed to advance a radical national democratic revolution. This is perhaps one of the most important conclusions that is to be made about a democratic South Africa and the challenges it poses.

The post-1994 economic trajectory has fundamentally been a combined impact of Neo-liberalism and corporate capture of the state. The adoption of GEAR in 1996 laid the foundations for both the financialisation of our economy (from financial sector being 6% of the economy to being 25% by 2020) and state capture (as eloquently argued and demonstrated in the SACP submission to the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture).

An important contextual issue is whether there has indeed been a rupture between the political economy of the late apartheid era and the first two to three decades of democratic South Africa. There are important ruptures in the politics between the two periods, but very strong economic continuities. While the post-1994 economy has transcended beyond the minerals energy complex, it still retains strong features of it, especially the pit to port mining dispensation, yet at the same time there has been enormous financialisation of the South African economy, accompanied by a process of significant de-industrialisation of the

economy.

The post-1994 political economy has also seen significant new patterns and processes of class formation, whilst leaving the capitalist character of the economy intact, albeit transitioning towards financialisation. In other words we have seen increased neoliberalisation of the South African economy, accompanied by deepening corruption and struggles over corporate capture of the state, between a parasitic petty bourgeoisie that has become dependent on the state for accumulation through naked theft, and the white-dominated bourgeoisie, with its compradorial black stratum.

One of the significant aspects of class formation post-1994 has been the creation of a small stratum of a highly compradorial black section of the bourgeoisie, forged through black economic empowerment measures that have been very narrow in terms of impact. It is a stratum that has no independent existence from monopoly capital that continues to be the dominant component of South Africa's capitalist economy. In fact, significant components of this black stratum is a front for monopoly capital that is still dominated by a white sections of the capitalist class.

There has been a massive neoliberal restructuring South African workplaces and of the working class itself. Through the methods such as labour brokering and massive retrenchments, we have seen the rapid fractionation of the working class (shrinking permanent workforce, casual labour) with significant weakening and fragmentation of especially the progressive trade union movement. This has significantly shifted the class balance of forces in favour of monopoly capital as one key economic and class feature of post-1994 South Africa. It is this trajectory and logic that necessitates the building of strong socialist movement aimed at tilting the class balance of forces in favour of the workers and the poor.

Such a movement needs to be built simultaneously with new strategies to expand and develop our economy and the absolute necessity to rebuild a restructured state owned enterprises sector as the mainstay for taking forward the national democratic revolution and indeed bring new ways of building people's economy, cooperatives, informal sector and other forms of sustainable livelihoods

What lessons can we draw from the above context that has informed this important shift in the SACP's strategy and tactics, as encapsulated by the strategic and programmatic goal of building a powerful socialist movement?

International matters

We attended to the International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties in Cuba with Cde Zola Saphetha.

The meeting tasked us to complete the work of the Communist Parties in Egypt and Kenya and their application to the movement. We must complete this task at least in the first quarter of the year.

We were also tasked with the lead role on the contribution and development of new statutes and rules of the International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties.

The meeting accepted in its declaration the imperialist threat to world peace and development and the expansion of imperialist wars and called for end to all wars and the building of the peace movement.

The Cubans have requested the Alliance to host the Africa Cuba Solidarity Summit in 2023. It was meant for Mozambique but was shifted due to war in Cabo del Gado in northern Mozambique.

Key areas:

The world is characterised by a deepening daily threat to an emerging multipolar world system based on world cooperation for peace and human development. This world congruency towards multiple centres

of powers and influences in economic, political and security relations. This is largely caused by the insecurities of the declining influence and power of the bipolar imperialist forces in world affairs. This can be summarised as a capitalist Europe and the US seeking to impose their world view and capitalist economic models as the tool to divide the world economy, using their compliant NATO as a military force to cajole states to support their neoliberal economic model and expansionism in Eastern Europe in order to encircle the Russian Federation and in other parts of the world. We should be proud that the peoples of various countries like Russia and China have responded firmly to defend their independence and national sovereignty.

Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, addressing the St Petersburg Economic Forum in Russia observed that globalisation is being replaced by an era of regionalisation and in that regard called for more unity of the Asian countries. President Putin of Russia in the same forum highlighted how “technological sovereignty: a system where important components are not dependent on foreign supply” has become critical for them given the sanctions and other prohibitive measures imposed on them.

There is a growing intent to preserve the old order system largely based on a colonial mentality by seeking to change the world order through wars, violence and aggressive economic isolationist diplomatic strategies and policies through overt postures and ad hoc measures like on gas and oil and grain distribution outside the rule based system. In other words the world order is fast changing and imperialism changes the rules by brute force to keep the old order and blame others for it.

John Bolton, former White House National Security Advisor to President Donald Trump between 2018 and 2019, recently admitted on CNN that he had “helped plan coups d’etat” abroad. This is further confirmed by documents exposed by *The Intercept* through Freedom

of Information Act and the papers reports that the US has reportedly used a secretive authority called “127e programs” to launch at least two dozen proxy wars since 2017 confirming that 14 so called 127e Programs were active in the Middle East and Asia Pacific regions as recently as 2020. Apparently, this is one of the virtually unknown authorisations granted to the Defence Department by Congress almost two decades ago. This authorises US special forces to conduct “counter terrorism operations” in cooperation with foreign forces around the world with minimal oversight. According to *The Intercept*, they don’t even share this information with Congress or State Department.

Imposing the macro economies policies on the rest of the world to follow the capitalist path has caused serious under-development and even de-development of some countries who remain locked and imprisoned by the conditions. Now the swift tool is sanctions applied to those with which the US disagrees – like the comprehensive sanction against Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, DPRK (North Korea) and Russia and the selective sanctions against Chinese industries. At the core of this system is the imposition of the “common” system when it suits the US.

Reckless and myopic leadership especially from the US and Europe – with these leaders clearly working to service capital and rebuild their economies through sponsorship of wars. US Republican Senator Lindsey Graham and his Democrat counterpart Richard Blumenthal have announced that they will cooperate to pass the Russia is a state of sponsor of terrorism Act accusing Russia of war crimes and genocide in Ukraine.

This move, despite opposition from US President Joe Biden, would further deteriorate the already strained relations two of the world’s military powers. We have heard before the nuclear word been uttered that made even Donald Trump a hero when he cautioned against the easy use of that word during conflict situations. Never has the threat of

a consciously initiated nuclear disaster and war been so imminent with absolute disregard for safety and the well-being of the world.

In late July this year, addressing the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, the UK's Security Advisor Sir Stephen Lovegrove said "the West risks nuclear conflict with Russia and China because of breakdown in communication – during the Cold War, we benefitted from a series of negotiations and dialogues that improved our understanding of Soviet doctrine and capabilities, and vice versa. This gave us both a higher level of confidence that we would not miscalculate our way into a nuclear war. Today, we do not have the same foundations with others who may threaten us in the future – particularly with China."

The West is risking a possible nuclear war by cutting off Russia and China through closing available platforms and space for engagements, opting instead for constant provocation.

EU leaders, through their Foreign Minister Josep Borrell, affirmed that Ukraine must be supported with anything it wants. They now want to build a European security process without Russia, which divides the region from its inception. They don't seem to be interested in peace.

Yet the West does not want to learn from its past dismal failures in Europe, especially after the collapse of the Soviet system in Russia. Professor Geoffrey Roberts of Cork University in Ireland said after the death of Mikhail Gorbachev that "NATO's expansion was not the fault of Gorbachev's policies, but the responsibilities of the West while his successors' failure to integrate Russia into Europe was not down to lack of trying but Western intransigence". Western failure, he added, is "at the heart of the current troubles that we are facing in the world today, not least in relation to Ukraine".

What is also worrying is the reckless behaviour of Ukrainian comedian Volodymyr Zelensky and his NATO proxy war machine. As reported

by Amnesty International before it was forced to nuance the wording by its offended European funders that Amnesty International “accuses Ukrainian military of violating international law and risking civilian safety by placing troops and military vehicles in residential areas, including turning hospitals into de facto military bases”. Basically, they use civilians as human shields in the war. This is an act of scoundrels and barbarians. No rules and regulations are followed when they defend their cohorts and stooges everywhere.

In other words, we have seen almost the whole of Europe and the US fully engaged in proxy war with Russia by full scale military and financial support of Ukraine. They want to exhaust and weaken Russia before actively entering the war to finish off Russia.

These are economic wars to rescue and entrench a faltering capitalist system. But from the US point of interest it is clear their espoused anti Communist tendencies have been revived now posed against China seen as a direct immediate threat politically, economically and security wise. The ultimate target remains the communist People’s Republic of China although by admission of several US military people, China and Russia pose no threat to the US.

Retired US colonel Richard Black former head of the US Army’s Criminal Law Division at the Pentagon and former Virginia State Senator addressing the May 26 Schiller Institute Conference on the Illusions of Russian and Chinese aggression around the world noted: “The US and UK combined have about 900 military bases overseas while Russia and China have 35 combined with China only having five” and that the US spend 11 times more on military spending than the military spending by the next 11 countries combined. That the US support for Ukraine is more than the Russian Defence budget? This is not a real threat but is intended to serve the economic interests of the industrial war complex in the US.

In this regard we need to strengthen solidarity with our fraternal organisations and countries against the inhuman American-imposed economic blockade of Cuba and its continued occupation of Cuban territory of Guantanamo Bay. It must leave Cuba alone to practice its chosen economic system.

We express solidarity with the people of Swaziland fighting for basic human rights that we claim to hold dear and yet we watch them butchered by absolute monarch dictator King Mswati III. The Alliance may consider a request made at a seminar to facilitate process for their negotiations teams and how to strengthen the progressive forces.

We extend our firm commitment to solidarity with Western Sahara and Polisario Front to defeat Moroccan occupation. We held a good meeting with President Ghali of Polisario Front.

We should give solidarity to Yemen and Syria where wars are being waged against the people with full support of the US and its European allies

We support Venezuela and its chosen system of socialism – we need more collaboration with Venezuela and even Bolivia and Nicaragua to strengthen their tireless fight against imperialism and counterrevolutionary forces.

Our solidarity with Palestine remains unflinching against apartheid Israel.

We live in the era of war and indeed shall only know peace once war is permanently abolished. As Lenin observed: “War cannot be abolished unless classes are abolished and socialism is created”.

Support for the 16 days of activism against GBV

We need to mobilise our structures on the ground to intensify the fight against gender-based violence and reorganise communities to fight against crime as well.

Our members should support and mobilise communities to join the 16 days of activism against gender based violence, and violence against women and children. The crisis of social reproduction continues to give society these massive social disruptions and discords against social cohesion and normality to life. ●

Endnotes

1 *The independence of the judiciary*: Address by the Hon Mr Justice I Mahomed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Appeal, to the International Commission of Jurists in Cape Town on 21 July 1998. *South African Law Journal* [(1998) 115 SALJ 658].

STATE & POPULAR POWER DEBATE

A dialectical approach to election options

A dialectical method is required for the SACP to build a powerful socialist movement and decide on electoral options, writes **Themba Mthembu**

The debate on the SACP's approach to state and popular power has now been going on for almost 18 years, with eight resolutions taken in as many Congresses. In almost all the resolutions the agreement is for the Party to contest elections.

The SACP did contest elections in Metsimaholo in 2017. Outstanding is a comprehensive report on Party's experiences and the lessons learnt in Metsimaholo to assist the Party on the best way for a further contestation of elections.

Some people consider the delay in finalising the Party contestation of elections unnecessary and detrimental to the future of the Party and the working class, while others consider it necessary to be careful concerning a very complex question.

But what is most disturbing and a fundamental challenge is to allow this question to be debated without the use of Marxist-Leninist tools of analysis and hence devoid of dialectical method. Without this and the use of historical experience, there is a likelihood of ending up with an erratic decision. If any attempt is made, as in the 14th Congress, it is likely to be ignored or undermined. At the centre of the pressure for the Party to resolve the immediate decision to contest elections is the view

that the masses are eager for the Party to contest because they have had enough of the ANC. The claim is that the masses are now far ahead of the Party on what is to be done of the Party, but with neither evidence nor scientific analysis to back up the claim.

The political report of the 4th Special Congress has the following to say on the above: “Much as we know that songs are like poetry and catch phrases, we must nevertheless not be lost in songs about what the state power arise.” This is very important. In other words, as our 14th National Congress resolved, we must maintain analytical alertness and tactical flexibility based on strategic consistency.

“Let us look at electoral politics and the state. The implication of losses are pretty obvious. So let us look at electoral victories. Important as they are, electoral victories do not necessary constitute control of state power.”

The claimed pressure from the masses on the vanguard party once invited this comment from Josef Stalin: “[I]n order that it may really be the advanced detachment, the Party must be armed with revolutionary theory, with knowledge of the laws of the revolution. Without this it will be incapable of directing the struggle of the proletariat, of leading the proletariat. The Party cannot be a real party if it limits itself to registering what the masses of working class feel and think, if it drags at the tail of the spontaneous movement, if it is unable to rise above the momentary interest of the proletariat, if it is unable to raise the masses to the level of understanding the class interests of the proletariat. The Party must stand at the head of the working class, it must lead the proletariat, and not drag at the tail of the spontaneous movement.” (*Stalin, Works, Vol. 6, pp. 177 - 178*)

In the “SACP and state and popular power” 14th National Congress resolution it is said “that in the current fluid reality the SACP must be guided by ... analytical alertness – what Lenin described as the capacity

to provide a “a concrete analysis of the concrete situation”.

“Concrete analysis of concrete conditions, Lenin said, is ‘the most essential thing in Marxism, the living soul of Marxism’. Lacking analytical approach, many of our comrades do not want to go deeply into complex matters, to analyse and study them over and over again, but like to draw simple conclusions which are absolutely affirmative or absolutely negative.” (*Selected Works of Mao Tse Tung Volume 3* page 165)

This knowledge of revolutionary theory must be applied in the class struggle. This is the reason why the proletariat needs scientific strategy and tactics. Strategy and tactics are a complete application in Marxist-Leninist theory in practice, they aim at the unification of scientific socialism with the working-class movement. The dialectical method helps to achieve these because class struggle itself is a dialectical process, the acceleration and higher development of which is possible consistent with its inherent dialectical laws alone.

Class struggle has an objective aspect, law-governed and independent of the human will, and it has a subjective conscious aspect. The latter consists of the reflection of the spontaneous social development in the consciousness of the fighting spirit of the masses. These are consolidated and advanced by the activity of the revolutionary Party guided by the strategic main task, consistent with the aim of the stages of the development of the class struggle:

- **First stage:** Winning over of the decisive majority of the working class for the struggle for socialism;
- **Second Stage:** Carrying out the revolution; and
- **Third Stage:** Conquest of power and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat.

No matter how much crisis manifests itself and the contradictions sharpen, the transition to a revolutionary situation is not possible without winning over the decisive majority of the working class for social-

ism. To disregard this due to revolutionary impatience means becoming subject to wishful thinking.

If there is an attempt at accelerating the objective factors of the revolutionary crisis to produce subjective conditions without making any detours and with clear cut ideas of the activities of the Party regarding the masses, it needs to be opposed.

Two basic views emerged: the revisionist view (others refer to it as opportunist) about the possibility of reforming, “conquering” and utilising the bourgeois state for socialism and the revolutionary view of a need for socialist revolution.

The two views are a reflection of the ideological confrontation about the bourgeois state and bourgeois democracy. Some understand the bourgeois state and parliamentary democracy as a state that expresses the correlation of forces between various classes. In essence as a “supra-class” state that expresses the democratically expressed will of the people, regardless of which class they belong to.

On the basis of this standpoint, they approach bourgeois democracy as a favourable terrain that can be utilised to the benefit of socialism. In contrast, Marxists understand the class character of the bourgeois state, regardless of the exceptionally varied forms it has taken on historically. They understand bourgeois democracy as one of the varied forms of the dictatorship of capital and indeed the most “secure” form for the protection of the “omnipotence of wealth”, as Lenin wrote in *State and revolution*.

This necessitated the addition of the resolution of the Party to pay particular attention to a broad range of aspects and elements related to the state and state power question, including theorisation of the state in the current conjuncture, and parliamentarianism.

There are claims that there have been successes of some left parties in contesting elections in the past under bourgeois parliamentary sys-

tem. Some examples given are the Workers' Party in Brazil, Eva Morales in Brazil, Syriza in Greece, socialist parties in Spain and France. Here it can be argued that there have never been successes and benefits for the working class under bourgeois democratic systems.

It can be further argued that no one can bring back the past on correct foundations with mistakes deleted. But at least it is possible to draw lessons from past experiences to advance the struggle today. Proletarian struggle demands the honest revolutionary Marxists take an attitude in this direction, face their mistakes, renew themselves through drawing a revolutionary balance sheet and leap forward to build the new by arming themselves with the revolutionary lessons of historical experiences.

It should be kept in mind that in the present objective conditions are fully ripe for the world working class to overthrow capitalism. The task of creating the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat is very important. To move on, the hindrance that has been posed by the past years' worldwide negative legacy in the organisational area must be overcome. These are the fundamental pillars of how internationalist communists, who do not lose their historical optimism and, when necessary, dare to swim against the current, understand the duties of the day both on a national and international level.

Nothing new can be created without historical roots. When we think in dialectical terms, to get rid of the shade of the past and surpass the past is only possible through assimilating the historical experience which constitutes the past and make a distinction between its positive and negative aspects. Thus, by breaks within continuity, that is, by regeneration with the positive legacy of the past and not succumbing to negative sides, revolutionary proletarian struggle can be advanced.

It would be useful to emphasise a few points in the first place that are important to the political struggle of the working class. The concept

of “revolutionary” has acquired different meanings throughout history depending on different class interests. As explained by Marxism, it is for sure that petty-bourgeois revolutionism and proletarian revolutionism are separated by bold lines both in terms of political attitudes and conceptions of organising. Marxist attitudes require that such differences should not be covered up and that different conceptions of revolution and organisation that flow from different class positions should not to be mixed up.

This is the fundamental starting point that answers whether there have ever been successes of the working class parties under bourgeois systems and the question of what to do in the face of the burning realities of today’s world and what political and organisational line should be sought in the first place. It is quite obvious that all groups that are to determine their political line under the impact of the bourgeois or liberal left will be deluded by the lie that a new, positive period is being opened now that the ANC is a ruling party.

To the extent that revolutionism gets away from a proletarian class base and becomes petit bourgeois, the tendency to liquidation will be strengthened ideologically and organisationally. As a result, all groups that have not internalised Marxism properly and organised on proletarian revolutionary class lines, will be faced with disarray and confusion.

Such unstable elements have not made any contribution to the revolutionary workers movement. On the contrary, they will turn a totally deaf ear to organised working class forces that try in the light of Marxism to grasp the conditions the capitalist system. The unfounded accusations and harassment against those forces trying to organise the working class on the basis of a revolutionary class line will be increased.

The damage done by the type of revolutionism detached from the working class is enormous. This type of revolutionism sneers at the revolutionary theory in the name of “action”, and cannot endure patient

and planned work within the working class. Therefore, it is impossible for these political tendencies to develop tactics advancing the working-class movement and to carry on revolutionary mass work.

It is obvious that those groups whose general logic and ways of political struggle and mass work are marked in the last analysis by petty-bourgeois revolutionism cannot create a type of party required by revolutionary workers struggle.

This group of tendencies is surely not the only one blocking the working class from the road of revolutionary struggle. Another group consists of those political circles that fail to break away from tailing the bourgeois left while at the same time not giving up posing as socialist. These kinds of political tendencies are fed mostly from “educated” elements as a social layer and their “socialism” is similar to what Marx and Engels described long ago as bourgeois socialism.

The consequences of dominance of such elements in the leadership of a workers’ party are demonstrated by a variety of historical examples. One can remember the German Social Democratic Party, the same can be said of our ANC, which was made up of millions of workers. It was drawn into the quagmire of legalism and reformism by elements keen on intellectual leftism, which is far away from the conception of revolutionary struggle and organisation.

A revolutionary movement, call it a socialist or Marxist movement, has never been and can never be homogeneous. For instance, splits in the Marxist movement are based on differences of a fundamental nature such as the strategy of revolution or conception of organisation. Such differences are rock solid facts, and one cannot resolve organisational crises by simply skipping over them.

It is not possible for the revolutionary struggle to take a significant step forward by hollow desires for unity or ambitions for a “united party”, which, from the outset, are meaningless. The EFF and Cope experi-

ences are striking examples of this. Those groups and tendencies that seek to find an umbrella under which they hope to keep their political identities alive, rather than to create a revolutionary organisation of the working class, have always approached the question of party from the standpoint of their narrow group interests. That was the reason why they ambitiously stood for a party like the EFF.

There is another aspect of the question at stake in relation to the revolutionary struggle of the class. The struggle of the working class against capitalism does not only require a vanguard revolutionary party, but also a diversity of other types of organisational forms, hence the SACP has resolved on a Left Popular Front. Besides, the struggle against the existing political order involves a broad spectrum including different class forces and movements of oppressed nations. In this respect, it is necessary to form unity in action on various levels and also it cannot be denied that there is a burning need for the revolutionary interests of the working class.

So, in the framework of these debates, we need to draw a clear and solid distinction line between the revolutionary party that would lead the class and formations of fronts and blocks that would express unity in action of different opposition forces. It is also extremely important to make a distinction between those blocs in the form of “workers’ fronts” that are formed by organisations of the working class and those blocs that bring together a broader diversity of forces. And these two levels should never be confused.

In brief, there is a principled approach of Marxists on such important questions; this is exactly what we must defend. Apart from the general debates on organisational questions, the issues of principle also shine light on the particular question of the attitude to be taken regarding the so-called ‘left popular front’ or ‘socialist movements’ debates.

To put it more explicitly, if it is not to remain at the level of hollow

words, and dilute or obscure the need for the revolutionary proletarian party, then it is surely a positive thing that such broad unity is formed in action against the bourgeois order. Moving from this framework, it may not be categorically wrong to establish fronts or movements which are in fact an expression of unity in action and a bloc in the struggle against the existing order.

But a fundamental question still remains unanswered from the perspective of the revolutionary proletarian struggle. The principal question is: in an intended front/movement that would be the expression of unity in action, what class line, would determine the main political course? How and on what basis would the inevitable question of “political hegemony” be resolved, not in terms of inner administrative functioning, but of living class relations that exist in real life?

In answer to these questions we must state that no unity in action, unless its core is formed by revolutionary forces of the working class, can bring forward the revolutionary struggle of the working class. Unless political hegemony is held by the organised revolutionary forces of the working class no front/movement or even future alliances can ultimately prevent the working class from tailing some other class’ course. As clearly exemplified in the struggle of an oppressed nation, even the righteousness of the forces that wage struggle against the political order can never sweep aside these burning questions.

There must be very clear attitudes reflecting the revolutionary class line on questions such as the present situation of the capitalist system, organisational questions and unity in action. We are fully aware that such attitudes are hardly to be welcomed by some left parties that have a strong dislike for a clear-cut class line in general and those who seek to sow a horde psychology in the left, those touts of unprincipled unity etc. Yet, this in no way changes, and it did not in the past, our revolutionary sense of duty and basic principle.

Without the vanguard role of the revolutionary party the spontaneous struggle of the working masses cannot advance to the point of overthrowing capitalism. Without a revolutionary vanguard, mass struggle would be condemned to roll back from the peaks every time it reaches them and the masses in struggle will go back to their habitual daily life. Without arming those leading elements of the class with revolutionary consciousness through the organised struggle of the revolutionary vanguard, they cannot spontaneously transcend the limits of trade union struggle.

To claim that socialist consciousness would arise in the working masses spontaneously with the progress of economic-democratic struggle means to attempt to skip over the question of a revolutionary party with its intellectual craft. It is surely possible that combative workers with their class sense move to the point of the necessity of getting rid of capitalist system. But this does not mean achieving socialist consciousness.

It is exciting that the Party resolved at our 15th National Congress that: “The SACP must continue to improve its theory and practice on the question of electoral politics and contestation as a Marxist-Leninist Party based on inviolable ties with the working-class masses.”

Our strategic main task as commanded by the 15th National Congress going forward is to build a powerful socialist movement and work at winning the decisive majority of the working class – that is the line of march. ●

Cde Mthembu is the SACP KZN Provincial Secretary and the Deputy Speaker of the KZN legislature

SOCIAL POLICY

Universal Basic Income Grant – an imperative, not a luxury

Neil Coleman spoke to AC about the need for a Ubig and the positive impact it would have on reducing poverty

African Communist: Cde Coleman, what is a universal basic income grant?

Coleman: A Ubig, in the South African context, is a regular basic income transfer¹ indexed to an objective measure of need, for example a poverty line, that goes to all adults aged between 18 and 59 regardless of employment status or income level, as a social right that no government can take away. It advances Section 27 of our Constitution, which guarantees the right to social security for all, including social assistance if they cannot provide for themselves and their dependents. It does away with poverty targeting and means testing which discriminate against the poor, and ensures that everyone has a floor of basic income, regardless of their circumstances, whether precariously employed, informally employed, unemployed or caregivers. It is a simple system to administer, minimises corruption and ensures cross-subsidisation of the grant via the tax system. But on its own a Ubig is not a silver bullet to address the suffering of the poor, working-class majority in this country. We must continue to fight for the provision of good quality

and equal public services, decent jobs that pay living wages and policies that reduce the immense inequality we face

AC: It seems that there is a global consensus around which a Ubig could be developed – at least among progressive and left forces, but can you explain why we need a Ubig in South Africa?

Coleman: The idea of a Ubig is quite controversial in certain progressive circles internationally, for specific reasons that I don't think strictly apply in the South African case. In part, because of the fear that the balance of forces in certain societies, such as India, mean that basic income could only be introduced at the expense of public services, particularly in the context of austerity; in part, because of some conservative forces embrace the idea of basic income; and perhaps because some feel it would compromise the focus on attaining full employment.

Some of these concerns² need to be taken seriously, but we also need to look at the specific conditions in South Africa that make this demand so relevant:

- Firstly, the extent of immiseration and poverty amongst the working class, arising both from the current economic crises as well as deep structural factors require an immediate and significant intervention. These factors mitigating against the African working class establishing sustainable livelihoods include: financialisation and deindustrialisation of the economy, landlessness and the lack of a vibrant peasant economy, the small size of our informal economy, and the historical marginalisation of working-class rural and urban communities from the economic centres as a result of apartheid planning.
- Secondly, the deep crisis of hunger and destitution currently haunting the country, require rapid high impact interventions to

transfer income, which the Ubig is able to do.

- Thirdly, the crisis of state capacity to roll out more complex economic interventions in the short to medium term and the challenges of corruption can to a significant degree be short-circuited by a basic income rollout. We have seen this with the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant, which, despite its problems, has been rapidly rolled out with relatively minor problems of corruption when compared to other programmes.
- Fourthly, the stimulus impact of the injection of income into poor and working-class communities provides a platform for economic renewal and development, a reality that the SRD grant has demonstrated (despite it being so tiny). This is also backed up by international evidence on the impact of basic income trials, which has been comprehensively documented by the Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ) in a recent paper⁴.

AC: What are the issues of social cohesion and social solidarity of a Ubig, especially for working-class communities?

Coleman: While some academic commentators and the conservative media see a Chinese wall between the employed and the unemployed, with the former as some sort of ‘privileged aristocracy’, this reality simply doesn’t exist in working-class communities. Livelihoods are shared in families, extended families and communities and span a spectrum of activities from part-time ‘hustling’ or survivalist activities, self-employment, informal employment, part-time or casual work, contract and full time work. Across this continuum of livelihoods is the care work which holds communities together, often performed by women from different generations.

So the notion of one breadwinner or ‘head of household’ providing

income, in the case of a household lucky enough to have a formally employed earner versus an unemployed household, is too simplistic to capture this reality of fluid household income dynamics that often move in and out of poverty and economic status. Many poor households receive some income from the working poor, some grants and other sources – but these income sources are increasingly precarious in the context of growing unemployment and rising dependency ratios, and the soaring cost of living, and therefore insufficient to enable households to afford basic necessities.

In this context, the introduction of a dependable regular source of income - the basic income guarantee - to all adult members of a household and extended family networks is a game changer for social solidarity, and income support in poor working-class communities. Here, the critical economic unit is the household, not the individual beneficiary, because of the pooling of income that takes place in poor households. This sharing or pooling of income has been well documented in the case of the SRD grant, and other grants which until now haven't served their intended purpose of focusing mainly on support for old aged pensioners and children (because of the lack of other income support).

This does not mean that a 'household grant' is preferable to an individual grant. Indeed the opposite is the case: The beneficial economic impact of pooling a Ubig given to each adult household member, is demonstrated by modelling by Applied Development Research Solutions (ADRS)⁴ which shows that a Ubig even at the much lower level of the Food Poverty Line of R663 increases disposable income in the poorest three quintiles, more than an unemployment BIG at the upper bound poverty line of R1 417. This is because the greater number of grants are pooled in the household. This shows the importance of universality in reaching all those who need income support. The impact of a Ubig, combined with the national minimum wage, and access to

affordable public services, could be revolutionary in raising the income and living standards of the poorest 50% of the population.

Equally importantly, a Ubig supports and recognises the caregiving activities of women, and gives them economic independence, given that women face higher barriers to entering the labour market, carry a higher burden of unpaid domestic and care labour, that employed women have poorer working conditions and lower pay, and that women workers are more precarious and more likely to lose their work.

A Ubig should be seen as a fairer way of sharing the surplus wealth produced across society – recognising that we all contribute to producing that wealth over our lifetimes, regardless of current employment status, and that we all have a right to have our basic needs met through the dividends of that wealth. This can have a positive impact on social cohesion because it upholds everyone’s basic rights and dignity. Further, targeting has been shown to have a negative impact on social cohesion because it tends to create intracommunity divisions and social stigmas.

AC: Although the idea of a Ubig has gained international attention in recent years, it is not completely a new issue in South Africa; it came up during the 1990s, but can you explain what is the difference then and now, in terms of general understanding, policy development and activism around this issue?

Coleman: We placed the demand for a Ubig, as organised Labour, at the 1998 Jobs Summit, but at the time it was a left field and largely unknown idea. It was then taken up by a coalition of organisations following the report of the Taylor Committee that proposed introduction of a BIG. But the balance of forces in the ANC at the time was hostile to this idea, in particular from the then Finance Minister (Trevor Manuel),

President (Thabo Mbeki), and ANC leadership, with the exception of Cde Zola Skweyiya, then Social Development Minister.

Initially campaigns for a Ubig secured social support, but the refusal of government to engage on the idea, as well as certain organisational dynamics, led to the campaign fizzling out. Nevertheless the campaign had an important impact in broadening the social security net, extending the Child Support Grant (CSG) to 18 year olds (at the time of the Job Summit it only reached children up to 7), and putting the restructuring of social security on the agenda. However National Treasury blocked the Department for Social Development's attempts to create a new social security policy, which became stuck in government and Nedlac for many years.

The game changer was the Covid-19 crisis in 2020. The crisis of hunger poverty and rampant unemployment was stripped bare, and worsened by the socio-economic implosion that followed the pandemic. The introduction of the SRD and caregivers grant (later to be effectively combined) created a platform for progressive civil society voices to campaign for the introduction of permanent basic income support. It became clear that this huge hole in our social security system (with no regular form of income support for adults) had to be urgently filled, if we were to prevent a social implosion, deeper hunger and even mass starvation. The extent of this danger of social disintegration became clear with the 2021 July looting, which followed the termination of the SRD grant a couple of months earlier.

However, the attempt to consolidate, improve and extend the SRD grant as a basis for a permanent form of basic income came up against the deeply conservative economic policies of Treasury, despite the fact that it was embraced by important sections of government, and increasingly by the ANC, as civil society organisations, the labour movement, and other progressive forces mobilised around this call. Nevertheless

we collectively managed to expose and defeat Treasury's attempts to terminate the grant in 2021 and again in 2022⁵, with the result that the grant has been extended to March 2024, an election year. This grant is now irreversible, so some form of basic income has effectively been won for South Africa – a world leader in this respect. The issue now is what form basic income will take – the level, who will get it, and whether it will be comprehensive or targeted.

AC: You mentioned that on its own a Ubig is not a silver bullet to address the suffering of the poor majority in this country – both the unemployed and under-employed. Can you elaborate on that and how it can be related to other measures, like the expanded public works programme and other interventions?

Coleman: A Ubig, by consistently injecting resources into poor working-class communities, creates increased demand for locally produced goods and a platform for local economic development. But if the impact of a Ubig is to be maximised, a range of complementary interventions are required.

These include a well-resourced high-impact industrial policy that promotes jobs-rich economic diversification and maximises the impact of the increased demand impacts of the Ubig; and an appropriate macroeconomic framework that stimulates development, rather than the austerity framework that pits one area of public expenditure against another – and therefore allows for expansion of affordable, universally available public services, and public employment programmes, combined with a Ubig. Also, a coherent strategy for a just energy transition which sees social protection for communities affected by the energy transition, being combined with a programme to promote employment in the labour intensive renewable energy sector.

A shift in our current inappropriate economic paradigm, which gives rise to austerity is therefore essential. The introduction of an adequate Ubig will neither be possible within this paradigm nor will these other interventions be achievable. But growing support for the demand for a Ubig, in the run-up to the ANC Conference, represents a real chink in the armour of this backward economic approach which has dominated government's economic policies in recent years.

AC: That should be very clear, but at times the discussion tended to be posed as employment versus social grants. Is this a valid way of approaching this discussion?

Coleman: The international evidence on this is very clear: basic income and social grants facilitate rather than hinders employment, and job search. This has been thoroughly documented in an IEJ policy brief on *Jobs vs Grants*⁶. Extensive evidence shows that cash transfers in developing countries have had the effect of growing local economies, increasing people's participation in the labour market, and increased rates of self-employment. So this debate should be seen for what it is: an ideological attack on the state taking forward its constitutional responsibility to provide for its citizens – building on social prejudices that justify opposition to support for the poor.

AC: Like the National Health Insurance (NHI) which is on the verge of being passed by Parliament, opponents of a Ubig always ask: "Is Ubig affordable?" What is your take on that?

We are told by Treasury and conservative think tanks that a basic income will be economically damaging and unaffordable. However, they don't seem to have fully applied their minds to the evidence, or are not prepared to consider it. Research shows that a basic income set at a reasonable level is both affordable and would have beneficial social

and economic impacts. In short, these accounts miss three important aspects:

- The economic multiplier benefits, and associated rise in demand and revenue, resulting from a large injection of income, particularly into poor communities, is significant⁷;
- The net costs of a basic income grant are substantially lower than the gross costs (often used as a reference) once the recouped tax (including via VAT), an income tax clawback, the stimulus impact, and partial uptake are considered⁸; and
- There are multiple financing options available. These need to be carefully selected and sequenced, avoiding unintended consequences either on revenue, or on the intended beneficiaries⁹.

Clearly the grant will be a significant commitment, and the wealthy in society will have to be prepared to make a moderate sacrifice to make it happen. This is a small price to pay given the huge disparities in wealth and income in South Africa. There are a range of progressive financing instruments that have been proposed by the IEJ and others for consideration. A wealth tax is one of these, but there are a number of others.

AC: Finally, it appears that important policy advances have been made within our broader progressive movement to move towards a Ubig, could you identify some the challenges that lie ahead and what could be done about them?

Coleman: There are two immediate challenges: Firstly to improve the value of the SRD grant and extend it to millions who have been unfairly excluded by current provisions in the regulations¹⁰. The level of R663 has no basis, and progressive civil society is of the view that the SRD needs to be increased at minimum to the FPL of R663. This needs to

happen in this year's budget, and the exclusionary regulations which expire in March 2023 need to be amended. Secondly, pathways toward the introduction of a Ubig within agreed timeframes and with agreed modalities need to be discussed and finalised. Our initial discussions with the President in this regard, in January last year, were positive. But certain bureaucrats in the Presidency and Treasury in particular have blocked further discussion, despite an agreement that we would meet by the end of June 2022.

Research is currently being conducted modelling alternative pathways towards a Ubig¹¹, and we hope to present this to the President early this year. Further, while some business bodies have come out against Ubig, we are aware that there are significant business leaders who both recognise the value of basic income for the economy and their own businesses, and the danger of not acting given the conditions of extreme social distress.

While current developments in the Alliance on this front are encouraging - all three partners have expressed support for the introduction of a Universal Basic Income Guarantee - there is a concern that palace politics, factions, and leadership contestation will overwhelm critical policy issues such as a Ubig. And further that even if the ANC adopts the demand for a Ubig, there is concern it may not be implemented by government. However, if I look at the long road we have travelled and how far we have come on this issue, I am fairly optimistic that we can make history by becoming the first country, certainly in the global South, to adopt this radical measure.

AC: Thank you for sharing your perspectives with our readers on this critically important topic.

Thanks, it is so welcome that the SACP has taken up this issue of a Ubig, and is supporting its introduction. The left as a whole has not advanced this demand to the extent it should have, and there are probably a couple of reasons for this. Firstly, there is a tendency to think that issues of reproduction are not as important as matters of production, which are of course critical to any materialist analysis of capitalism. But the dynamic and changing nature of capitalism and the impact of its growing crises, particularly on the working class in the global South, as well as the central importance of the care economy thrown up so sharply during the Covid-19 crisis, are forcing a reassessment of this perspective. Secondly the embracing of the idea of (a limited version of) basic income by some conservative forces internationally, and the attempt to use this to undermine public services, makes some of the left suspicious of this demand. So it is a contested terrain that needs to be shaped by progressive forces. South Africa can be a global leader in this respect. ●

Cde Coleman is a senior policy specialist at the Institute for Economic Justice, a former Cosatu researcher and activist

Note: *the international and South African evidence referred to in this interview is summarised in a series of seven UBIG factsheets recently published by the IEJ and is available [here](#)*

Endnotes

1. <https://www.iej.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/IEJ-UBIG-1-fact-sheet-web.pdf>
2. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3208737
3. <https://www.iej.org.za/can-a-universal-basic-income-contribute-to-breaking-structural-poverty-in-south-africa/>

4. <https://shelverink.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=dea890fe0dd5d6278998be8a8&id=54a2cafc30&e=3d4b5b5dd3>
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9. <https://www.iej.org.za/financing-options-for-a-universal-basic-income-guarantee-in-south-africa/>
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BOOK REVIEW

A vital retelling of South Africa's history

A Brief History of South Africa: from earliest times to the Mandela Presidency, by John Pampallis and Maryke Bailey, Jacana, 2021

Review by Mandla J Radebe

The writing of South African history has been contentious, mainly due to the exclusion of the majority African people, whose past achievements have often been ignored or treated contemptuously. Various tendencies in the writing of this history sought to dispute Africans' claim to South Africa. The Afrikaner tendency, for example, portrayed Africans as not being indigenous to this country (Theal, 1897). On the other hand, the liberal tradition considered South Africa as constituting a single nation with the whites making up the core, while blacks in general and Africans in particular had to be integrated on the basis of meeting particular standards (Nxumalo, 1992).

This latter point is precisely what makes *A Brief History of South Africa* an important intervention. In this book, Pampallis and Bailey introduce the reader to a broad sweep of South African history, from the earliest times until the Mandela Presidency. While the book employs both a narrative chronology and thematic chapters, it encourages critical thinking about key events that shaped the history of the country. This is done by, inter alia, portraying the agency of the oppressed majority in resisting colonialism and apartheid, which explains the emer-

gence of political, social and trade union movements and their role in the liberation struggle.

Early societies

In a fascinating fashion the authors stretch our minds and knowledge to the seventeenth-century societies of southern Africa and reflect on the San as the first inhabitants of the region. Without being presumptuous in their argument that “early modern humans were present in southern Africa over 100 000 years ago”, they concede that “owing to a lack of evidence, we know very little about these early residents” (p. 18). The arrival of the Bantu-language speakers who were farmers is another dimension that is often misrepresented.

The expansion of the early Bantu-language speakers southwards from eastern Africa (the Great Lakes region) and western Africa (probably around Angola) debunks the revisionist notion presented by colonialist historians such as Theal (1897), which later became the basis of the ideology of the likes of Hendrik Verwoerd. Theal’s writings had become part of the foundation of the Afrikaner ideology which racist politicians like Verwoerd relied upon to advance a baseless notion that “Africans had no right to claim the whole of South African territory as belonging to them” (Nxumalo, 1992, p. 15). *A Brief History of South Africa* dispels this notion by pointing out that “The earliest farmers settled around the Kruger National Park, eSwatini and Mozambique in about AD 250. Settlements spread south along the coast of KwaZulu-Natal over the next 500 years. By AD 700 some farmers had settled as far south as modern-day East London” (p. 20).

Linked to this is the period between 1700 and 1800, which witnessed political changes among the Sotho–Tswana and Nguni groups. This is yet another epoch that has been misconstrued deliberately. Pampallis and Bailey describe this “state formation in southern Africa” and the

accompanying social, political and economic instability. How we understand and interpret this period of upheaval, known as the mfecane or the difaqane, is critical to our understanding our present. The book navigates various contentious issues such as the emergence of larger states such as the Zulu, Sotho and Ndebele kingdoms and their existence in the context of various kingdoms such as the Gaza, Swazi and Pedi kingdoms.

How exactly these kingdoms co-existed and what was the source of various conflicts are some of the crucial elements that this book unpacks. The political economy of this epoch included competition for the control of trade routes such as the one that “ran from the Portuguese colonial trading ports in the north-west (Angola) and on the east coast (Mozambique) to the upper Marico district” – parts of our history seldom spoken about (p. 33). For some, our history began with the arrival of the European settlers in 1652. By the time the raiders expanded from the Cape Colony by moving towards the north in the early 1800s, the African kingdoms in this country had been in existence for centuries.

The resistance struggles before and after the gold rush

Fundamentally, Africans, despite being technologically disadvantaged due to their reliance on primitive weaponry, were no walkover. Various books about the heroism of the Africans have emerged in recent times, albeit insufficiently. The Khoi and San responded to the Cape colonial expansion: the first Khoi–Dutch war is reported to have taken place in “1659 and lasted about a year” (p. 38). Again, the war between the trekboers and the Xhosa people is located in the context of the co-existence that the Xhosas had sought to foster, similar to their absorption of the San, Khoi, Thembu and Bhaca people. However, it was economic rivalry that led to conflict.

The colonial expansion and the resistance beyond the Cape Colony portray the agency and innovation of Africans. Many African communities regarded the Boers as just another group in competition for land and cattle, and in some instances “African leaders sometimes allied with the Boers, or the British, in order to defeat a common enemy”. The fights of Chief Moroka II of the Rolong with Mzilikazi is a case in point. Even in such alliances, the racial supremacy of the Voortrekkers, who “saw themselves as racially superior”, is palpable (p. 41).

The heroism of the African kingdoms and their different responses to colonial expansion, such as the Basotho under King Moshoeshoe in the land across the Orange River and the Zulu kingdom under various kings, are covered. This is done in the context of various developments such as the indentured labour of Indians in Natal. The defeat of Mzilikazi together with the treaties and agreements with the more powerful kingdoms to the north and east, such as those of the Swazi and Pedi, lay the basis for future developments. In fact, the liberation struggle cannot be fully understood outside of this background.

South Africa’s history would be incomplete without unpacking the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and the gold rush in Johannesburg 20 years later. It was on the back of these mining activities that South Africa became the largest industrialised economy on the African continent (Venter et al., 2012). The gold mines in particular not only brought about development, employment and wealth, but also, as Durand (2012) argues, “the most devastating war in the history of South Africa, civil unrest, economic inequality, social uprooting, pollution, negative health impacts and ecological destruction”. Hence, the control of the mining industry and the wealth it created in other economic activities, the role of mine workers and the racial dimension, and fundamentally the impact of the mineral revolution in South Africa, are all critical.

Indeed, history does not proceed on a straight line but has twists and turns as witnessed in numerous events of our past, such as the Anglo-Boer relations which led to war and the Union of South Africa. Inevitably, these developments led to the new forms of resistance including the formation of early black political organisations. The emergence of these modern political organisations in the later nineteenth century such as Imbumba yama Afrika, the Native Electoral Association and the Native Educational Association in what is now the Eastern Cape, provides us with insights into nascent modern resistance in South Africa (p. 67). It was in this environment that the South African Native National Congress, the forerunner of the African National Congress, was formed. Developments such as the Native Land Act of 1913 and the World Wars make for complex and fascinating reading.

In the context of the spikes of the recent protest action in the country and the emergence of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, the discussion of the post-war years, which venture on issues such as the Spanish flu and strikes, connects our past with the present. Similarities between the Spanish flu and Covid-19 are striking in that both are transmitted through respiratory droplets, are highly contagious and have no definitive cure (Lyngdoh, 2020). These linkages between the past and present are useful as we seek to resolve the national question by building a non-racist, non-sexist, democratic country. Importantly, this period will be incomplete without mentioning the role of communists, in particular the South African Communist Party and its forerunners, the International Socialist League and the Communist Party of South Africa. It was the emergence of the Party that gave impetus to non-racialism and the national democratic revolution (NDR). As Jeremy Cronin posits, “an inclusive non-racialism, the foundation of the post-apartheid South African democratic Constitution, is one of the major legacy contributions of the Party to the South African reality”

(Cronin, 2021, p.81). Thus the Party is pivotal in the history of the struggle for self-determination.

A Brief History of South Africa is replete with information on such issues as the economic crisis of the 1930s, the emergence of the National Party (NP), its rise to power in 1948 and the establishment of apartheid. The initial resistance to apartheid and the revival of the mass movement after the liberation movement had been weakened during the economic boom period of the early 1960s is an important part of our recent history.

The revival of the mass movement, inter alia, by the rise of the student movement and Black Consciousness in the universities, the re-emergence of worker resistance as witnessed in the 1973 Durban strikes, the independence of the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola in 1975 and the broader political developments in Southern Africa, Bantu Education and the uprising of 16 June 1976, and the bantustans are some of the important aspects.

Freedom and democracy

When the apartheid regime came under severe internal and external pressures, a negotiated settlement emerged as a solution. The processes leading towards negotiations – including the secret talks, overtures to release Mandela, the emergence of FW de Klerk as the new National Party leader, and the ultimate release of political prisoners and unbanning of political organisations – are crucial elements in comprehending our negotiated settlement.

The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) process, which paved the way for the 1994 elections and the eventual rise of Mandela to power, constitutes the last part of the narrative section of *A Brief History*. With the first democratic government in power, a new constitution was adopted in 1996. Many within the movement had ar-

tulated the vision of a constitutional democratic dispensation. One such interlocutor was Jabulani Mzala Nxumalo (1990), who argued thus when deliberating on the negotiation process:

“Our immediate and practical political concern should be the building of a new South African constitution, as the fundamental law of the country. Such a constitution should not, and will not, be the expression of any partisan political tendency. It will be neither an ANC nor an NP constitution. By definition the constitution should embody the aggregate aspiration of all citizens irrespective of their racial or ethnic affiliation. It is only on the basis of such a constitution that true national unity and equality will be placed on a secure legal basis in South Africa.”

In discussing Mandela’s legacy, the question of the Constitution often crops up. Of course, other areas like building new institutions of democracy, the expansion and transformation of the social infrastructure, the promotion of reconciliation through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the economy remain pertinent. However, it is in dealing with the economy in relation to the Mandela’s legacy that the book could have done more. Although it is mentioned that post-1994, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was jettisoned for the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme, the impact of this ideological shift cannot be discussed in one short paragraph.

The authors do not pretend to be experts on policy analysis; nevertheless, the historical process leading to GEAR could have been better articulated. Moreover, the folly of the 1996 class project is being exposed daily through our intractable socio-economic problems. Particularly, the SACP and Congress of South African Trade Unions were vocal on the policy and issued numerous documents. For example, the Macro-Economic Research Group (Merg) released a document in De-

ember 1993 whose ideological orientation differed to that of GEAR. Among the salient features of this document was its focus on the importance of the RDP. This history is crucial if future generations are to learn from some of the mistakes from the past.

Themes in South African history

The second part of *A Brief History of South Africa* presents themes in South African history, and I found this most valuable. Among the themes presented is “The South African economy”, which traces the economic sectors at different times and their influence in bringing about changes in the country’s politics and society. These sectors include subsistence agriculture which, for centuries, was the backbone of the South African economy; mining and commercial farming which became the two dominant sectors after the discovery of diamonds in the late 1860s and gold in the mid-1880s; and manufacturing linked to the mining boom.

The economic shifts of the 1970s linked to the rise of the financial and services sectors is another important aspect of our economic history. Recently, as part of its financial sector campaign, the SACP has characterised neoliberalism and financialisation as “destructive phenomena”. In the financialisation process, accumulation profits accrue primarily through financial channels rather than through trade and commodity production (Krippner, 2005).

A retelling of South Africa’s history would be incomplete without a discussion of the bantustans. The book presents a detailed logic behind this sham self-determination project of the National Party. It correctly posits that the “bantustans helped the apartheid government to extend its control over the movement and labour of the African population”. This is certainly not how apartheid presented this initiative. Having

presented a detailed and compelling history of the system, including the decline of the bantustans due to, inter alia, protests against them, it would have been useful for the book to connect the current provincial system to bantustans.

There is no doubt that there are continuities of the bantustan logic in the democratic period which have perpetuated backward tendencies like tribalism. In his December 2021 political report, the SACP's General Secretary, Blade Nzimande, identified parallels between the current local government "bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie" with the one that emerged in the bantustan and local government structures in black townships under apartheid. Nzimande also argued that there "still exists a huge divide in the rural areas between white-owned farms and the landless black masses in both the white farms and the former bantustans". Essentially, this denotes some level of continuity of the apartheid legacy into the democratic dispensation.

The theme on "The history of schooling in South Africa" details the inequalities resulting from our past. When discussing this theme, it is palpable that the authors are at their strength. It is not surprising, taking into account their backgrounds. The themes on "Poverty and inequality", "Life under apartheid: urban and rural experiences", "Women's struggles", "The trade union movement", "South Africa's constitutions" and "International solidarity against apartheid" are also important, and are more understandable after the scene of our history has been set in the first part of the book. In reality, these are not accidents of history but a constructed reality that the African working class in particular must contend with as part of their daily lived experiences. It is a credit to the authors for including such aspects as part of our history, as poverty and inequality, for example, form part of the South African landscape.

Concluding thoughts

While the book does not aim to present a comprehensive history of South Africa, a more nuanced and detailed discussion in relation to personal and organisational ideologies could have been presented more sharply. More importantly, not just in relation to the Mandela legacy, but various aspects of the book, one would have expected to encounter something new given the praxis of the authors. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the book's attempt to present an accurate version of our historical past. Such books are imperative in shaping our damaged collective historical consciousness that has been affected by centuries of distortions of history, particularly of the black majority. The authors must be commended for their efforts in successfully condensing an extensive historical period in a narrative of just over 300 pages.

A Brief History of South Africa is a useful guide for everyone interested in understanding our past. As to be expected of a book written by seasoned educators, it is a text that will come in handy for both formal and non-formal adult education purposes. However, its strength also lies in its usefulness as complementary material for history teaching in schools (including an appendix of text engagement activities for learners) and, fundamentally, in political education circles. Educators and trainers will find the book a useful tool that is likely to expand their own knowledge, particularly because each chapter points readers to a range of further readings with a variety of historical interpretations; it also provides questions for group discussion. ●

Cde Radebe is deputy chairperson of the SACP in Gauteng, an author, and associate professor in the University of Johannesburg's Department of Strategic Communication

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WHERE TO CONTACT THE SACP

HEAD OFFICE

4th Floor Cosatu House
110 Jorissen Street
Braamfontein, 2017
JOHANNESBURG, 2000
Tel: (011) 339 3621/2
(011) 3393621/2
Website: www.sacp.org.za
Twitter: SACaP1921
Facebook Page:
South African Communist
Party: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/South-African-Communist-Party/115354128489821>

EASTERN CAPE

Block A Unit 1 Bisho Business Village
Siwani Avenue BISHO, 5605
Tel/Fax: (040) 635 0463
Email: ecape@sacp.org.za

FREE STATE

1st Floor Moses Kotane Building
44 Fichardt Str, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9300
Fax: (051) 430 7571/4480303
Email: freestate@sacp.org.za

GAUTENG

4A Floor Samwu House
Cnr. Frederick & Von Brandis Str
JOHANNESBURG, 2000
Tel: (011) 333 9177
Fax: (011) 331 3017
Email: gauteng@sacp.org.za

LIMPOPO

Jorissen Street, Adams Forum
NUM HOUSE, 0700
Tel: (015) 297 8128
Fax: (015) 297 7643
Email: limpopo@sacp.org.za

MOSES MABHIDA

321 Anton Lembede Street 7th Floor
SADTU House DRBN
Tel: (031) 301 3806/301 3763
Fax: (031) 301 5470
Email: kzn@sacp.org.za

MOSES KOTANE

4th Floor; Room 406, Vannel Building,
Cnr: OR Tambo & Boom Street
KLERKSDORP, 2570
Tel: (018) 462 5675/8230
Fax: (018) 462 5675/4322
Email: northwest@sacp.org.za

MPUMALANGA

NUM Offices, Smart Park Building
WITBANK
Tel: (013) 656 2045/73
Fax: (013) 690 1286
Email: mpumalanga@sacp.org.za

NORTHERN CAPE

17 Graham Street Street,
KIMBERLEY, 8300
Telefax (053) 831 4180
Email: ncape@sacp.org.za

WESTERN CAPE

No 8 Beverley Street Athlone,
Code: 7764 CT
Tel: 021 762 9719/9748
Fax: (021) 421 4170 / 424 4667
Email: wcape@sacp.org.za

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