

Umsebenzi

May 2025

Voice of the South African Communist Party

MAY DAY MESSAGE



**BUILD A MASS MOVEMENT
FOR SOCIALISM!**

- **Sactu anniversary**
- **Anti-Fascists meet in Moscow**
- **Two different Ukraines**

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Editor-in-Chief
Solly Mapaila

Editor
Yunus Carrim

Deputy Editor
Buti Manamela

Jenny Schreiner
Alex Mashilo
Nomarashiya Caluza
Yershen Pillay
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Andries Nel
Mzwandile Thakudi
Dibolelo Mahlatsi

Sub Editor
Mark Waller

Design & Production
Lungiswa Msibi

Staff Support
Hlengiwe Nkonyane

SACP, Cosatu House
110 Jorissen Street
Chr Simmonas
Braamfontein 2017

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May Day, Freedom Day and 31 years of democracy: the struggle to deepen working-class gains

The working class must be organised and mobilised to take back its rightful place as the engine of people’s power

This issue of *Umsebenzi* comes just after a momentous period: May Day, Freedom Day, and the 31st anniversary of South Africa’s democracy. These are not disconnected commemorations. They are fundamentally interwoven markers of the ongoing struggle for liberation, dignity, and justice for the workers and the poor of our country.

As the SACP, we remain clear: the

people, the continued marginalisation of working-class voices from key centres of power, and a weakening of the trade union movement. On top of this, we face an intensified imperialist offensive globally and neoliberal attacks from within.

It is exactly because of these crises that the SACP has taken the historic step of preparing to contest the 2026 local government elections independently, to

“*The working class must be organised and mobilised to take back its rightful place as the engine of people’s power*”

Constitution must be a living document in the hands of the working class, a shield against oppression and a weapon for further transformation. Our Party uses it not only to defend the rights of workers, but to fight for deeper social and economic transformation.

This year’s commemorations take place in a context without precedent. For the first time since 1994, the ANC lost an outright national electoral majority, and a Government of National Unity (GNU) has been formed. But this GNU, while presented as a necessity for stability, carries real dangers. We are witnessing the return of austerity, an attempt to tax the poor and working

ensure working-class interests are no longer sidelined.

We must also acknowledge that there has been progress. Our labour laws remain among the most progressive in the world. The Bill of Rights enshrines hard-won freedoms. Social conditions for millions have improved, albeit unevenly and far from where they should be. But we cannot pretend this is enough.

The truth is, our democracy has been reduced to mere top-down service delivery demands and voting rituals every five years, while the people have been demobilised from active participation in changing their material

conditions. It is not enough to vote. The working class must be organised and mobilised to take back its rightful place as the engine of people's power.

This moment also sees new threats emerging. The GNU threatens to roll back progressive programmes: the Expropriation Bill, the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Bill, National Health Insurance (NHI) and even the basic social security nets meant to

cushion the poor against capitalist crises. In this climate, the latest target has become the Employment Equity Act, a powerful instrument designed to address workplace exclusion and the ongoing racial and class inequalities that remain entrenched. The right wing, aided by big capital, has launched attacks on the Act. We must defend it with everything we have. To weaken it is to weaken the rights of the working

class.

The SACP's task remains clear: to defend and deepen the gains of the past three decades; to resist austerity and neoliberal rollback; to protect and expand worker rights; and to ensure that democracy becomes more than just an exercise in voting, but a real expression of mass power in every corner of society.

The struggle continues.★

ACT AGAINST APARTHEID ISRAEL

The South African BDS Coalition is a network of Palestine Solidarity Organisations and is the South African affiliate to the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) that issued the call for international boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel in 2005. The BNC represents the broadest coalition of Palestinian civil society, including all political parties, trade unions, human rights and grass roots organisations.

The coalition exists to bring various solidarity organisations together, under common campaigns, structures, and principles. It therefore creates a platform for the different Palestine Solidarity Organisations to work together and support one another.



A mural in Bethlehem calling for the boycott of Israeli products (Photo: Megan Hanna), and a Palestine solidarity sticker seen in Stockholm, Sweden

MAY DAY 2025

Intensifying the fight for socialism, working-class unity and anti-imperialism

On 1 May 2025, workers across South Africa and the world gathered to commemorate International Workers' Day, reflecting on the intensified challenges faced by the working class and the continued relevance of the struggles initiated by the Chicago pioneers in 1886



Cosatu held its main May Day rally in Middleberg, Mpumalanga. On the platform from the left: Siyabonga Hlongwane, Mpumalanga Provincial Chairperson, Popcru 1st Deputy President Mosadiwamaje Mokokong, Cosatu President Zingiswa Losi, ANC President Cyril Ramaphosa, SACP General Secretary Solly Mapaila, Sanco President Richard Hlophe and ANC Mpumalanga Provincial Chairperson Mandla Ndlovu Photo: Cosatu

South Africa: call for unity amidst challenges

In South Africa, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) organised rallies across all nine provinces, with the national event held in Middelburg, Mpumalanga. Keynote speakers included Cosatu President Zingiswa Losi, who emphasised the importance of defending workers' rights against neoliberal policies and austerity measures. She called for unity among workers to resist economic challenges and policy rollbacks.

The South African Communist Party (SACP) also participated actively in these events. General Secretary Solly

Mapaila delivered a powerful critique of the Government of National Unity (GNU), labelling it as a betrayal of the working class. He emphasised that the GNU's policies, particularly austerity measures, undermine the gains of the National Democratic Revolution and called for the defence of transformative legislation like the Employment Equity Act.

Other notable rallies included events in Sharpeville, Gauteng, and Cape Town, where workers braved inclement weather to participate in the celebrations. These gatherings served as platforms to reaffirm the commitment to workers' rights and to mobilise against the erosion of labour protections.

Global solidarity – shared struggles and aspirations

The themes echoed in South Africa found resonance worldwide, as workers in various countries marked May Day with rallies and demonstrations:

Cuba: In Havana's Revolution Square, approximately 5.3 million people, nearly half of the country's population, participated in May Day celebrations. The massive turnout underscored the Cuban people's resilience amid economic hardships and heightened tensions with the U.S.

Brazil: Workers across Brazil took to the streets to demand better working conditions and wage increases. In

May 2025

São Paulo, demonstrations focused on ending the six-day workweek, highlighting the ongoing struggle for fair labour practices.

India: In Hyderabad, members of the Centre of India Trade Unions (CITU) participated in vibrant rallies, emphasising the need for improved labour laws and increased minimum wages.

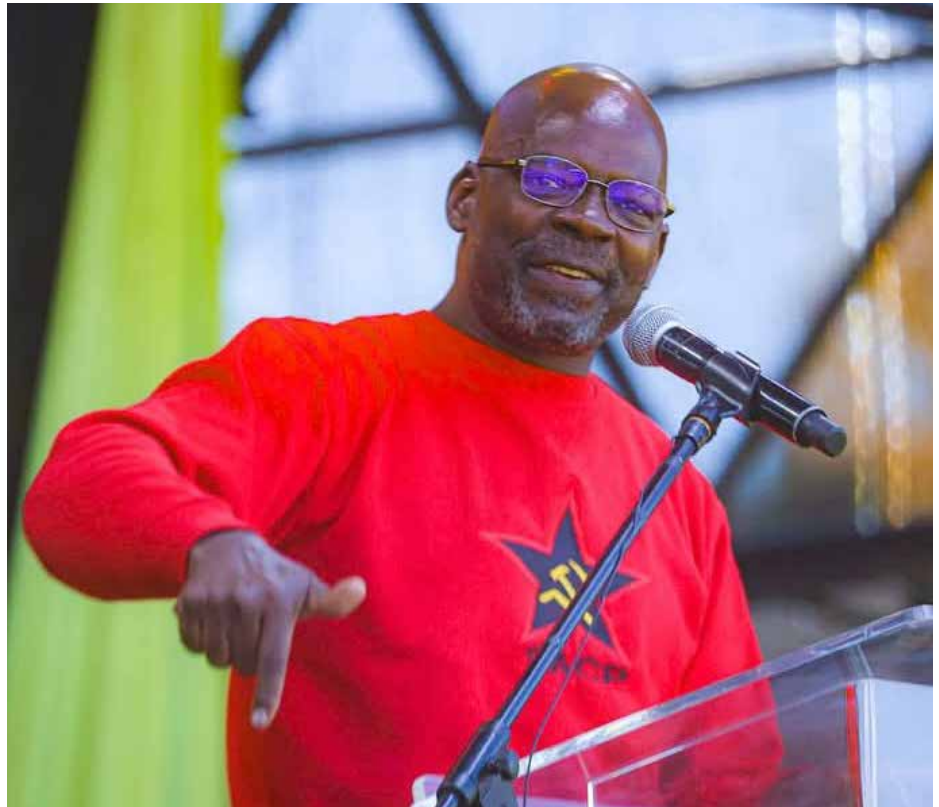
Mozambique: Workers demanded urgent wage increases and measures to combat precarious working conditions, highlighting the deteriorating purchasing power of workers and calling for government action.

Eswatini (Swaziland): The Communist Party of Swaziland (CPS) issued a May Day statement emphasising the need for democratic reforms and the protection of workers' rights, and condemning the government's suppression of the labour movement.

US: Across the country, thousands rallied to protest against President Donald Trump's labor and immigration policies. Major cities like Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago saw significant turnouts, with demonstrators advocating for workers' rights, fair wages, and immigrant protections.

Unified front against global capitalist crises

The consistent challenges faced by workers globally—ranging from long working hours, unsafe working conditions, austerity, and inequality—underscore the need for unity. The



SACP General Secretary speaking at the Cosatu May Day rally held in Middleberg, Mpumalanga
Photo: Cosatu

cost of living, environmental justice, and the weakening of industrial trade unions are not isolated issues but are interconnected symptoms of a global capitalist crisis and onslaught.

This May Day served as a powerful reminder that the struggle for workers' rights transcends borders. It calls for a unified front, both locally and internationally, to confront the systemic issues that continue to oppress the working class. The World Federation of Trade Unions, celebrating the 80th

anniversary of its foundation, called for intensified class struggle against the exploitation of workers and to oppose imperialist wars.

As the SACP and Cosatu have emphasised, the path forward requires solidarity, resilience, and a steadfast commitment to the principles of social justice and equality. The fight continues, and the unity of workers worldwide remains our most potent weapon against exploitation and oppression. ★



Members of Centre of India Trade Unions (CITU) shout slogans at a rally to mark May Day in Hyderabad, India, Thursday, May 1, 2025
Photo: Mahesh Kumar A.

WFTU: Against imperialist wars - for workers' rights

This year's May Day coincides with the 80th Anniversary of the WFTU, which was born in the ashes of the most destructive war in the history of humanity in the revolutionary fresh air of the great anti-fascist victory of the peoples with the Soviet Union at the forefront, and completes 8 decades of continuous and uninterrupted struggle for the rights of workers, for justice and social progress, against all forms of discrimination, against wars and imperialist interventions, against man-by-man exploitation.

Both the messages and demands of the Chicago pioneers of 1886 and the needs that inevitably led to the establishment of the WFTU remain relevant and necessary today. The crisis of capitalism deepens and is generalised. Social inequalities are widening dramatically. Democratic freedoms and trade union rights are under attack all over the world, and the imperialist wars and interventions are on the daily agenda.

*From the World Federation of Trade Unions May Day 2025 Declaration
For the full text, see <https://www.wftucentral.org/wftu-2025-mayday-declaration/>*



May Day protest in São Paulo, Brazil, demanding the end of the 6-day working week Photo: Tomaz Silva/Agência Brasil

SACP: Build a socialist movement of the workers and the poor

The solution does not lie in hoping that the agents of capitalism will deliver any fundamental change. We must build working-class power to bring about fundamental change. The SACP has adopted two connected resolutions:

- To forge a popular left front movement as a broad platform of working-class struggle
- To build a powerful, socialist movement of the workers and the poor

These are not abstract slogans. They are practical responses to the deepening capitalist crisis. They are about uniting organised and unorganised workers, progressive trade unions, community movements, youth, students, women and all the exploited and marginalised.

The SACP calls on organised workers to strengthen efforts to organise unorganised workers. Let us unite in the popular left front movement at all levels.

Beyond that, let all socialist revolutionaries and class-conscious workers unite to build a mass socialist movement to challenge capitalist rule.

*From the SACP's International Workers' Day 2025 statement.
For the full text, see <https://www.sacp.org.za>*



Signs calling for an end to the U.S. blockade of Cuba could be seen throughout the 600,000-strong May Day mobilisation in Havana
Photo: Duane Stilwell / World-Outlook

Cosatu: Unite more than ever

Whilst we celebrate our victories, much remains to be done, the struggle must continue. Unemployment is endemic, casualisation and labour brokers persist, gender-based violence haunts millions and wages are stagnant whilst living costs rise.

Political freedom has not yet delivered economic freedom for workers. We cannot be divided. We must unite more than ever before.

Key to uplifting the working class, is control of the state. The Alliance did not only contest state power to become ministers, but to ensure that the organs of government are biased towards the poor and the working class and that they are used to defeat unemployment, poverty and inequality.

From the Workers' Day address by Cosatu President Zingiswa Losi



May Day rally in Chicago, US Photo: Brandon Chew/People's World

May 2025

SACTU 70TH ANNIVERSARY

A pivotal place in SA's liberation movement history

OJ Fourie looks at a crucial moment in South African working-class history that indelibly linked labour and class struggle



The creation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu) in 1955 brought about a formation of the organised working class, who by their consciousness, advanced the dialectical relationship between trade union struggle and political struggle.

To demonstrate the depth and intensity of this, from its foundation on 5 and 6 March 1955, it mobilised the collection of key demands from the organised and broader working class, which were sent by workers to be incorporated into clauses of the draft Freedom Charter.

Sactu was given the main responsibility of gathering worker's demands for the Freedom Charter.

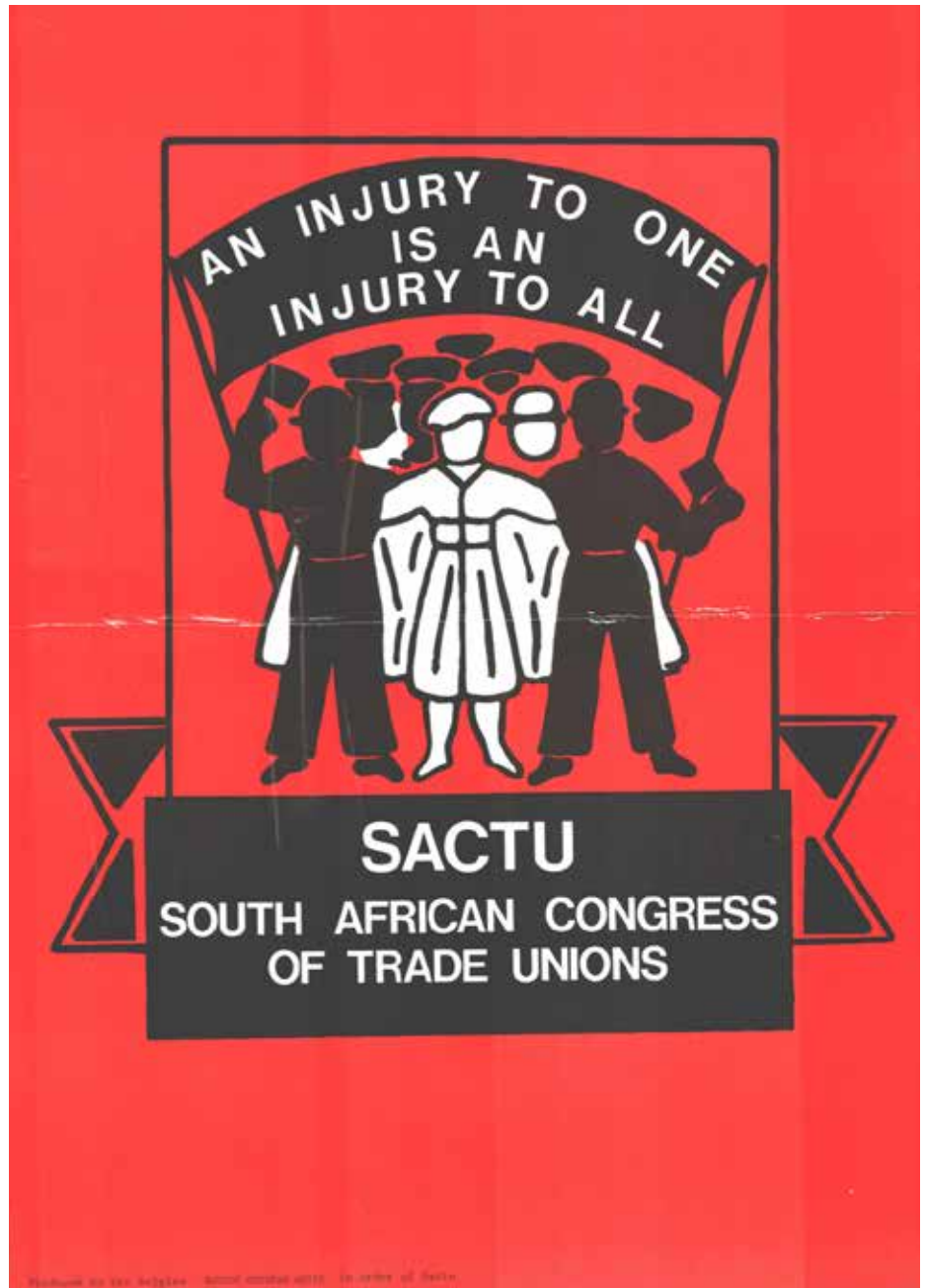
Among the ones that found their way into the final clauses of the Charter were "The people shall share in the country's wealth", "There shall be work and security", and "The right and duty to work."

This brought Sactu into the Congress Alliance in 1955, until it was phased out in 1991.

The structured politicisation and education of Sactu members resulted in many taking on key leadership roles in the ANC and SACP. The federation's first conference, in 1956, declared that the fight for economic and political rights was inseparable. Uniquely, Sactu holds a pivotal place in South Africa's liberation movement history, with significant contributions to the military struggle, trade union struggle and, more broadly, the liberation struggle.

Celebrating Sactu's legacy on its 70th anniversary at Liliesleaf Farm presented an opportunity to reflect on its historical journey, its contribution to the trade union, political and military struggle and the lessons that can be passed on to the trade union movement today.

The formation of Sactu marked a



Poster produced for Sactu in 1985 by the anti-apartheid solidarity movement in Belgium to mark the federation's 30th anniversary

significant shift, and foresight in the trajectory of South Africa's labour movement, being the first non-racial trade union federation, at a time of deep racial segregation, whilst at the same time openly advancing the workers' and working-class interests in a militant and systematic attack upon

apartheid racial discriminatory labour legislation.

Sactu's commitment to workers' rights and social justice was encapsulated in its slogan: "An independent native South African republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic, with full equal

rights for all races, black, coloured, and white.”

The roots of progressive trade unionism in the country can be traced to the International Socialist League, which was instrumental in organising workers across colour lines.

It was also instrumental in the formation of the Indian Workers Industrial Union (Durban) and the Industrial Workers Association (Witwatersrand) in 1917, then the municipal workers a year later,



followed by the African mineworkers strike in 1920.

The call for strikes, burning of passes and refusal to pay taxes were brought onto the agendas of the Commercial Workers Union (CWU).

The formation of the Council of Non-European Trade Unions in

1941 saw the first progressive trade union federation emerge, the result of work carried out in the Joint Committee of African Trade Unions, the African

Clothing Workers Union (a parallel union of the Garment Workers Union), and work by the Communist Party of South Africa. This work in the 1930s among industrial unions was based on night schools organised for workers.

The philosophy and ideological orientation of Sactu was to be spelt out at its first Congress in 1956, which declared that the union was “conscious of the fact that the organising of ...workers for higher wages, better conditions of life...is inextricably bound up with a determined struggle for political rights”.

“It follows that a mere struggle for economic rights for all workers without participation in the general struggle for political emancipation would condemn the trade union movement to uselessness and to a betrayal of the interests of workers.”

Sactu initially aimed to unify Black workers under non-racial trade unionism, aligning ideologically with the World Federation of Trade Unions and the SACP. It built industrial unions and organised strikes and protests challenging apartheid-era labour policies. Leading up to the Congress of the People in June 1955, Sactu was seen as a strategic ally, tasked with collecting demands from workers for the draft clauses of the Freedom Charter.

One of the many Sactu organisational slogans was, “An independent native South African republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic.” This underscored its commitment to broader socio-economic and political transformation, in a new republic of changed power relations in favour of the working class.

Sactu served on the National Co-ordinating Committee of the Congress Alliance. At times Sactu took up and initiated campaigns and played a leading organising role in these campaigns. Noting Sactu's rich history, it goes without saying that Sactu played a pivotal role in fighting for and achieving workers' rights for the working class. ★

Cde Fourie is an SACP member in Gauteng Province and works for the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) in the Presidency

What is SACTU?

- ★ SACTU was founded as the first non-racial trade union co-ordinating body on 5 March 1955.
- ★ SACTU at its formation committed itself and its affiliated unions and workers to struggle on both economic and political fronts against all forms of oppression and exploitation.
- ★ SACTU, through its place in the Congress Alliance shows its total commitment to the destruction of the apartheid regime and to the implementation of the Freedom Charter.
- ★ SACTU's success in mobilising workers on both trade union and political fronts met with severe repression in the early 1960s.
- ★ Between 1962 and 1965, hundreds of SACTU activists were banned from trade union work, banished and imprisoned. Many were murdered in the prisons of apartheid.
- ★ SACTU was forced to find new ways of organising. Today SACTU is forced to use every means, legal and illegal, open and underground to build the strength of the trade unions.
- ★ SACTU continues its tasks of organising the unorganised workers into trade unions, creating unity between diverse forces within the South African working class in opposition to apartheid.
- ★ SACTU has always regarded the formation of one democratic federation as a crucial and urgent task facing the trade union movement. The unity of the trade unions is essential for workers to win both their short term and long term demands.
- ★ SACTU's task is to guide, influence and persuade the trade union movement along the revolutionary course of our struggle.



INVITE SACTU SPEAKERS TO ADDRESS YOUR MEETINGS!

South African Congress of Trade Unions

8 Flowers Mews, off Archway Close, Upper Holloway, London N19 3TB
Telephone 01-281 3233

From a leaflet marking the 30th anniversary of Sactu. From the early 1970s SACTU had an office in London and in 1976 it set up a liaison committee to foster links with British trade unions

Who decides what work is valuable? – the class politics of labour and status

Buti Manamela asks why some labour is considered more important than others, regardless of the profits it generates



For as long as work has existed under capitalism, so has the hierarchy that defines it. Some jobs are seen as prestigious, others as undesirable. But who decides what work deserves respect and what work is dispensable? Why do we praise the office executive but overlook the carpenter who built that office or the cleaner who prepares that office daily? Why does a stockbroker earn exponentially more than a plumber, when we will always need plumbers and cleaners? These questions may seem abstract, but they lie at the heart of how capitalism has shaped our understanding of labour, value and dignity.

Hollywood played a crucial role in

this process. Over time, it has crafted and reinforced a specific image of success—the suave stockbroker in a tailored suit, shouting at his or her secretary in a sleek office with a panoramic view of the city. That became the aspiration, the definition of a career. Meanwhile, the people who keep the world running—electricians, shoemakers, tilers, cleaners—became invisible. You seldom see a plumber on television unless it's for comic effect, as if the work itself is something to laugh at. You certainly don't see women workers on television unless they are marketing some commodity.

This is not a coincidence. It is a deliberate social construct, designed to make people aspire to the world of finance law and corporate power rather than manual labour. It is a way of

devaluing essential work and pushing people into a system where wealth is made not through production, but through speculation.

After the Second World War, the American economy boomed, fuelled by the Marshall Plan, military expansion and exploitation of global resources. The result? A shift in the concept of work itself. The physical, tangible labour that built the country—factories, farms, trade work—was devalued in favour of using money to make more money. Capital itself became a commodity, and suddenly, work was not about creating but about circulating wealth. That was the moment when certain types of jobs became unfashionable.

Take a plumber, for example. No matter how much technology advances, humans will always eat and poop, which

“Some day, we may reach a point where society recognises that all labour – whether manual or intellectual – has dignity

means we will always need someone to deal with the consequences. Robots might be sophisticated enough to drive cars, but will they be able to handle our sewage? We need welders, tilers, electricians, carpenters and cleaners. No civilisation—no matter how modern—will ever function without these women and men. And yet, their work has been systematically devalued.

What capitalism has done is not just create economic inequality; it has created hierarchies of labour. It has assigned status to certain professions and rendered others undesirable, including those where women are predominant. And, in doing so, it has also exported manual labour to the East. China, for example, built its global dominance precisely by doing the work that Western economies no longer wanted to do. It became the world's factory, while the West focused on financial speculation and technology.

In Southern Africa, the impact of this is clear. If you ask a middle-class person, “Who made your shoes?” they probably won't know. If you need a skilled carpenter, chances are the best one in your area is from Malawi or Mozambique. That's not a critique of local talent—it's an indictment of the fact that our system does not prioritise



Manual work: making life livable



Why do we consider office or 'intellectual' work more important than manual work?

skills training. We have millions of unemployed young people, yet we rely on migrant labour for artisanship. Instead of building a generation of skilled workers, we've built a generation dependent on social grants.

This raises a fundamental question: who decides what work is valuable? Why is my work as a deputy minister seen as ten times more valuable than that of a woodcutter or a cleaner? If I don't have wood, I can't be an efficient parliamentarian. But somehow, the system has decided that I should earn ten times more, while the woodcutter and cleaner barely survive.

The truth is that the entire structure of work is based on power, not necessity. Some work is made fashionable because it aligns with the interests of capital. Other work is made invisible because it does not. And yet, all work is interconnected. A world without poets and musicians would be bleak, but a world without sanitation workers would be unliveable.

I read something this week: “If AI can do my dishes, I'll be happy because then I can focus on writing

poetry.” This idea is often presented as a utopian vision—that we should all be freed from manual labour to pursue intellectual or artistic interests. But is that really the goal? The real question is, why is some labour seen as a burden and other labour seen as a privilege? Why does a poet's time matter more than a plumber's or cleaner's?

Someday, we may reach a point where society recognises that all labour—whether manual or intellectual, whether done by men or women, black or white—has dignity. Someday, the carpenter and the parliamentarian will be seen as equal contributors to society. Someday, bad poetry may even become poetry.

And that will be the day I finally publish. ★

Cde Buti Manamela is a CC member, MP and Deputy Minister of Higher Education

FIGHTING FASCISM

Anti-Fascist Forum meets in Moscow

The lessons of the war against 20th Century fascism and militarism are more relevant today than ever, writes Ben Martins



Four hundred and fifty delegates from 91 countries, representing 164 organisations, political parties, women and youth organisations, political leaders, MPs, scientists, war veterans and trade unionists took part in the Anti-Fascist Forum in Moscow on 21 to 25 April 2025 at the invitation of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, ahead of the 80th anniversary of the Soviet Red Army's victory over fascist Nazi-Germany, which fell on May 9.

The Forum was opened by the

General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), Gennady Zyuganov. He said that Nazism would not have been defeated without the leadership of Joseph Stalin and communists who were among the first to volunteer to serve on the frontlines of the Second World War.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a message of support to the forum, in which he stressed the importance of preserving the historical memory of the Red Army's defeat of fascism and the need for joint efforts to prevent the spread of racism, Nazism, fascism, Russophobia, anti-Semitism and

other regressive ideologies based on inciting hatred, intolerance and narrow nationalist propaganda.

The forum's opening programme included an international conference on the theme *The Consolidation of Progressive Forces in the Struggle Against Neo-Fascism and Neo-Nazism in Modern Society and Against the Threat of a Third World War*. A seminar was also held, titled *The Birth of Genius: Lenin's Teaching on Imperialism and Fascism*. This was dedicated to the 155th anniversary of Lenin's birth and was organised by Russian Scientists for Socialism (RUSO).

Other discussion topics dealt with fascism as a threat to security and cooperation in Europe, and Nazism and fascism as the logical continuation of colonial capitalism.

The SACP delegation participated in both the conference and the seminar.

On 22 April, the 155th anniversary of Lenin's birth, delegates from 91 countries gathered at the Red Square and laid red carnations at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in tribute to the sacrifice of Soviet soldiers killed in the Second World War.

From there, they proceeded to Lenin's Mausoleum to pay their respects.

On 23 April the SACP and ANC delegations had a courtesy meeting with the General Secretary of the CPRF, which revealed that despite finding themselves broadly aligned with President Putin on the question of opposing Nato expansionism and neo-Nazism in Ukraine, the Russian communists maintain a distinct line: socialism has to be restored to fight fascism and win.

Among other issues discussed was the importance of building united fronts, anti-capitalist alliances and the cooperation between peoples and the forging of a multipolar world against imperialist wars and unipolarism.

On 24 April, the SACP and ANC delegations had a Round Table discussion with the Patrice Lumumba



Soviet soldier raising the flag of the Soviet Union over the Reichstag in Berlin, 2 May 1945

University Faculty of Economics lecturers and students on the topic of prospects for expanding Russian-South African relations in the face of external challenges.

Among other matters foregrounded at the International Anti-Fascist Forum were calls for intensified international collaboration of communists and anti-fascists for a united front against imperialism and war.

The remnants of neo-colonialism and fascism that continue to plague the world were also discussed.

“ It is important to build united fronts, anti-capitalist alliances and cooperation between peoples, and to forge a multipolar world against imperialist wars and unipolarism

The important point that fascism was not only defeated in the Second World War on the battlefield, but also by a system of values which emphasised freedom, social justice, equality, humanism and the friendship of peoples, was also highlighted. As was the need to remain committed to multilateralism and the democratisation of international relations.

From the proceedings at the International Anti-Fascist Forum it was clear that communists, socialists and left-wing forces will defend the historical truth of the Soviet Union's crushing 9 May 1945 defeat of Nazism, from the bourgeois powers which suppress or seek to rewrite it, and from those who distort, misinterpret and misrepresent it.

In conclusion, Georgi Dimitrov's definition of fascism at the 7th World Congress of the Communist International, held in 1935, as “ ... an open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, the most chauvinistic, the most imperialist elements of finance capital” remains apt. ★

Cde Martins is an SACP Central Committee and Politburo member, Secretary of International Relations, a former Minister, MK combatant and political prisoner. He's also a published poet.



Scene outside the Anti-Fascist Forum, Moscow, 22 May. Photo: CPS



Delegates to the Anti-Fascist Forum lay flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow Photo: Russian Embassy in Kenya

SOVIET UNION – UKRAINE

Ukraine – a history lesson

Ronnie Kasrils *contrasts the behaviour of the Soviet Ukraine of history with the Ukraine of today*



There is an uncanny repetition in the line-up of Nato forces against Russia today, centred on the Ukraine front, and stretching 1,500 kms from the Baltic to the Black Sea. That front was previously breached on 22 June 1941 in Nazi Germany's infamous invasion of the Soviet Union. That ill-fated fantasy of Adolph Hitler to wipe out communism, and to subjugate the world to fascist rule, ended in Nazi Germany's inglorious defeat on 8 May 1945, 80 years ago, primarily at the hands of the Red Army.

Russia has been invaded many times in history at incredible cost to its people, and does not intend to allow that to happen again. Its partnership with China and the Global South against Western imperialism is invaluable for humanity's sake.

Celebrating victory over Nazi Germany

The 80th anniversary of the epic victory over fascist Germany has just been celebrated in Moscow and the West. The elitist ruling class version in the West was a Nato event, where US President Donald Trump claimed

that America won the war. That's the Hollywood version. Their Ukrainian puppet Zelensky features as an inflatable hero against the Russian peril. A visitor from another planet would not have realised Hitler and Nazi Germany had once been the common foe of World War 2 Allies – East and West.

As the Western imperialists attempt to rewrite the history books, the current rise of fascism is being undermined, and their war-mongering grows. In contrast, the celebrations in Moscow were authentic and supported by countries such as Belarus and China, which had carried a major wartime burden in that victory.

Zelensky's visit to South Africa

Shortly before these events, Zelensky was in South Africa, where unfortunately such misunderstandings of history were prevalent.

In welcoming him, President Ramaphosa stated:

"We acknowledge with great appreciation the support we received from Ukraine during our liberation struggle. We recall that a number of exiled South Africans received training

“ *The Ukraine of today is an anti-communist, Russophobe proxy of Nato, where Nazi collaborators are celebrated*

and education in Ukraine.” (24 April, 2025)

Amidst protests over Zelensky's visit, the General Secretary of the SACP, Cde Solly Mapaila, stated: “Zelensky does not deserve to be in South Africa. We are recognising a man who has turned his country into a meat grinder, sending young men into the frontline for something he could have avoided. He has lost legitimacy in Ukraine and world affairs.”

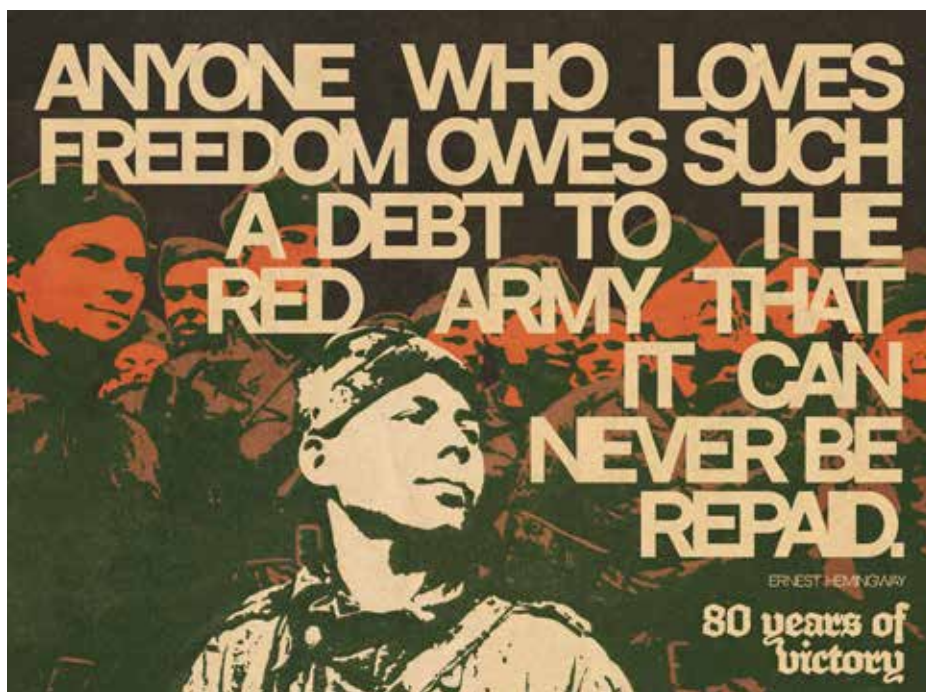
President Ramaphosa's statement needs to be corrected.

The Ukraine of today is an anti-communist, Russophobe proxy of Nato, where Nazi collaborators are celebrated. It is by no means the same state that assisted our liberation movement and many others from Africa, Asia and Latin America, most notably in the people's victories of Cuba, Vietnam and Southern Africa. Neither is Ukraine the country that was part of the Soviet Union in the war against Hitler.

The Ukraine that provided generous support and training for the ANC was Soviet Ukraine—part of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). This was a communist-led republic that, along with others, played a key role in the internationalist policies of the Soviet Union; a very different entity to Zelensky's Ukraine.

To put it bluntly, welcoming Zelensky and thanking his government for Soviet-era support is like thanking West Germany for the internationalist solidarity that came from the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) — an entirely different society with a different political project.

The Ukrainian embassy in South



Africa cynically asserts that the ANC should acknowledge gratitude for Ukraine's role in supporting our struggle against apartheid.

Formation of the Soviet Union

Ukraine was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1922, along with 14 other Soviet republics. The Soviet Union was formed as a consequence of the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. Soviet Ukraine, along with the other Soviet republics, made remarkable advances in science, education, and industry and played a key role in the USSR's broader

internationalist agenda.

This was the Ukraine that hosted and trained ANC cadres, along with those from Frelimo (Mozambique Liberation Front), SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation), MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola), Zapu (Zimbabwe African People's Union), and others. From the early 1960s, military and academic institutions in Soviet Ukraine, along with other Soviet republics, welcomed liberation fighters. We were welcomed not as recipients of aid but as comrades in a global struggle.

The support we received was

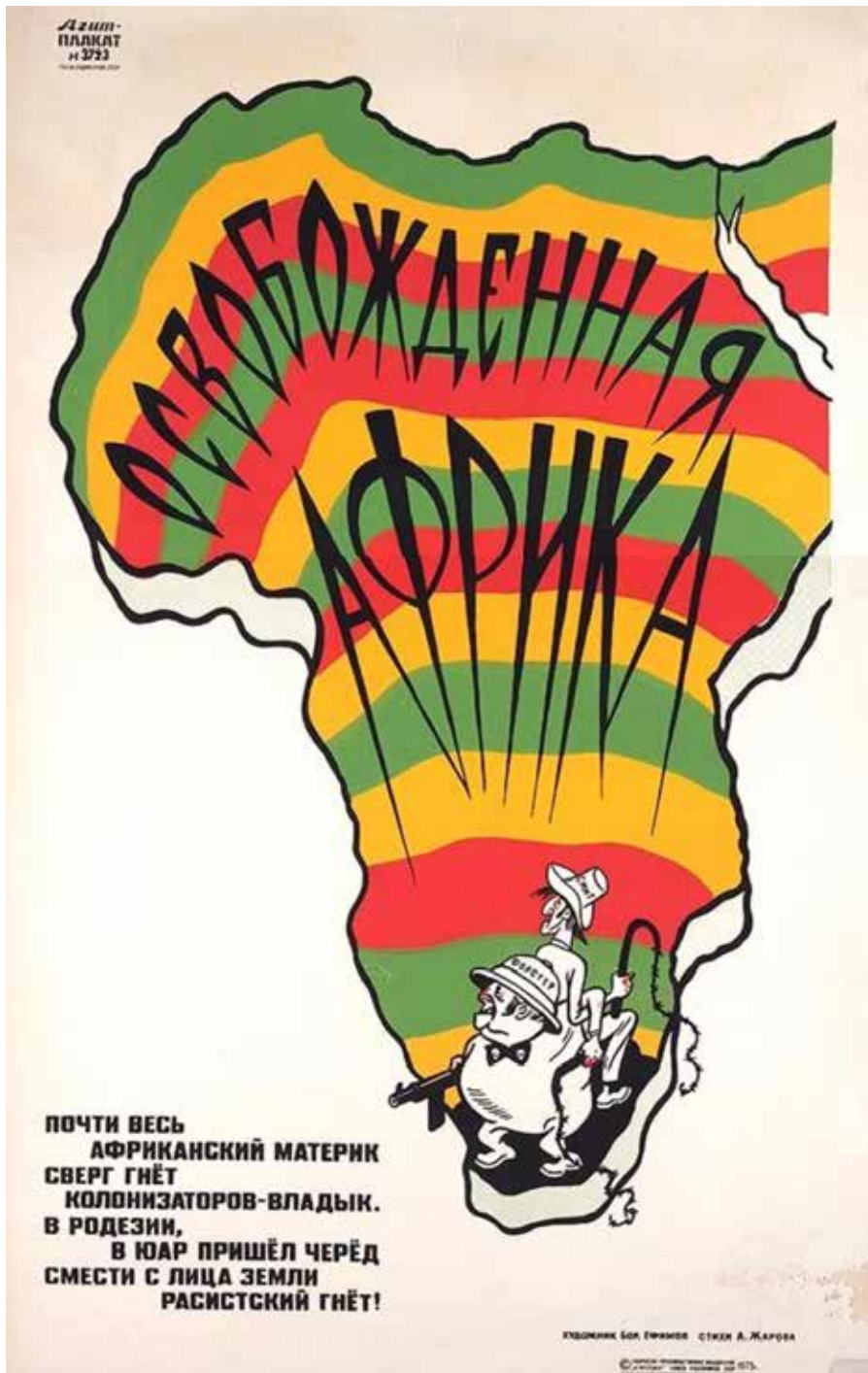
not from a nationalist state but from a socialist internationalist project grounded in anti-colonial solidarity. It is important to recall that at this time Western governments backed the apartheid regime.

For the record, military training and academic education of ANC/SACP cadres in the Soviet Union resulted from initial proposals from the SACP and a formal request by Oliver Tambo on behalf of the ANC to Soviet authorities in 1962. The first group of forty Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) comrades received military training in Moscow in 1963, among them Cdes Chris Hani, Archie Sibeko and Mavuso Msimang. Two groups, approximately 150 each, received training in Odessa in 1964 and 1965. Among them were Cdes Joe Modise, Moses Mabhida and Joe Jele.

Over the years the training for MK was centred on the Moscow district, with specialisations in time for naval officers in Baku (then Azerbaijan SSR), air force pilots in Frunze Academy (Tajikistan SSR), political commissars in Minsk (Belarus SSR) and Tashkent SSR. From 1969 a major training area for African movements was in the Russian speaking Crimea, at the extensive Perevalnoye base, where the terrain was more suitable for southern Africans. Further afield, countries such as Cuba, China, North Korea and Vietnam received huge support in their liberation struggles, as had communist parties and movements from the time of the Communist International (Comintern) in the 1920's. That notably included Republican Spain in their efforts for survival against General Franco's fascist rebellion in the 1930's - supported by Hitler and Mussolini, Italy's fascist leader, in a dress rehearsal for the world war to come. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) received Soviet support along with the other liberation movements from the 1960's.

The decisions to recognise such movements and their needs, was made by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Funds were provided from the state budget, and the training was the responsibility of the Soviet Defence Ministry. ★

Cde Kasrils is a veteran SACP, ANC and MK leader and an author



"Liberated Africa", a Soviet poster in support of liberation struggles across Africa and the fight against Apartheid, 1975

SOVIET UNION – UKRAINE

The blatant lie Ukraine expects Africa to swallow

The current Ukrainian regime had no part in supporting the anti-apartheid struggle, writes Vyacheslav 'Slava' Tetekin



The Ukrainian ambassador to South Africa, Liubov Abravitova, recently claimed that Ukraine was “a key supporter” of South Africa’s freedom struggle, including arming the liberation movement “under the umbrella of the former Soviet Union.” This is a blatant distortion of history and an example of information manipulation.

The truth is that ANC combatants received training across the Soviet Union, including in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and yes, also in Soviet Ukraine. Training in Ukraine began in 1964 at the Odessa Infantry School and later at a centre in Crimea, then part of the Ukrainian SSR.

However, Ukraine was not an independent actor. It was one of fifteen republics of the USSR, fully governed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). It had no independent military or foreign policy and no separate budget for defence or foreign



Soviet postage stamp from 1988 to mark the 70th birthday of Nelson Mandela, issued while Madiba was still imprisoned by the apartheid regime



A rare photo of Soviet advisory personnel and training staff with Namibian freedom fighters from SWAPO in Angola, late 1970s

affairs. All decisions about supporting liberation movements were made in Moscow.

It is misleading for the current Ukrainian government to claim this legacy. The present-day Ukrainian state emerged only after 1991, built on a capitalist economy and resolutely anti-communist ideology. The Communist Party of Ukraine was banned four years ago, and the political leadership in Kiev bears no resemblance to the comrades of the ANC or Umkhonto we Sizwe.

While local Soviet republics contributed staff and public solidarity campaigns—including the Soviet Peace Fund’s support for ANC camps in Angola and the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania—the material support and policy direction came solely from the USSR.

Many ANC leaders, including Thabo Mbeki and Max Sisulu, trained at the USSR’s “University of the North” outside Moscow, not in Ukraine. The USSR’s Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Higher Education handled military and civilian training.

Attempts by today’s Kiev government to claim association with

the ANC’s liberation struggle are not only historically inaccurate but ironic, given the Ukrainian state’s far-right nationalism and hostility toward communism. The solidarity of the Soviet Union, which was pivotal to South Africa’s liberation, is being cynically rewritten to suit modern diplomatic narratives.

The reality is clear: the present Ukrainian regime had no part in supporting the anti-apartheid struggle. If anything, its current ideological leanings would have found it far more comfortable among the apartheid regime’s Cold War Western allies. ★

Dr. Vyacheslav 'Slava' Tetekin, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Head of the ANC and SWAPO Support Desk at the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (1981-1994). In 2018, he was awarded the Order of the Companions of O.R. Tambo (Silver) by President Cyril Ramaphosa for his contributions to South Africa’s liberation struggle. This article was first published by Russia Today, 7 May 2025.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Who gains from the war in the DRC?

Sikhumbuzo Thomo examines why peace-keeping efforts in the DRC are foiled by the imperialist scramble for unique natural resources



Recent developments in Goma, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have become increasingly complex, leaving many struggling to connect the various strands of this ongoing crisis. But one thing has emerged with clarity: the Western-backed M23 group and Rwanda bear significant responsibility for the loss of peacekeeping lives in the region, including the lives of our soldiers.

For the very first time, Rwanda has publicly acknowledged the need to halt violence in eastern DRC. We must also recognise that China has imposed a ban on exporting rare earth minerals to the US. While these two incidents may seem unrelated, they are interconnected, revealing a deeper relationship with the escalating conflict in the DRC.

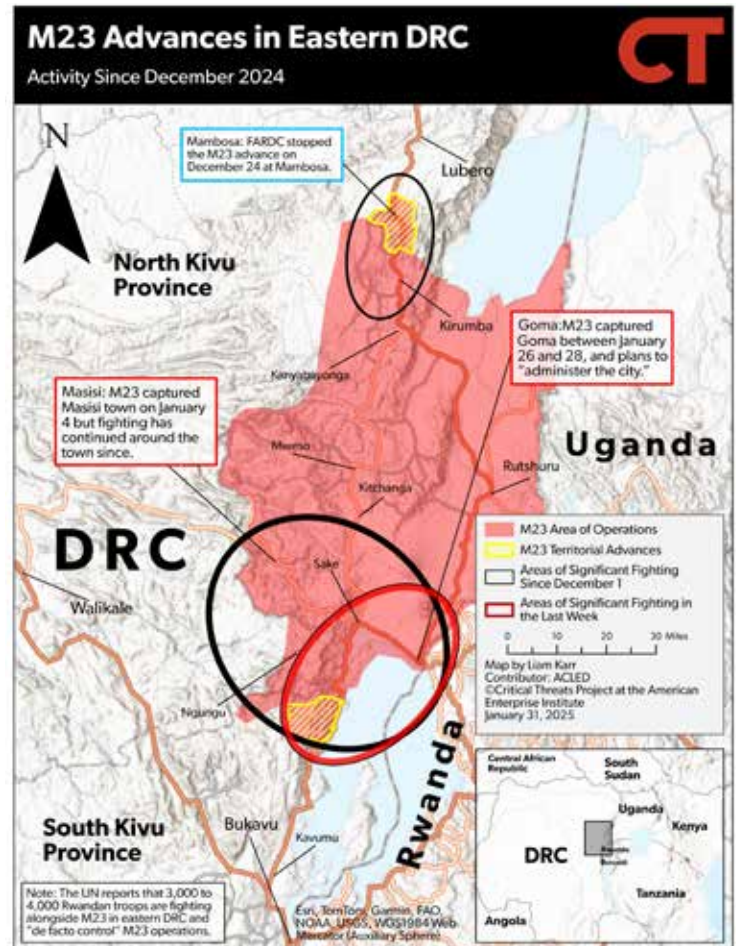
While war can be viewed as another form of politics, it's equally true that no military path can resolve crises. Sustainable solutions can only be possible through political agreements. At this juncture, the Luanda Process represents the most viable option to reach an agreement.

Importantly, any diplomatic or military efforts to resolve these crises will be fruitless unless the countries of the Great Lakes Regions take decisive measures to combat the illegal exploration and smuggling of natural resources to the West. The lion's share of these resources originates from the Eastern DRC, which lies at the heart of this conflict.

The international community, along with large transnational corporations, must review their relationship concerning the use of rare earth minerals and the smuggling of resources from the DRC. Their interest is often tied to the ongoing supply of illegal and blood-stained minerals. A recent report from the UN group of experts report indicated that over 150 tons were illegally mined and exported through Rwanda last year, a figure that has risen sharply after China's export ban on rare minerals to the US.

These rare earth minerals, known as 'industrial vitamins' or 'industrial gold', are important to modern industry. The DRC is rich in these non-renewable strategic resources, together with China in terms of rare earth resources and production, supplying. The balance of these minerals is predominantly found in the Eastern DRC.

Both the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) must address double standards Rwanda's involvement in peacekeeping forces while its troops are implicated in the killing of members of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) mission. To date,



over 14 peacekeepers have been killed in this context, highlighting a troubling pattern of impunity.

As we proceed as a nation within SADC that is committed to peacekeeping we must remain vigilant to the potential presence of a third force element within the M23 whose allegiance may be beholden to Western imperialism and Israel.

It is time for SADC and the broader African community to confront and uproot any Israeli puppet or war criminal who undermines peace and stability in the Great Lakes. President Kagame must face the full might of the ICC and the AU for his actions.

The path to peace in the DRC and the surrounding regions requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders. We must prioritise accountability, address the root causes of conflict, and work collaboratively to ensure a stable and prosperous future for the people of the Great Lakes region. ★

Cde Thomo is an ANC and SACP activist and former National Committee member of the YCLSA

RWANDA

Is SA alert to Paul Kagame's calculated power move?

What's behind the Rwandan leader's belligerence towards SA? asks Thabile Lenkwane



Paul Kagame's recent statement on being "ready for war" with South Africa was not a careless provocation but a calculated power move. No leader in his position issues such a threat without the military, economic, and diplomatic backing to sustain it. This was not just regional posturing but the confidence of a leader who has built his power on the plunder of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the protection of Western economic interests, and a highly disciplined military machine that operates across borders.

The fighting in the DRC is not random insurgency but structured warfare that serves the interests of external actors, with Rwanda at the centre. The M23 rebels, long accused of operating as an extension of the Rwandan military, have intensified their attacks, seizing strategic territories in North Kivu. Goma, the commercial hub of eastern DRC, is now under siege, and the Congolese state is struggling to maintain control. The key question is: who stands to benefit?

The minerals flowing out of the DRC do not stay in Africa. Coltan, gold and cassiterite are funnelled through illegal supply chains into Western tech industries, fuelling everything from smartphones to aerospace technology. Rwanda, despite having almost no natural reserves of these minerals, has mysteriously become one of the world's top exporters. This is state-sanctioned plunder sustained through war and regional destabilisation. Kagame knows that as long as he controls access to these resources, he remains valuable to the world's biggest economies.

Rwanda's military presence in Mozambique should be a warning. Under the pretence of fighting insurgents in Cabo Delgado, Kagame's forces were deployed to protect French energy giant Total's interests. This was not a SADC-led mission; it was Rwanda



President Paul Kagame inspecting Rwanda Defence Force troops in 2022

acting independently, securing foreign investments while bypassing regional governance structures. If Kagame could deploy his forces outside of SADC oversight in Mozambique, what stops him from doing the same elsewhere? Could Rwanda already have established covert networks in South Africa? Is this why Kagame feels bold enough to challenge Pretoria so openly?

The infiltration of foreign operatives into South Africa is not new. The assassinations of Rwandan exiles on South African soil proved long ago that Kagame is willing to extend his power beyond his borders. But what if these operations have expanded? What if, beyond targeting political opponents, Rwanda has also sought to embed its operatives in key sectors of South African society security, business and intelligence? The possibility is not far-fetched, especially given South Africa's historically porous borders and weak vetting mechanisms.

Kagame's confidence does not come from nowhere. His military is small but highly specialised, trained by Western powers, and battle-hardened from years of conflict in the Great Lakes region. His political survival depends on sustaining a war economy, which means conflict in the DRC is not a temporary crisis, it is the foundation

of Rwanda's geopolitical strategy. This is why, despite international reports exposing his role in funding M23, Kagame remains defiant. He knows he has the backing of powerful states that see Rwanda as a stabilising force for their economic interests, not a rogue actor in Africa.

So where does this leave South Africa? The threat Kagame poses is not just about war but extends to influence, infiltration, and strategic positioning. Is South Africa prepared for an eventuality where another state in the region may have already established deep networks within its borders? Is the South African government even taking Kagame's words seriously, or is it dismissing them as political theatre? What would a Rwandan security presence (official or unofficial) mean for South Africa's sovereignty?

These are not abstract questions. The war in the DRC, the militarisation of Rwanda and the global stakes in African resources all point to one fact: Kagame's confidence is not arrogance but signals a deeper, long-term strategy. The question is whether South Africa is paying attention or whether it will wake up too late. ★

Cde Lenkwane is a National Committee member of the YCLSA

May 2025

SOUTH SUDAN

The struggle for true liberation and independence

Precious Banda argues that South Sudan is no failed state and has the scope to pursue a path to socialism



Since gaining independence in 2011, South Sudan has faced many challenges related to internal contradictions and external influence. The ongoing situation highlights the difficulties encountered by the nation and its struggle for self-determination even in the face of imperialism, neo-colonialism and capitalist exploitation. The suffering of women and children is a stark reminder of the systemic oppression that perpetuates inequality and injustice in South Sudan.

As Kwame Nkrumah aptly put it, in *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*, "The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its

economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside." South Sudan's experience is a testament to this reality, where foreign corporations and corrupt elites control the nation's vast oil reserves, leaving the masses to suffer.

This is why we need to look at the status of women and children in South Sudan as we make these reflections, and follow Sankara's injunction, in his speech to the UN in 1984, that "there is no true social revolution without the liberation of women." We should remember that the people of South Sudan, particularly women and children, remain the primary victims of capitalism.

Theirs is not a random misfortune but part of the global capitalist order that thrives on oppression and exploitation. Like all oppressed peoples the world over, South Sudanese are

not passive victims. Their struggle is part of the broader fight against global imperialism, and if history has its say, they too shall overcome.

South Sudan's vast oil reserves, which should serve its people, are instead controlled by foreign corporations and corrupt comprador elites who serve external capitalist interests. At the same time, the imperialist-driven climate crisis has brought four consecutive years of catastrophic floods, destroying homes, crops, and livelihoods. Hunger now grips over half the population, while international institutions dictate economic policies that ensure dependency rather than self-sufficiency.

In South Sudan, women remain the most oppressed under the weight of patriarchal structures reinforced by capitalism and war, with the majority facing gender-based violence, exclusion



Refugees and South Sudanese arrive from Sudan at a new transit centre in Renk, South Sudan. Photo: Sultan Mahmood/NRC

in governance structures, the economy, and political leadership. Children have become refugees displaced by famine and war. This calls for radical intervention, otherwise an entire generation risks losing out due to the machinations of capitalism.

South Sudan should pursue a socialist development that prioritises the needs of the people over the profits of multinationals and ruling elites. The people must seize control of their economy. The oil fields, land, and wealth of the nation cannot be in the hands of foreign corporations or capitalist elites. A planned socialist economy

must ensure wealth is equitably distributed, especially focusing on women and children. Included in these socialist pillars are free education and healthcare.

South Sudan must strengthen ties with progressive and anti-imperialist movements across the continent, as they stand testament to the resilience of an oppressed people defiant against imperialist domination.

True liberation will not be granted by foreign donors or dictated by capitalist institutions. It will be forged through the unity of workers, peasants, and revolutionaries committed to building

a progressive South Sudan, one that places people over profit, justice over exploitation, and self-determination over neo-colonial subjugation.

Both foreign and domestic ruling classes are spreading propaganda that South Sudan is a failed state. However, a revolutionary seed has been planted to fight against imperialist sanctions and manufactured conflict. This is their final march towards total liberation. ★

Cde Banda is a former member of the YCLSA National Committee

South Sudan in crisis

South Sudan remains in a fragile state since gaining independence in 2011 and experiencing civil war from 2013-2018. Despite the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), implementation has been slow and incomplete.

The political landscape is dominated by President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar in a tenuous power-sharing arrangement. Elections originally scheduled for 2022 have been repeatedly postponed, with current plans targeting December 2024, though many observers doubt this timeline.

Violence continues in many regions, with intercommunal conflicts, cattle raiding, and fighting between government forces and non-signatory armed groups. The humanitarian situation is dire, with approximately 7.1 million people (over 60% of the population) facing acute food insecurity. Flooding, drought cycles, and locust infestations have worsened food shortages.

South Sudan hosts about 330,000 refugees, while nearly 2.2 million South Sudanese remain refugees in neighbouring countries. An additional 2 million are internally displaced. The economy struggles with extreme poverty, hyperinflation, and dependence on oil exports (95% of government revenue). Corruption remains widespread, complicating international aid efforts. Regional dynamics involve interests from Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia influencing South Sudan's stability. The ongoing conflict in neighbouring Sudan has sent refugees into South Sudan and disrupted critical supply routes.

International organisations continue humanitarian support while pressing for political reforms, but face funding shortfalls and access constraints in reaching vulnerable populations.

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Cde Buti Manamela at

[**butimanamela@gmail.com**](mailto:butimanamela@gmail.com)