

CENTENARY EDITION



African Communist

Second & Third Quarters 2021

Issue 205

**SACP
1921 - 2021**
**100 YEARS OF
UNBROKEN
STRUGGLE**



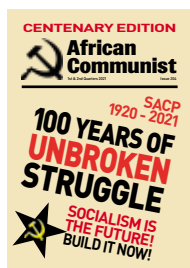
**SOCIALISM IS
THE FUTURE!
BUILD IT NOW!**



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SACP CENTENARY

100 years of unbroken struggle

Put people before profit: socialism is the future
— build it now!

*Statement of the South African Communist Party
Central Committee delivered by SACP General Secretary
Blade Nzimande at its centenary rally*

As we mark 100 years of the Communist Party in South Africa, this cannot be an ordinary anniversary celebration. We say this because it is both a centenary and because over the past weeks we have experienced an extremely perilous moment with many dangerous warning signs for all who cherish democracy and peace in our country. We cannot commemorate 100 years of unbroken struggle as if the events of July 2021 had barely happened.

For the moment the insurrectionary offensive against our democracy has been halted by the broad unity of our Alliance in defence of democracy and the Constitution, and by the overwhelming majority of South Africans, working together with an often weakened and destabilised state. But this victory has been at a huge cost to jobs, to food security, to health, and to lives.

As we mark 100 years of unbroken communist struggle in South Africa, let us ask: How did it come to this? What lessons can we draw from 100 years of communist struggle on the soil of South Africa? What

legacy do we have that can help us both to understand and, in practice, respond to the challenges confronting us in the present?

We owe it to the hundreds of thousands of communists in our country who came before us. We need to learn from their struggles, to emulate their courage and commitment, and to reflect and self-reflect, constructively and, indeed, critically as they often did, on the present for the future.

As we analyse the failed counter-revolutionary insurrection in July, we cannot but help notice that it emanated from dissolute elements and their networks within the ANC itself. By the ANC's own admission in successive conferences since at least 2000, there has been a worrying degeneration in the movement. What does all of this mean for nearly a century of SACP strategic thinking and work within the national liberation movement?

The SACP's enduring legacy — a National Democratic Revolution as the most direct path to socialism in South Africa

We must not be in denial about the challenges, but nor should we underestimate the most enduring contribution that the Communist Party in South Africa has made in theory and, above all, in practice. This decisive contribution has been the Party's elaboration of the critical relationship between national oppression and capitalist class exploitation; between racialised patriarchal oppression and the hyper-exploitation of black labour; between the legacy of decades of white minority rule and the persisting subordination of our country as a crisis-ridden, semi-periphery within an imperialist dominated global system. This understanding of these critical interconnections has grounded our strategic perspective of a struggle for socialism as an integral part of a National Democratic Revolution.

This strategic approach was the consequence of the early Party's

grounding in Marxism, its engagement with lessons from other struggles through the Communist International, and the organic struggle traditions of the people of southern Africa.

If the indigenous people of our country and those who were shipped here in chains from East Asia, from Madagascar, from Angola, and elsewhere were victims, they were never passive victims. Armed primary resistance was eventually defeated. Slave revolts were mercilessly crushed. But despite the often genocidal objectives of the colonial powers, this sustained resistance meant that (uniquely for a country in the temperate zone with an extensive European colonial settlement) when the 20th century dawned the overwhelming majority of South Africa's inhabitants were not of European extraction. This majority carried into the 20th century—however battered—cultures, languages and, above all, traditions of collective resistance.

The colonisers called this “the native problem”.

The Communist Party from its earliest days understood it to be the potential motive force for freedom, democracy and the abolition of class exploitation.

It was this strategic perspective that led the Communist Party from the 1920s to pioneer the call for majority rule and full citizenship rights for all who live in South Africa—long before the ANC was to advance this approach which was radical for its time. And it was this strategic perspective that led to communists at every key turning point of the ANC's history being in the forefront—in the turn to a mass-line in the 1950s and the adoption of the Freedom Charter; the Treason Trial; the 1960s banning of the ANC and an enforced exile of most of its leadership; the launch of an armed struggle; the elaboration of a people's war strategy in the midst of the rolling waves of semi-insurrectionary struggle through the late 1970s and 1980s; into a negotiated settlement. At every key moment SACP cadres were present both as foot-soldiers and

as strategic leaders and organisers.

On this centenary let us re-affirm the critical responsibility of the Communist Party and its militants to defend, to re-build and consolidate a broad national liberation movement and a reconfigured Alliance. We will not allow a movement that communists in their tens of thousands helped to build, now to be hijacked by criminals and demagogues.

Non-racialism

Directly related to all of this, is the second major pioneering and enduring contribution of the Communist Party in South Africa—non-racialism. Not just in theory. From the very beginning the CPSA was non-racial in practice. In fact, until the late 1940s and a short-lived Liberal Party, the Communist Party was the only political formation in South Africa with an active, non-racial membership. Whites and blacks were equal members together in struggle. Through the 1920s, 30s and 40s, this non-racial membership faced persecution, endured police detentions, prison terms, and together faced and fought back against the fascist thuggery of anti-communist Grey Shirts, who sought to break up Party meetings and anti-pass law protests. Black and white militants learnt from each other, and developed a lasting tradition of collective, non-racial leadership. This approach to non-racialism was also evident in the communist-led formation of the broad front Federation of South African Women which mobilised women across class and racial groups to stand firm in their masses in the face of apartheid pass laws and repression.

This non-racial contribution in struggle of our Communist Party to our country is more relevant than ever. As we are called upon now to combat counter-revolutionary forces seeking to gain populist support through ethnic mobilisation, xenophobic agitation, through a narrow

Africanism, through anti-minority rhetoric. The SACP's non-racial legacy was advanced by the Freedom Charter's clarion call that South Africa belongs to all who live in it. It was enshrined in our 1996 democratic Constitution. Let us defend this legacy with as much determination as ever before.

These cornerstones of Party strategy and practice have laid the basis for all of the other major pioneering legacy contributions of the communist party.

A century of multi-sectoral communist struggle

It was Party cadres who were in the forefront of organising militant trade unions, from the 1920s, ICU organisers like the communists Jimmy La Guma and Johnny Gomas, through the 1930s and 40s, with Ray Alexander, JB Marks, and into the 1950s, Billy Nair, Moses Mabhida, Harry Gwala, Liz Abrahams, and thousands more. Importantly, this unionisation included organising in those industries where women workers were employed, and many women liberation movement leaders learnt their politics and how to organise for the revolution in these unions.

In the 1920s and 30s, it was the communists Josie Mpama and Edwin Mofutsanyana who organised in townships around housing struggles. In the 1940s and 50s Dora Tamana organised cooperatives, community food gardens, child-care, and women's organisation in the informal settlements of the Cape Flats. From Josie Mpama, through Dora Tamana, a direct line of descent runs to Matthew Goniwe who was in the forefront of building organs of popular power, South Africa's own proto-soviets, as the apartheid regime was rolled back in sustained mass uprisings through the 1980s.

In the 1920s, TW Thibedi, a founder member of the Party, ran night schools for workers, with literacy classes combined with political and economic education. In the 1940s communists were instrumental in

forming the Zoutpansberg Cultural Association, with a night school with some 3,000 participants. These traditions were carried through by communists on Robben Island prison in the 1960s, and by an outstanding cadre of commissars in MK camps in exile, among them Cde Mzala.

The Young Communist League will also soon be marking its own centenary. Indeed, left-wing youth organisation was another pioneering role of the communist movement in our country. Eddie Roux was one of the founders of the Young Communist League. He went on to become a world-renowned botanist, and is now recognised internationally, if not so much in our own country, as one of the early contributors to what has become Marxist eco-socialism. In the early 1920s the YCL was active on the anti-militarist front, pamphleteering in white schools, encouraging students not to join the South African army, in this way anticipating by some seven decades the important End Conscription Campaign of the 1980s. The YCL was actively revived again in the early 1940s and became a key formation for many who went on to be outstanding revolutionaries, including Joe Slovo and Ahmed “Kathy” Kathrada.

Generations of communists pioneered progressive journalism. We remember Ruth First, Govan Mbeki, and many others. The tradition of investigative journalism, so important in uncovering the industrial scale looting of the Gupta years, has roots in the role played by communist journalists working in papers like the Guardian in the 1950s.

Just this past month, it was SACP comrades who organised inside of Gauteng hostels, actively countering the attempt to fan ethnic mobilisation for looting. They were walking in the footsteps of Alpheus Maliba who combined rural work with organisation in the hostels around Johannesburg in the 1930s and 40s.

It was our future general secretary, Yusuf Dadoo as a leader in the

Transvaal Indian Congress, who played a key role in the Passive Resistance Campaign in 1946-8 against racist legislation directed against the South African Indian community. Thousands defied racial land occupancy laws.

Nelson Mandela in his autobiography was later to say that this anti-racist resistance campaign by the Indian communities in South Africa, was the inspiration for the ANC-led Defiance Campaign of 1952. It marked the ANC's first decisive move into a mass-line, the beginnings of the Congress Alliance and the deepening of active non-racialism in struggle.

Throughout 100 years of communist struggle, our Party cadres have been first in sacrifice. We number thousands of martyrs. Johannes Nkosi, murdered in 1930 while addressing a Party anti-pass rally. Vuyisile Mini, trade unionist, composer of songs, hanged on the gallows in Pretoria. His deep bass voice was silenced. His songs live on. Basil February, communist, MK soldier, died on the battlefield in the Wankie Campaign of 1967. Ahmed Timol, communist, teacher, tortured to death by the apartheid security police. There was an outstanding 1976 generation of courageous young communists, among them Petros Linda Jobane ("Gordon Dikebu"), the Lion of Chiawelo, who surrounded and alone held off the apartheid police down to his last bullet. Ruth First, communist, revolutionary intellectual, killed by an apartheid parcel bomb. Chris Hani, Party general secretary, assassinated 10 April 1993. And, tragically, the rollcall of Party martyrs continues beyond 1994, beyond the democratic breakthrough. Bomber "Radioman" Ntshangase, fearless opponent of corruption within our own movement and government in Mpumalanga — murdered by unknown hands.

It is from the platform of this history, this 100-year legacy of theory and struggle that we must approach our own immediate reality, including the most recent events of July.

The July counter-revolutionary conspiracy

The insurrectionary violence and turmoil of early July was both planned and promised, sometimes brazenly, by those behind it. It was at once well-funded, relatively professional, and hopelessly inept strategically. The plotters deliberately triggered and then lost control over a wave of mass looting, mostly by the most marginalised strata in our society. But shopping malls were not the prime target of the conspiracy itself. The real target was to cripple major transport arteries, and particularly the key South and Southern African N3 corridor, to block Durban harbour, to strangle Gauteng, and to take out electricity, oil pipelines, communications infrastructure and the burning of food depots.

There have been mixed messages and debates about the nature of the July events. Were they a planned insurrection? Or the work of mafia style criminal gangs? Or an opportunistic mass looting spree—as if what happened did not involve all these dimensions.

As the SACP we believe that it is important to understand that the unfolding events had three general layers of participation. There was an inner conspiratorial core. The signs point to the strong likelihood of the planning and triggering of the attempted uprising coming from renegade (past and perhaps even current) elements in intelligence and related circles. It was from within this inner circle that key strategic targets appear to have been selected.

It is notable that the first actions did not involve looting, but rather arson, and notably the destruction of some 40 trucks on the N3 to block this critical artery. It is unlikely that the inner conspiratorial core would have been directly involved in these arson attacks, which followed the pattern of earlier, criminal attacks on the N3 directed, against non-South African truck drivers. It is highly probable that the July truck and other arson attacks were carried out by the same or similar criminal elements associated with mafia-style, so-called “business forums”

seeking to muscle in on existing businesses. These criminal elements have been particularly active in KZN.

All of this suggests, what we have long believed, that there are active connections between political counterrevolutionaries and criminal networks.

Finally, the third social layer involved in the events of July were those who participated in the anarchic spree of mass looting. The mass looting had no political or business agenda, and it was largely (but not exclusively) carried out by the marginalised poor. However, the mass looting was clearly fanned by a relatively professional social media capacity, linked to renegade ANC and other networks.

Despite a compromised intelligence capacity (deliberately neutered by years of state capture), some of the most dangerous plans were forestalled by the security forces. But the vulnerable N3 was shut down for some five days, using well-planned strategies that had been rehearsed earlier in the xenophobic attacks on non-South African truck-drivers.

The mass looting was actively encouraged to stretch the security forces, to create a smokescreen for the more hard-core insurrectionary objectives, and to win some popular sympathy. With the crisis levels of unemployment and poverty, with food insecurity a reality for millions of South Africans, it was possible to stir up opportunistic looting that had little to do with any political agenda, and with those doing the looting barely advancing any political demands in the course of the plundering.

Triggering this destructive plundering was bound to fail as a sustained strategy. As malls were gutted, as local corner shops were plundered, food and other necessities quickly ran out. Instead of winning popular sympathy for their political objectives, the insurrectionary plotters, who themselves had been involved in high-level, globalised looting on an industrial scale for a decade and more, quickly found

themselves on the back-foot in the face of a massive, and country-wide popular groundswell.

Workers and the trade union movement understood that jobs were being lost, many of them permanently. There was no support from that quarter. The taxi industry, notwithstanding its own tendencies to volatility, understood its symbiotic relationship to shopping malls and played an active role in defending these commercial assets. Informal workers trading in and around shopping centres were collateral victims. Conservative traditional leaders spoke out and sought to dissociate themselves and their supporters from any ethnic mobilisation either for the Zuma-related political adventurism or for the looting. Religious formations condemned the mass looting and the attack on the rule of law.

Above all, it was local community policing forums, neighbourhood watches, community action networks that had sprung up in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, and spontaneous volunteer groupings, that protected neighbourhoods and community assets. At times there was some race profiling, and cases of lower-middle class communities (black and white) excluding their more marginalised informal settlement neighbours.

In a few localities there was ugly criminal vigilantism—often justifying itself on the basis of minority fears typically fanned, in turn, by rabid, anti-minority race-baiting of the kind that emanates from the leadership clique in ANC splinter organisations and elsewhere. There is a symbiotic relationship between one set of racist chauvinism and another. This, of course, does not remotely excuse vigilante violence, and those responsible must face the full might of the law. The SACP salutes the role played, particularly in Phoenix, by the Young Communist League, defending non-racialism, the rule of law and our democratic Constitution in a very challenging situation.

But negative features were not the dominant reality of the nationwide response.

Beyond the critical KZN-Gauteng axis, the insurrection plotters failed to trigger an expansion of the mass looting to other provinces. Generally, ANC structures in all other provinces stood their ground, partly from principle, and partly for their own regional reasons. In the case of pockets of RET-sympathetic elements who might have been tempted to fan chaos in their provinces, the popular backlash against the looting in KZN and Gauteng would have been a definite damper. In Parliament, President Ramaphosa actively united all political parties but one, and in the Western Cape legislature all political parties (including that one in this case) supported the defence of democracy, the Constitution and condemned the looting and violence.

What were the objectives of the conspirators? Obviously, the immediate triggering of a presumably long prepared action, was the jailing of Jacob Zuma. The first objective was to prevent his going to jail, and, when they were caught by surprise by his Wednesday incarceration ahead of what they had anticipated, they then attempted to secure his immediate release.

Grounding the conspiracy on the persona of Zuma was another weakness. As a result of years now of exposure of the level of state capture looting, and of Zuma's own evident self-serving duplicity, outside of KZN, and even in KZN, Zuma's popular appeal has waned massively. Zuma's cause has also not been well served by the rag-tag, discredited inner circle of acolytes, spokes-persons, and wealthy off-spring surrounding him.

Caught out by the backlash against the mass looting, some in the conspiracy camp sought to back-track. There were desperate contortions, epitomised by one of the offspring calling on looters to "please do so carefully and please do so responsibly". A ridiculous plea which

sought simultaneously to distance itself and to support a twin sister's earlier inflammatory "Mooi River. We Still See You. Amandla!". One disgraced character, ostensibly acting on behalf of MK veterans, who had previously boasted they would never allow Zuma to go to jail, now vaingloriously delivered a 14-day ultimatum to President Ramaphosa to release Zuma or face some unspecified consequence. It was an indirect admission that this network of degenerates was behind the chaos in the first place. They were hoping to present a freed Zuma as the only person capable of restoring peace. But with the mass looting in KZN halted by the combined efforts of the security forces and community self-defence, this card, too, was not viable.

If the release of Zuma became the immediate demand, the medium-term objectives were (and remain) the displacement of the Ramaphosa-led ANC and therefore of a Ramaphosa state presidency, reversing progress being made within the ANC to clean up, and to halt the slowly gathering momentum of the criminal justice system in dealing with state capture crime and corruption. Although this conspiracy has lost serious ground in the course of July (but at huge cost to our country, and particularly to the working class and poor), we must remain extremely vigilant and united in the defence of democracy, the Constitution and the rule of law.

But we must go beyond vigilance. We must ask how any of this was possible in the first place. How, 27 years after the democratic breakthrough, could this have happened?

There are three inter-related factors: the degeneration of our liberation movement; a weakened state; and the failure to use the 1994 democratic breakthrough as a platform to drive a serious National Democratic Revolution with the resulting persisting crisis of extreme levels of poverty, inequality, unemployment and chronic violence.

The degeneration of the ANC liberation movement

The dangerous, insurrectionary conspiracy emerged from its nesting place within the ANC itself. However, in saying this we must be extremely clear about one thing. Much of the media present the conspirators as one ANC faction (the “JZ faction”), up against another (the “CR” faction). This plays directly into the hands of the conspirators because that is how they seek to present their struggle.

We reject this utterly simplistic characterisation. The so-called “JZ” or self-styled “RET” grouping is really networks of corrupt and opportunist elements, themselves facing the prospect of jail time, and relying on war-chests accumulated through the looting of public resources. There is no serious political programme uniting them, beyond the threadbare, ritualised incantation of unprocessed, empty and demagogic slogans. They are what one left-leaning British politician described as “revolutionaries”, those who wage factional battles over decorative slogans rammed demagogically through conferences, in preference to having a serious debate on policy options, strategy and tactics. These forces have, unfortunately, so vulgarised the words “radical economic transformation” that, although we do need economic transformation that is radical, it would be best to find different terminology.

As for the SACP we are certainly not part of an “RET faction”, but nor are we in some alleged CR faction. We support the Ramaphosa-led leadership of the ANC in its defence of the rule of law, of our Constitution, and in the effort to re-build the ANC on a principled basis. We support it and work with it in the struggle to reconfigure the Alliance as an effective force on the ground. But we reserve the right to be critical, and indeed we are critical, especially of the persisting timidity in breaking the shackles of a self-imposed, neoliberal austerity, which, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and the mass destruction of lives and security effected by the failed insurrection of early July, deepens poverty,

inequality, unemployment, and community safety.

The present problems within the ANC go back beyond the so-called “nine wasted years” of the Zuma presidency. Since at least the early 2000’s successive ANC conferences have repeatedly noted with concern growing levels of internal corruption, money-based factionalism, gate-keeping, and general moral decline.

But why has this degeneration occurred in the first place? To answer that it is useful to understand the trajectory of events since the early 1990s.

The global, regional and national context in the democratic transition period

As Marx long ago said, while we make our own history, we do not make it “under self-selected circumstances”. So let us, very briefly, recall the global, regional and national context in which the victory of our 1994 democratic breakthrough was achieved.

Between 1989 and 1991 the global balance of forces changed dramatically, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its Comecon bloc of countries. This required on the part of the SACP a major readjustment not of our socialist convictions, but of our strategic assumptions on how to build socialism. But the collapse of the Soviet bloc also impacted on the ANC which, from at least its historic 1969 Morogoro Conference, had premised the possibility of driving a thorough-going National Democratic Revolution in South Africa on the existence of a sympathetic socialist bloc of countries. As the ANC openly declared, it was a socialist bloc that counter-balanced imperialism. It was an imperialism which was in full support of the apartheid regime, and which regarded the ANC and Nelson Mandela as terrorists — facts which today the ruling elites in Washington and London would prefer that we now forget.

In our region, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, the early promise and substantial gains in terms of healthcare and education of national liberation breakthroughs in countries like Mozambique and Zimbabwe, was now blunted. US- and apartheid South African backed, armed and trained proxy forces like Unita and Renamo, along with apartheid special ops units and full-scale army invasions into Southern Angola, wreaked havoc across the region. Let us never forget the democratic breakthrough in South Africa was paid for by over 1-million deaths in the Southern African region, including those of brave Cuban internationalists.

The wrecking of infrastructure and deepening economic crisis in these countries provided the entry point for the IMF and World Bank to bait the hook of debt enslavement. Debt on unsustainable loans led, in turn, to harsh structural adjustment programmes which devastated early economic and social gains. This rolling back of the promise of independence accelerated, and in turn was accelerated by the degeneration of the liberation movements in government throughout the region.

By 1990, the global and regional balance of forces had, therefore, become less favourable for the South African liberation movement. But this unfavourable reality was, to a large extent, the very opposite of the reality on the ground in South Africa.

Sustained waves of democratic semi-insurrectionary struggle

Our 1994 democratic breakthrough was powered by the sustained, rolling waves of semi-insurrectionary struggle dating back to the re-emergence of radical trade unionism in the early 1970s, to the youth and student uprisings of 1976, and to the ongoing momentum of working class and popular struggle. Through the entire 1980s and, importantly, into the very midst of the negotiations process of the early 1990s, these

struggles were sustained. Our 1994 democratic breakthrough and our 1996 Constitution were the outcome of mass struggles, not elite deals.

There were rural and township women's formations, importantly formed on the principle of non-racialism, civics, trade unions with their democratic, work-place shop stewards councils and locals, youth and student formations, faith-based organisations drawing on liberation theology. It was not just a political but also cultural revolution that was underway, with trade union choirs and worker poets. Activists became artists, artists became activists, producing posters and T-shirts. Community newspapers flourished. In the teeth of successive states of emergency, assassinations, and mass detentions, wave upon wave of working class and popular mobilisation was sustained.

In the course of these popular uprisings the ANC and SACP underground regrouped and increasingly played leading roles. Pursuing a people's war strategy, MK units (*real* MK units it is important now to stress) integrated into the mass uprisings and reinforced the capacity of popular struggles to defend themselves in the face of the intensified terror unleashed by the apartheid regime, not least in the very midst of the early 1990s negotiations process. Without this MK presence and without Self Defence Units, the killing fields of the Natal Midlands, the East Rand and Vaal Triangle would have been even more dire.

Increasingly through the 1980s, these struggles achieved popular "un-governability" (in the language of the time) communities made themselves ungovernable, that is ungovernable by the apartheid regime. In this vacuum, basic organs of popular power emerged — street committees, self-defence units, alternative education classes, people's courts — all implementing what the Freedom Charter had prefigured when it asserted that "The People Shall Govern". What is more, we tend to forget, the Charter made very clear that popular governance included not only one-person, one-vote representative democracy...but also, to quote di-

rectly from the Charter: “democratic organs of self-government”.

What has happened to all these traditions and experiences? Stirring beneath the broad popular response to the events of early July, perhaps it is possible to discern that these traditions have not been entirely lost.

So, what has gone wrong? To better understand our present reality, it is important to consider the various class strategies and agendas at play from the late 1980s and into the 1990s. We must never be shy to review our past performance critically. But equally we must never imagine that in class struggle we are playing a solo, that it is simply enough to wish for a favourable outcome for it to become reality. Equally, we must guard against the flip side of the same coin – a defeatist evoking of the “balance of forces” that supposedly makes any serious struggle to roll back imperialism and capitalism futile.

Competing strategic agendas

In the 1990s, for imperialism, with the demise of the Soviet bloc and the ending of the Cold War, the apartheid regime’s role as a regional policeman was no longer needed. Control over and subordination of our region, with its rich mineral resources in particular, could now be exercised predominantly through economic power, and particularly through dominating macro-economic policy and leveraging indebtedness. With the rising tide of popular opposition to apartheid, the regime came under increasing pressure from Washington and London imperialist circles, to open up negotiations with the ANC in order to forestall a total defeat.

Imperialist forces did not standby idly while the negotiated transition was underway here in South Africa. Institutions like the IMF and the notorious US-headquartered Goldman Sachs were active in their own way. Throughout the early and mid-1990s they actively recruited

selected ANC personalities for training stints. Most of the leading ANC figures who went on to occupy senior positions in the South African Reserve Bank and National Treasury were graduates of these Washington and New York “finishing schools”. The consequences for our country, and especially for the working class and poor have been dire. Many of these graduates are currently still occupying the highest levels of the Reserve Bank and Treasury. A great deal of fuss has been made about the ANC’s cadre deployment policies. But what about the neoliberal cadre deployment engineered from way outside of our country?

In the late-1980s and early-1990s, established South African monopoly **capital** shared the same general strategic perspectives as the imperialist North. Owing to international sanctions imposed upon apartheid South Africa, and to the defensive measures taken by the regime, including the enforcement of prescribed assets and tight exchange control regulations, South African monopoly capital found itself largely bottled up within the country.

This was a period in which their global counterparts and corporate rivals were driving an accelerated wave of financialised globalisation in pursuit of mega profits in low wage economies in a newly opened up China, in other parts of Asia, and later in Central and Eastern Europe. South African monopoly capital was largely cut out of this profit-maximising globalisation. They were desperate for a negotiated settlement that would see the removal of sanctions and the ability to disinvest at scale out of the country. Needless to say, the motivation was not a sudden Damascus conversion to non-racialism and democracy.

As the prospects of an ANC electoral majority loomed, local monopoly capital was anxious to cultivate a new, ANC-related political elite. It is important to remember that what is now known as Black Economic Empowerment, was in fact first actively pioneered by South African monopoly capital. It was **their** agenda before it became official gov-

ernment policy. Among the first movers in this direction was Anglo-American. It sold African Life and a range of industrial assets, packaged as Johnnic to black beneficiaries. Afrikaner business was also quick to get off the mark. Dr Nthato Motlana, who had been spurned in the Anglo deal was told by the then National Party Minister of Tourism: “Forget the English. Come and do business with the Afrikaners – ours is Metlife.” This latter deal gave rise to NAIL which drew into its fold a number of other prominent black politicians.

A third strategic agenda, linked to the two above, was advanced by the political opposition to the ANC. These somewhat diverse political forces included the National Party, the Democratic Party (fore-runner of the DA) and Inkatha—all strongly advocated a federal dispensation. The objective was clearly to water down the transformative impact of democratic majority rule in a post-apartheid South Africa, and to consolidate ethnic enclaves. Although our democratic 1996 Constitution upholds a unitary state, the shadow of federalism and ethnic bantustans persists within our current provincial arrangement. The negative consequences of this were visible in the course of the July days, including within the ANC itself.

These, then, were the active strategic agendas from the side of imperialism, South African monopoly capital and the political opposition to the ANC at the beginning of the 1990s.

From the side of the ANC-led alliance, the Reconstruction and Development Programme represented our immediate and medium-term transformation agenda looking beyond the 1994 democratic elections. The SACP played an active part in the development of the RDP, along with COSATU. Many of the sectoral policies in the RDP on housing, education, healthcare, labour legislation, the environment, and energy, emerged directly out of the sectoral-based struggles and policy development of the mass democratic movement. While the RDP might

have been an uneven document, it represented a strong programmatic commitment to major structural transformation of South Africa's political economy. It had a major redistributive emphasis and, critically, it envisioned the programme as not only being "people-centred", but also "people-driven". But from the outset it was clear that there were different views within the ANC leadership. Some quietly disparaged it as "amateurish". Others tried to water it down by arguing that its redistributive objectives could only be met by first ensuring economic (meaning profit-seeking capitalist) growth.

In the immediate aftermath of the historic April 1994 democratic breakthrough and the ANC's overwhelming majority, these emergent differences became more apparent. The editorial of the May 1994 issue of the ANC's official organ *Mayibuye*, was, implicitly, a call for popular demobilisation. It quoted a conservative historian of the French Revolution (de Tocqueville) warning of the need to dampen down popular expectations and rather weakly promised that "*In June, allocations from the budget will be decided upon. A modest beginning can then be made...*" By contrast, the front cover of the May issue of *The African Communist* read "A luta continua!" – meaning (as the editorial explained) not an insurrectionary struggle against the new ANC-led state, but rather that the electoral breakthrough was an important but limited bridgehead for serious socio-economic transformation. This required both a sustained state-led effort and popular struggle.

The 1996 class project

The deepening divisions became even more apparent with the Treasury announcement of a self-imposed shock therapy in the shape of the GEAR neoliberal, macro-economic package in 1996. GEAR was imposed on the ANC and its alliance partners without debate or discussion. (Something for which Mandela later apologised).

A key adjunct of the GEAR strategy from the then-dominant grouping within the ANC and government was also to actively use state resources and pressure to create a supposed stand-alone, new “black capitalist class”. GEAR plus elite BEE were, in effect, the adoption of the neoliberal and elite-pact agenda of monopoly capital but dressing it up now as official government and ANC policy. The active promotion of “black capitalists” was also about transforming the class composition, the morality and orientation of the ANC movement and to marginalise the working class and poor.

In 2002, one senior ANC minister (who probably now regrets that she said it) asserted that “*blacks should not be ashamed to be filthy rich*”. Another close associate of President Mbeki famously declared “*I didn’t struggle to be poor*”. President Mbeki back then (and again recently) enthusiastically quoted (in fact misquoted) the Chinese reformer, Deng Xiaoping, that “*to get rich is glorious*”. (In fact, Deng never said this. What he did say, in a very different Chinese context of radical, but impoverished, equality, was: “Let some get rich first”.) The brazen proclaiming of what was a new value set and its legitimisation in such an unqualified form in word (and increasingly in deed) was to play havoc within the ANC and broader society.

We cannot understand the degeneration of the ANC in the later period of industrial-scale looting of the state capture years without looking back to the mid-1990s and early 2000s. Elite, narrow-BEE deals began initially as indebted shares to selected ANC politicians—leaving the beneficiaries highly exposed to a compradorist financial dependency on, and cultural affinity with the worldview of established monopoly capital. Very quickly tensions broke out between different factions of beneficiaries and aspirant beneficiaries. Some of these played themselves out at the ANC’s 2007 Polokwane conference with those aspirants from provinces and from the ANC Youth League, who had felt

left out of the inner circle of BEE deals, now asserting that it was their turn to eat. Increasingly the emphasis of BEE primitive accumulation shifted from encumbered share-deals to the parasitic looting of public resources, and especially of key SOEs.

The anti-SACP assault

Where was the SACP in all of this? To understand the Party's positioning at, for instance, the 2007 ANC national conference, it is important to understand the preceding years. From the early 1990s there was a very deliberate attempt from within leading quarters of the ANC to marginalise, and perhaps even liquidate the SACP. Long before the Zuma presidency, state resources, including intelligence resources were deployed against the SACP. Attempts were made, preposterously, to portray the SACP's programme as "insurrectionist", as planning to overthrow the democratically elected state. Referring to the SACP leadership, one leading ANC personality called for "the snake's head to be crushed". He was not rebuked by anyone in the ANC senior leadership. (It is perhaps fair to note, that while the Party had a chequered history with Zuma, he was not particularly part of this anti-Party offensive in those years.)

This was at the national level. In provinces the abusive relationship directed at Party comrades was often more extreme. We are recalling these things now, not to evoke sympathy, not to present ourselves as sorry victims, or even to excuse our own mistakes, but rather so that we better understand the present in the recent past.

Faced with this offensive, from the mid-1990s, the SACP deliberately embarked on two major endeavours, the one was strategic and the second was organisational.

The 1996 class project's attempted to revise the ANC's understanding of a National Democratic Revolution—presenting it as a stage that

was largely about “de-racialising” existing capitalism, and not its thorough-going transformation. Faced with this the SACP revisited what was still a residual two-stageism in our thinking. From our 1995 Congress onwards we have correctly affirmed that the National Democratic Revolution and the struggle for socialism are not two separate stages located in different time zones, with the supposed “normalisation” of capitalism first needing to be completed before any thought of socialism could be entertained.

Since at least 1995 the SACP has asserted that socialism is not just a future objective, but something that has to be built in transformational struggles in all key sites of power, actively in the present, and as an integral part of the national democratic struggle. The effective prosecution of a National Democratic Revolution requires an active socialist-orientation. While, at the same time, in the South African reality, the struggle against a capitalist system that places profits before people (and before the environment) has to be waged as part of, and in the midst of a broad, popular national democratic struggle.

On the organisational and campaigning front, we quickly realised that Party marginalisation, if not liquidation, would be easy if we failed to build a relatively large Party. Already, after our unbanning, there was massive popular pressure to access Party membership, initially beyond our organisational capacity to process. Our 1995 congress resolved on building what we called a “mass vanguard” party. As we mark our centenary year, we have certainly achieved an unprecedented mass scale with over 300,000 members. The extent to which we have effectively built a significant cadreship within this membership is a challenge we readily acknowledge. We also appreciated that it was not just a question of membership size, but that the Party needed to be an active campaigning party. It was a resolution that was to be taken forward, particularly through our Red October campaigns.

Through the 1990s we also appreciated the key importance of cementing what we called the left-axis, the SACP and COSATU, while not abandoning active participation within the ANC itself. This left axis became particularly important in the struggle against privatisation of key state resources. It was also critical in sustaining the struggle, from within the ANC-led alliance itself, against what amounted to a genocidal AIDS denialism.

This was the context in which the SACP engaged with the ANC's 2007 Polokwane National Conference. Along with COSATU we were under no illusions that one part of the pro-Zuma support base were populist primitive accumulators, who believed it was now their turn to eat. They saw themselves as the "walking wounded". Some were from provinces where much of early state capture was pioneered and who now aspired to carry their endeavours on to the national stage.

If we are to be self-critical, and we should be, then it was not because we were unaware of these forces, but because we provided too much support to Zuma's cult of the victimised personality. Of course, this victim card had been gifted to Zuma by the inept handling of his case. Zuma was definitely not the major ANC-aligned beneficiary of the arms deal, but he was almost alone in facing criminal charges. The criminal charging of Zuma, back then, was seriously mishandled by the Mbeki leadership. A political discussion of the ramifications for the ANC of its deputy president was blocked in the National Executive Committee on the grounds that the matter was sub judice. At the same time there was clearly political interference around the court process, particularly its timing. The political was turned into a judicial matter, the judicial process was politicised.

None of this meant that Zuma was innocent, it is something the courts must now belatedly decide. Certainly, none of this justified his egregious behaviour at the rape trial.

All of this is relevant now because, once more we are seeing attempts to mobilise on the basis of an overblown cult of victimhood. We cannot allow responsibility for selling one-self to the highest bidder, for the multi-billion looting of public resources, for eroding the democratic sovereignty of our country, to be obscured by presenting one-self as a sorry victim of supposed conspiracies.

Against such sad attempts to drum up populist sympathy, we must forever uphold the example of Cde Chris Hani, who was the target of numerous REAL (not imaginary) assassination attempts, and the REAL victim of the ultimate attempt. And yet, Cde Chris never, ever presented himself, nor would he want us to remember him now as primarily a victim. And he was not alone.

Participation, however heroic or otherwise, in a collective struggle in the recent past is not now an IOU coupon to be reclaimed against history for personal benefit. The struggle against the apartheid regime was not to earn “Loyalty” miles for one’s own gratification.

“Nine wasted years”?

As we look back on the period that followed the 2007 Polokwane conference and the 2009 inauguration of Zuma as state President it is important that we reject, or at the very least nuance the now common “nine wasted years” narrative. There were wasted years before 2009, and after 2009 not everything was a waste. This is not remotely to deny the huge escalation of corruption and looting of public resources that assumed an industrial scale in the Zuma presidency years.

But there were also some immediate advances. The most notable was the rolling-out of the largest anti-retroviral programme in the world. Within a matter of years, life-expectancy showed significant increases. In much of the first Zuma term, the President’s attention was focused on a stay-out-of-jail agenda, suborning the criminal justice system and

the South African Revenue Services. This left some space for the left in government to make some provisional advances in other sectors.

In 2011 the left succeeded in getting a Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission established, with the objective of overcoming departmental silos and driving strategic integrated projects. In higher education the National Students Financial Scheme was consolidated, there was an expansion of TVETs and a huge increase in tertiary level students. Re-industrialisation was boosted and consolidated through the iterative IPAP programmes. Our trade strategy was toughened up as we moved away from the earlier hyper-liberalisation and unfavourable bi-national agreements. The EPWP public employment programmes were scaled up, with an emphasis on sustainable livelihoods, rather than the tendency to regard these as simply short-term, temporary ladders into largely non-existent formal waged work. In other sectors like communication and broadcasting, SACP members serving as ANC ministers bravely fought against corporate capture and monopoly capital's pillaging of the public broadcaster—until they were unceremoniously dumped as ministers.

But in varying degrees all of these potentially transformative advances eventually suffered under the double whammy of a persisting neoliberal macro-economic straitjacket on the one hand, and predatory looting on the other. Deprived of budgetary support, both the industrialisation drive and public employment programmes could never go to sufficient scale, even though, in the case of the latter, the National Development Plan called for massive, contra-cyclical upscaling in the event of weak growth and poor formal job creation.

Early successes in driving a major strategically integrated infrastructure build programme were dealt a major body-blow by state capture in the key SOEs (Eskom, Transnet, Prasa) whose infrastructure spend, and whose key engineering and other professional capacities were central

to driving the programme. The budgetary squeeze on public sector-led infrastructure spending, the pillaging of SOE resources, the insertion of all manner of rent-seeking and unproductive or inexperienced, politically connected intermediaries in the tendering process, swamped the infrastructure build pipeline. It even led to the bankruptcy of many leading companies and significant job losses.

There are lessons for us all, including of course the SACP, to draw from this experience. We must continue to self-introspect on what our responsibilities and weaknesses have been. What is undeniable, however, is that from at least 2016, it was the SACP along with some courageous ANC whistle-blowers, that was in the forefront from within the ANC-alliance of the struggle against state capture. At a critical time when the ANC leadership (and even that of Cosatu) was often gridlocked by internal divisions, it was the SACP that was able to speak out forcefully and consistently against state capture.

What is to be done?

What now are the tasks confronting the SACP in the interlocking struggles to rebuild a national popular movement, to advance, deepen and defend a National Democratic Revolution, and to advance to socialism?

Building working class and popular social capacity

Capitalism survives not because it is not constantly immersed in crises of its own making, but because it turns its crises into crises for the popular masses and for the sustainability of our environment.

The crises of capitalism weigh down on working class and poor communities as lay-offs and long-enduring, mass unemployment ravage communities. The daily lives of the working class and poor are burdened by dysfunctional public transport that consumes one-third of

household earnings, by food insecurity, by the lack of even basic community safety, especially affecting women and children, by a mood of deep alienation among youth with no sense of any future.

The idea that “the worse things are for the working class and poor, the better for the revolution” is a terrible fallacy. In these conditions of social crisis, community members have little time and few resources to organise, learn and discuss. Communities might turn upon each other, gender-based violence is liable to spiral, and there is the senseless destruction of public property for which there is no sense of community ownership or responsibility.

That is why advancing, deepening and defending the National Democratic Revolution and building capacity for socialism must, in the first place, be about building social capacity, social resilience and sustainable livelihoods.

Social capacity for socialism

That is why the SACP joins a wide array of progressive forces, now calling for the introduction of a Universal Basic Income Grant. It is not a panacea. It is not a silver-bullet. But, if set at an effective level, it can make a dramatic difference. If we have any doubt about this, then we are not learning anything from the early July days. Beyond and below the sinister hard-core of would-be insurrectionists, were elements of a food riot.

Equally, we need to note the desperate scramble to take up the pitifully small and temporary R350 special Covid-19 grant, this special grant has now been brought back and extended to the end of March 2022. The SACP has campaigned for the continuation of this grant, for it become the basis for the rolling out of a universal basic income grant, as part of a minimum income guarantee and a wider effort towards establishing a comprehensive social security system. And this

must not be done at the expense of top slicing off other desperately needed budgets.

Public employment programmes, especially those directed at the youth, must now be dramatically scaled up. A 60 per cent and more youth unemployment level means we are living in a totally unsustainable reality. We cannot rely on a dysfunctional capitalist labour-market to solve this problem. There are millions of unemployed South Africans willing and able to work and there are vast areas of socially needed work (child-care, township infrastructure maintenance, sports coaching in township and rural schools, community health care work, community safety, shelter care for abused women, community food gardens, building environmental resilience). The profits-before-people, capitalist labour-market is not remotely capable or willing to address this huge challenge.

Advancing, deepening and defending a second, more radical phase of our democratic transition, the National Democratic Revolution, has become more urgent in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic worsening the pre-existing high levels of unemployment, poverty, inequality, and the associated crisis of social reproduction reflected in many families struggling to support life. In the past decades, the SACP has driven a wide range of economic transformation and broader social development campaigns. Many of these working class campaigns remain relevant to expand our democracy, in line with the strategic objective of deepening the basis for an advance to a socialist transition.

It is crucial, for instance, to intensify the financial sector transformation campaign, not only to make banks and other financial services institutions serve the people but, as a key national transformation and development imperative, to build developmental state and co-operative banking sectors. We must de-monopolise and diversify ownership participation in the financial sector. At present the banking sector, for

example, is dominated by oligopolies, a few commercial banks driven by the profit motive.

In the same vein, we must resolutely continue pushing constitutional and legislative development, other executive measures, and popular mobilisation for the state to speed up land redistribution to enable South Africans to gain access to land on an equitable basis. Land redistribution must prioritise productive land use, to build sustainable livelihoods and contribute to the eradication of hunger and poverty, and ensure decent housing based on an integrated human settlement and industrialisation programme to tackle unemployment. The campaign to achieve access to water and sanitation for all is also as crucial as ever.

As public servants continue to engage the government on the social wage, in support of the engagement the SACP calls for an establishment of an affordable housing programme, and education and healthcare programmes that can be made possible by creative use of retirement funds! We need a more decisive advance to make quality healthcare for all a reality through the National Health Insurance.

In focusing on the building of sustainable livelihoods, much greater attention needs to be paid to the solidarity economy, to supporting co-operatives and to workers in the informal sector. Informal sector traders have been among the most negatively affected by the July events. But their challenges are continuous, whether confronting opportunistic xenophobia, or ongoing harassment by the police and city officials, including the confiscation of their goods.

The SACP is deeply concerned by government's announcement that looted goods, particularly non-perishable food, will be destroyed. Obviously, we must not condone looting, but confiscated non-perishable food should be responsibly re-circulated through a wide range of non-profit organisations already actively involved in providing support to marginalised communities battered by food insecurity.

Building organisational capacity

Building social capacity must go hand in hand with building organisational capacity.

This means that the SACP itself must review its organisational capacity. We have grown into a substantial mass party, but are we sufficiently grounded in the daily struggles of the working class and poor? A key task now is to build a significant number of effective cadres within our broad membership, cadres capable of playing a non-sectarian, but active vanguard role in their communities, in their places of work and study.

The trade union movement has been gutted by unemployment, by labour brokering and informalisation. These realities have forced trade unions on to the defensive and even into internecine competition and fragmentation. Cosatu and the broader trade union movement need to be rebuilt, unity in action needs to be driven, and the critical links between formal and informal workers, between the workplace and community struggles forged.

The Alliance needs to be reconfigured in particular to build an active presence on the ground.

The upwelling of community action networks in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, organising food gardens, food distribution, and much else need to be supported. As the SACP we need to learn from and be amongst them, but in a non-sectarian way. And the same goes for much of the myriad of grassroots, often non-racial, community safety, volunteer networks that emerged in the face of the attempted insurrection against our democracy.

Building developmental state capacity

The developmental capacity of our public institutions has been seriously weakened both by state capture and by a mindless, self-imposed

and self-destructive austerity. In the midst of the early July mass looting, the Business Day, suddenly bemoaned the fact that South Africa now had fewer police than we did 10 years ago, while there were 8 million more South Africans. But just the week before, the same Business Day had been praising Treasury's steadfastness in sticking to its plan to cut a further 162, 945 policemen and women by ²⁰²³/₄.

Until a few weeks ago, in the midst of the most serious global pandemic with a runaway third wave surge, hundreds of graduated medical doctors had still not been employed. The reason? Budget constraints. This is surely close to mindless criminality.

Lives are lost. Billions of Rands of damage are incurred and all because we think we are saving money. Of course, we cannot just throw money at an often-dysfunctional police force, corrupted by state capture, and disabled by poor training. Certainly, now more than ever, we need a thorough clean-up of the police. Policing failures and perhaps even deliberate failures in early July must be investigated. But what we cannot allow is for short-sighted (and ultimately costly) austerity to pose as if it were the answer to dysfunctionality. In fact, it is often a direct contributor.

Building state capacity must also involve rebuilding the capacity of the state, including the critical SOE sector, to drive a major, state-led infrastructure build programme; to expand the state-led industrial programme; and to build environmental resilience and sustainability through a just green transition. All of these must prioritise job creation.

State capacity must be built to ensure that we consolidate a core pillar of any national democratic effort – namely building democratic national sovereignty, forging as much as possible the ability to overcome the fate of forever being a semi-peripheral, subordinated economy continuously locked into an imperialist-driven reproduction of our own crises of under-development.

One aspect of this struggle in defence of democratic national sovereignty has been the important global struggle President Ramaphosa has led against vaccine nationalism (it's really vaccine imperialism). But there is much more to the struggle to consolidate democratic national sovereignty, including the critical struggle to avoid dollar-denominated debt enslavement to the IMF. It is for this reason that the SACP was outraged by Treasury's taking out of an IMF loan last year. It was a loan we did not need, and worse still austerity commitments were made that were totally unrelated to the nominal purpose of the loan in the first place. The only possible explanation for this was that it was a cynical attempt to draw in the full might of the IMF to lend weight to Treasury's crippling austerity agenda for our country.

Our state financial institutions including regulatory institutions and the Reserve Bank are frequently extolled as models of perfection and bastions against state capture. Where they have played a role against state capture, we salute them. And yet there has been a massive failure in these quarters to curb huge financial outflows out of our economy, much of it illicit. From the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture we now have some idea of the incredible looting and laundering out of our country of multi-billion Rands of public resources. Were the Guptas really that smart that they could outwit our financial regulators? And what were our private commercial banks doing?

Building state capacity must centrally be about building the capacity to discipline private capital in the public interest. It is something we have largely failed to achieve over 27 years. To take just one example. Why, for instance, with the Brent Crude oil price now hovering around 75 US dollars a barrel, are we not extracting a windfall tax on Sasol's super-profits? A brief reminder: SASOL was a highly successful publicly owned company established by the apartheid regime with taxpayers' money. With an impending transition to a non-racial democracy, it was sold-off

cheaply to National Party crony-capitalists. Today, around one-third of South Africa's fuel needs are produced by SASOL. As a country we pay SASOL for this fuel at the global going price, as if it were fuel transported all the way from somewhere in the Middle East. In the early 2000s the SACP waged a prolonged campaign, calling for a windfall tax to be imposed on SASOL when the global price rose substantially above its own production costs (estimated to be around 35 US dollars a barrel). Treasury finally established a commission to investigate the feasibility of this matter, and the commission agreed with the proposal of a windfall tax. The ANC Minister of Finance at the time rejected the findings of his own commission. There is no timidity in imposing austerity on the working class and poor, but when it comes to disciplining private capital in the public interest timidity and complicity seem to prevail.

It is for this reason that over the past two years the SACP has asserted that the struggle is a struggle on two fronts—against state capture and the networks behind it, and against neoliberal austerity and the bending over to please private capital interests at the expense of the public interest. These past July days have underlined just how relevant that strategic perspective is.

Forward to a socialist-oriented National Democratic Revolution

On this solemn but celebratory occasion of the SACP's centenary, we affirm what we have affirmed for most of these past 100 years. We do so now with greater conviction than ever before: the struggle for socialism in South Africa and the national democratic struggle are not two separate struggles. They do not occur in two separate times zones, or geographical spaces. Without a deepening socialist orientation, the struggle to defend the popular electoral mandate will be further eroded by ongoing submission to the will of undemocratic ratings agencies, the prophets of austerity, and their local mindless sycophants. Without

a deliberate placing of people before profits, the goals of the Freedom Charter and the aspirations so clearly expressed in our democratic 1996 Constitution will forever recede. Without boldly reclaiming socialist values, without instilling a popular morality of solidarity, without upholding that profound working-class slogan “an injury to one is an injury to all”, unless we do this in the face of those who proclaim, “I didn’t struggle to be poor”, who glorify personal primitive accumulation—the continued degeneration of our movement will persist.

We are not hitch-hikers. We are not entryists into the broad national democratic movement. Over 100 years, the militants of the Communist Party in South Africa have contributed immensely to building this movement. We will not allow it to continue to decline into deeper degeneration. But the ANC does not own the National Democratic Revolution. If we, together with many thousands of incorruptible ANC members and supporters fail to halt the decline, then it will still be necessary to build a broad, national popular movement to overcome the deep legacy of racialised oppression, to defeat patriarchy, and to put people before profits.

We are committed to this strategic perspective as socialists. We assert that the national democratic movement will only be renewed if there is a deepening socialist orientation to its character and in its activism. We do not say this as left sectarians. We do not decline to work with all democratic, peace-loving, anti-sexist, non-racial patriots, whether they regard themselves as socialists or not. But, as our Party militants have affirmed over the course of 100 years, it is imperative that we roll back the empire of private profit accumulation. We are more convinced than ever of the correctness of this perspective.

International solidarity

We pledge our solidarity with the people of Swaziland struggling for

democracy and socialism. The SACP calls for the unconditional release of political prisoners and unbanning of political parties in Swaziland with immediate effect.

We pledge our solidarity with the people of Western Sahara and Palestine against the occupation of their land by Morocco and the apartheid Israeli regime. The SACP reiterates its call for Morocco and Israel to unconditionally end the occupation with immediate effect.

The SACP pledges its unwavering solidarity with the people of Cuba and their government against the United States driven imperialist aggression and regime change machination. The SACP strongly condemns the additional sanctions imposed on Cuba by the Joe Biden administration.

This year, for the 29th consecutive time since 1992, the United Nations General Assembly strongly condemned the illegal blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba and called upon the United States to lift the criminal blockade. A total of 184 countries voted in favour of the resolution, and of all countries in the world only the apartheid Israeli regime stood with the imperialist United States in the minority. The blockade has far-reaching extraterritorial implications. It comprises effective sanctions against other countries, for example in the financial sector.

Besides its illegal blockade, the United States is still illegally occupying the Cuban territory of Guantanamo Bay.

The United States must unconditionally end both the blockade against Cuba and the occupation of Guantanamo Bay with immediate effect.

Long live the South African Communist Party!

Socialism is the future, build it now!



SACP CENTENARY

ANC-SACP alliance forged in history and still relevant

Reviewing the Alliance's rich history, ANC's **Jessie Duarte** concludes that the quality of ideas about the road ahead and joint action have always bound the ANC and SACP

Given the road the party has travelled, the battles it has surmounted and the victories it has registered, it is only appropriate for me to begin by congratulating the SACP for being an indispensable, adaptable and absolutely necessary pillar of our collective struggle for freedom, dignity and self-determination. I cannot do justice in this brief input to the rich history of the SACP and the heroic role played by one of our founding fathers, General Secretary Moses Mauane Kotane. Rather than recounting the SACP's history, I will instead draw thematic insights that emerge from critical milestones in the journey travelled by the SACP and its leadership to date, and the importance of such lessons for the road ahead.

Background and milestones

Ghana's founding father Kwame Nkrumah said, "those who would judge us merely by the heights we have achieved would do well to remember the depths from which we started". This centennial year of the SACP is a correct platform for us to briefly go back and borrow from the depths from which we started to inform our future political outlook. Going back to the emergence of the National Party and its war on com-

munists of all races, great lessons can be learnt from how the Communist Party both pre-empted and outmanoeuvred the 1950 Suppression of Communism Act and later emerged as an even stronger political force in South Africa. The party achieved this during a period when membership of the then Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) or merely supporting the communist ideals, came with a hefty price of prosecution and a jail sentence of up to 10 years.

Importantly, before the Suppression of Communism Act could be finalised, a painful but necessary decision to dissolve the CPSA was taken and communicated to all structures of the party. Then General Secretary of the party, Moses Kotane, communicated this decision to an assembly of around 400 members of the Johannesburg District. In the words of Rusty Bernstein, after comrade Kotane announced the decision of the Central Committee to dissolve the party “There was nothing to say... We sang the Internationale without enthusiasm for the last time and went out into the night as though from a funeral. All our years of work and dedication had disappeared in dust - without warning. Only uncertainty and doubt about the future remained.”

As the Suppression of Communism Act was finalised in June 1950, it would later be clear to the membership that the “self-dissolution” of the party by the leadership was more of a tactical retreat rather than an admission of defeat. The dissolution of the party by the Central Committee gave birth to what would later become an impressive and indispensable underground political machinery that bravely and relentlessly took on the apartheid regime and led us to freedom. During this difficult period, it was the leadership of the ad hoc committee of the dissolved CPSA, led by comrades Kotane, Yusuf Dadoo, Bram Fischer and others, that crisscrossed the length and breadth of our country to rebuild what would later become a victorious underground political machinery. The difficult conditions that had to be traversed and cen-

tral role played by comrade Kotane and his collective in keeping the underground machinery alive, is best described by Brian Bunting in his biography of Moses Kotane¹: “Under surveillance all the time, Kotane had to act with extreme care, but step by step, he was able to establish contact with like-minded individuals and groups in Johannesburg and discuss plans for the launching of the new Communist Party. At the beginning, having no headquarters to operate from, he and his initial contacts used to meet at dawn, in the open veld, away from the urban centres, so that, hidden in the bushes, they would themselves be screened from observation while at the same time able instantly to detect the presence of any unwanted stranger. At each meeting they would make detailed arrangements for the next meeting, fixing the exact time and spot at which each comrade was to be picked up, and the time and spot at which he or she was to be set down. If cars were used for transport, they had to be changed from time to time. All written and telephone communication was banned. Kotane and his group took the initiative in establishing contact with groups in Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, and elsewhere that were conducting similar consultations with former officeholders of the CPSA”.

Secondly, the early milestones in the journey of the SACP reminds us of the importance of placing loyalty to ideas at the forefront of building broader consensus and ideas as a guide to action. The leaders and membership of the party during this period exemplified the kind of selflessness and loyalty that runs beyond rhetoric. For 40 years (1950-1990), the banned SACP existed only in the minds of its secretly recruited membership and leadership. Maximum discipline and unflinching loyalty to an idea kept the flame alive for 40 years under two golden rules: complete silence about the very existence of the party and a strict requirement for a unanimous committee vote before anyone could be approached to join the now SACP’s underground political movement.

It is hard to imagine a successful pursuit for the National Democratic Revolution without the level of discipline and loyalty to the cause as demonstrated by the SACP during this difficult period.

Thirdly, with the party having given priority to quality over quantity of membership, small party groups of four or five members, unaware of other similar groups in their district or elsewhere in the country used to meet regularly to discuss the prevailing political situation, strengthening of trade unions and the advancement of Marxist theory in and outside of the party. From this practice, we can clearly see a tradition of collective development amongst cadres and a commitment to advancing and winning the battle of ideas beyond its membership. The success of an idea, first and foremost, depended on its strength and not on the mere number of people who supported it. In other words, majority narratives were as strong as their substance and not mere appeal. Importantly, party members at all levels participated in the deliberations of policy.

In the words of Joe Slovo: “Despite the post-1953 underground conditions, we continued to practise a good measure of internal Party democracy. The rank and file had the opportunity of debating major policy statements before they were finally adopted by the Central Committee. The leadership was re-elected at least once every two years at conferences attended by delegates from every district and who outnumbered members of the Central Committee”

From this tradition and practice of the 1950s’ SACP, we are already able to draw a significant lesson: internal party democracy is as important and good as its form and content. Internal party democracy should therefore not be confused or reduced to the mere will of the majority, as such practice has the danger of inherently undermining both the quality of the debate and ideas that eventually prevail. This is in direct contrast to an emerging culture of disregard for the art of convincing

one another while remaining open to be convinced.

Fourthly, it is the quality and strength of ideas that came out of the SACP's underground political machinery, not the size of its membership, that entrenched the party's influence in the entire anti-apartheid movement. In the words of historian, Sheridan Johns (2007), although "the SACP's membership was estimated at no more than several hundreds, it was still asserted, particularly by the apartheid government, that 'communists' controlled the anti-apartheid opposition". Accusations that communists controlled the ANC (and other organisations linked in the Congress Alliance) were a testimony both to the prominent positions that many former CPSA members held in these organisations and increasingly pro-Soviet pronouncements made by the ANC and its allies in the 1950s.

Deepening collaboration with the ANC

Kotane and Dadoo in particular, continued to be very active in the leadership and political activities of the ANC. In hindsight, in addition to the regime's paranoia towards the SACP, this fear of communists was also a testament to the strength, quality and appeal of the ideas and propositions that emerged out of the party's underground political machinery. Another milestone that cements the bond between the party and the ANC is the historic and heroic role played by members of the Party in the lead up to, during and after the drafting and adoption of the Freedom Charter at the 1955 Congress of the People in Kliptown. Prominent communist, comrade Lionel Rusty Bernstein's draft of the Freedom Charter was adopted by the Congress of the People with minimal changes. By 1955, once again, the influence of the SACP in the anti-apartheid struggle emerged through the quality and appeal of ideas it advanced.

In leading through the strength of their ideas, the footprint of SACP

members in our fight against colonialism and apartheid can be traced in almost every aspect of our revolution. In the labour movement, communists such as comrades Ray Simons and Raymond Mhlaba worked tirelessly to strengthen trade unions. In journalism and academia, Cdes Ruth First, Brian Bunting, Rusty Bernstein and many others occupied the battle of ideas through newspapers and academic journals. In the legal fraternity, communist lawyers such as comrades Bram Fischer, Joe Slovo and Vernon Berrange maintained their legal practices to take up political cases.

Despite the setbacks experienced during the state of emergency, the shock of the Rivonia Trial and its aftermath, the period between 1960 and 1990 was markedly characterised by deepening collaboration between the Party and the ANC. The bond between our organisation was solidified in communities, prisons, in exile, and in the trenches of Umkhonto weSizwe. Following the founding of Cosatu in 1985, we formally came together in Harare in 1988 to formalise our tripartite alliance and its programme aimed at the total deconstruction of the apartheid state and everything it stood for.

Consistent throughout this tumultuous history was the fact that the unity of the Alliance is much more than a semantic exercise. While on paper we correctly appear as separate organisations, a deeper and historical introspection clearly shows that we are one and as such, the bond between the ANC, SACP and Cosatu must be jealously guarded at all material times. Given the depth and spread of the SACP's DNA on the ANC, it should be difficult and indeed impractical for one of us to imagine and even flatter with the idea of the SACP leaving the Alliance. That is to say, given its 100 years of investment in ideas, blood, sweat and tears, by leaving the ANC, the SACP would effectively be leaving a part of itself behind. Let the quality of ideas about the road ahead be what binds us together, not personal differences. None of the chal-

lenges we face today are insurmountable. In fact, nor are the challenges we face today particularly new to our Alliance.

It is owing to your qualitative influence in our Alliance, in both policy and practice, that the SACP has been hailed by scholars such as Stephen Ellis in 1992 as “arguably the only communist party in the world whose popularity is on the increase”. By tirelessly elevating the plight of the working-class to the forefront of public and industrial policymaking, the SACP’s qualitative contribution has and continues to leave an indelible mark on the lives and livelihoods of millions of South Africans.

Internationally, it was comrade Kotane and other leaders of the party who played a critical role in mobilising military and non-military support for the final push against the apartheid regime. This contribution is well documented by Professor Piero Gleijeses in his widely read account of the role played by Moscow and Havana in our final push against Pretoria. In the book *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa* (1976-1991) Professor Gleijeses writes: “The armed struggle was a key element in the collapse of white rule in southern Africa and it would not have been possible without the weapons provided by the Soviet Union. Without Moscow, Cuba could not have kept tens of thousands of soldiers in Angola for more than a decade. Without Moscow, the Angolan army would have been virtually without weapons.

It was the Cubans who pushed the Soviets to help Angola. It was they who stood guard in Angola for many long years, thousands of miles from home, to prevent the South Africans from overthrowing the MPLA government. It was the Cubans who in 1988, with the reinforcements sent by Fidel Castro, forced the South African army out of Angola. It was they who forced Pretoria to abandon Savimbi and hold free elections in Namibia—which SWAPO won.”

In the words of President Nelson Mandela, the 1988 Cuban victory over the apartheid army in southern Angola “destroyed the myth of the invincibility of the white oppressor ... [and] inspired the fighting masses of South Africa.”

This was Cuba’s contribution to what comrade Castro called “the most beautiful cause” — the struggle against racial oppression in southern Africa. Humiliating one superpower (ie apartheid South Africa) and repeatedly defying the other (United States), Cuba changed the course of history in southern Africa. Today, 27 years after the end of apartheid, it is against this background that we urge the alliance to guard against emerging anti-Cuban propaganda that is largely fuelled by an old imperialist agenda to drive a wedge between South Africans and their Cuban brothers and sisters. Through their training of black doctors, skills transfer and the selfless and heroic contribution to our fight against Covid-19, the Cubans have once again demonstrated their loyalty to the principled cause of working-class liberation.

The state of the world as the SACP turns 100

As the SACP turns 100, its birthday gift is a capitalist system that is in turmoil and therefore facing a crisis of legitimacy. Decades of neoliberalism, a policy model and ideology that purports to be centred on the supremacy of market forces and minimal government, have had a tremendous impact on society as we know it today. Increasingly, there is growing appreciation amongst scholars and policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic and much of the developing world that the neoliberal experiment has not only produced disastrous outcomes for most citizens, but it further threatens the prospects of a sustainable future. If the goal was to advance societal well-being and usher in shared prosperity, neoliberal capitalism has been a remarkable failure.

During this period, we have witnessed, on the one hand, the transfer

to and concentration of wealth and power in those already well placed, and a steady rise in chronic social insecurity and the further subordination of the working-class on the other hand. In his book *Requiem for the American Dream*, Noam Chomsky explains how neoliberalism has even collapsed the American Dream and replaced it with a concentration of “extreme wealth in a tiny sector of the population, a fraction of the top 1 percent”, an era that he argues represents “the worst period of American history”. The Covid-19 pandemic has therefore only worsened an already untenable situation. As was the case in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic has once again reaffirmed the downward and peripheral direction the fate and well-being of the working-class takes in times of crisis. This was laid bare by António Guterres, the UN General Secretary, during the 2020 Annual Nelson Mandela Lecture, when he reminded the world that due to Covid-19:

“We face the deepest global recession since World War II, and the broadest collapse in incomes since 1870. One hundred million more people could be pushed into extreme poverty. We could see famines of historic proportions. Covid-19 has been likened to an x-ray, revealing fractures in the fragile skeleton of the societies we have built. It is exposing fallacies and falsehoods everywhere: the lie that free markets can deliver healthcare for all; the fiction that unpaid care work is not work; the delusion that we live in a post-racist world; the myth that we are all in the same boat. Because while we are all floating on the same sea, it’s clear that some are in super yachts while others are clinging to drifting debris.”

Alfredo Saad-Fihlo has described the impact of Covid-19 and capitalism’s lack of preparedness for it by paraphrasing *The Communist Manifesto* when he asserts “all that was solid melted into thin air”: “Globalisation has gone into reverse; supply chains previously thought of as

the only way to organise production have collapsed, hard borders have returned alongside a stalled international travel market. In a matter of days, tens of millions of workers became unemployed and millions of businesses lost their employees, customers, suppliers and credit lines.”

The sudden growth in resonance, advocacy and proponents of the ideas that the SACP has advanced for decades; ideas such as the need for a publicly funded universal health care, a wealth tax, universal basic income, a free decolonised higher education, etc; should not come as a surprise. In the words of economist Nouriel Roubini (2020), “Covid-19 has triggered the sharpest and deepest economic contraction in the history of capitalism”. In other words, the pandemic has simply fast tracked our realisation that neoliberal capitalism has been a disaster waiting to happen. There is no doubt in the mind of prominent scholars that the destruction of solidarity and collectivism under the neoliberal order of the past decades has worsened the impact that the pandemic has had on human lives and livelihoods. The destruction and undermining of trade union movements and the once powerful leftist movements has left the poor and the working class particularly vulnerable to a type of disaster capitalism that particularly thrives in times of crisis. The time to reimagine a new global and national order is now.

As the SACP turns 100, our nation has not escaped the failures described above. In South Africa and much of the developing world, Coronavirus found us riding a wave of another pandemic: a pandemic of extreme poverty, insecurity and inequality, a pandemic pillared by unjust ways in which income and wealth have been distributed in the past 26 years of post-apartheid South Africa. By the fourth quarter of 2020, under the expanded definition of unemployment, 11.1 million working age South Africans are recorded as unemployed by Statistics South SA.

In the Presidency’s *25 Year Review Report*, the late comrade Jackson

Mthembu reminds us that we remain the most unequal country in the world, with a Gini coefficient score of 0,68. The latest inequality figures by Aroop Chatterjee (2020), supports this claim: “The top 10% own 86% of aggregate wealth... The top 0.01% of the distribution (3,500 individuals) own 15% of household net worth, more than the bottom 90% as a whole”.

Drawing inspiration from comrades Kotane, Dadoo and the collective that carried us to this point, it is time for the SACP to help the alliance reimagine a kind of society that serves the majority of those in the margins and defend principles of solidarity, collectivism and redistributive justice.

To conclude with the words from Alfredo Saad-Filho’s *From Covid-19 the end of neoliberalism*: “The Covid-19 pandemic happened by chance, but it was not unexpected. Its consequences are much more than scandalous: they are criminal, and the left must say this loudly and clearly. Neoliberal capitalism has been exposed for its inhumanity and criminality, and Covid-19 has shown that there can be no health policy without solidarity, industrial policy and state capacity. This is a desperate fight. We must come out of this crisis with a better society. The left is needed like never before and it must rise up to the challenge.” ●

Cde Duarte is Deputy-Secretary General of the African National Congress

Endnotes

1. Brian Bunting, *Moses Kotane, South African Revolutionary, A Political Biography*, Inkululeko Publications, 1975

SACP CENTENARY

Cosatu salutes the SACP on its momentous centenary celebrations

The history of the South African working class, argues Cosatu in this centenary tribute, is not complete without the role of the vanguard in building working class power

We have said it before and shall repeat it, that this is a remarkable period in the history of the working class, not just in our country, but throughout the world, with particular significance to the workers of our beloved continent, Africa.

The birth of the first communist party on the African continent, the CPSA, remarkably changed our landscape and that of the then raging struggles against colonialism, apartheid and feudalism throughout the continent.

Once again, as Cosatu, we owe it to the critical tools of working class analysis and struggle that the Party bestowed on us in our quest for the emancipation of the class and society in general, against capitalist barbarism.

Exactly 100 years ago, in this month of July, the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was formed, which later turned to be the South African Communist Party (SACP) as we know it today. In 1921, immediately after the 1st World War,, several known communist parties were formed, with such historic significance to the class struggle. They include the Communist Party of China.

The profound words of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, expressed the essence of the class struggle when in their Manifesto of the Communist Party:, “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master† and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes”.

Following the devastations of the world economy by the inter-imperialist rivalries that resulted in the First World War – a war between and among imperialist powers, for the balkanisation of Africa and other parts of the developing world, territorial conquests and colonies to partition the world into monopoly spheres of each imperialist power, the working classes of the world arose to the reality of capitalist greed and destructiveness that led the whole world into common ruin. This led to the birth of several key communist parties that changed the course of human history forever.

This underlines the fact illustrated herein above about the history of all hitherto existing society as the history of class struggles. History has proven that no class wages a struggle on behalf of another, hence the indispensability of class consciousness and class analysis in all our struggles.

Without class consciousness, workers and other social forces are unable to unpack and expose the class contradictions and the class interests behind every decision, move and policy. Towards that end, it's the cardinal pillar of any revolutionary and working class organisation to remain guided at all times by class consciousness.

In the history of the South African revolution, we owe a special tribute to the role of the SACP in the ideological, organisational and po-

litical sphere for offering its sharpest analysis, insights and advanced ideas during the most difficult period of the underground and exile. We did not doubt that, for every difficult question facing the revolution; from narrow national chauvinism and tribalism to sexism and patriarchy, to colonialism of a special type and racial capitalism, to superstitions, myths and stereotypes and all sorts of backward ideas, the SACP was at the forefront clarifying the foundation of our class analysis and the advanced theory of the class. We have benefitted from the historic works of Moses Kotane, JB Marks, Ray Alexander, Dr Yusuf Dadoo, Brian Bunting, Dan Tloome, Michael Harmel, Ruth First, Chris Hani, Jack Simons and Dora Tamana.

The CPSA laid a solid foundation in the development of the ANC's left leaning orientation, together with other African liberation movements towards clarity that the struggle against colonial dispossession is at the same time a struggle against imperialism and capitalism in general. So, there is no struggle against racism, sexism and oppression without at the same time fighting capitalism as a whole.

Strategic role of the Alliance in leading the NDR

The significance and role of the tripartite alliance and its components must be understood in the above context. It is the revolution that defined what alliances and class forces define the essence of the National Democratic Revolution and how do they relate to each other and the revolution in general, during the different phases of our struggle. The Alliance must be understood in its totality and as a convergence of different components representing particular constituencies and forces that share a common perspective called the NDR, but with separate social constituencies.

Towards this end, the alliance must and should always clarify the overall thrust of the NDR in each phase, but remain alive to the fact of

each constituency's immediate and pressing issues, which if ignored, could lead to a strategic detour or even an outright rupture. This clarity and understanding of the forces constituting the alliance and the MDM in its general sense is very important, otherwise we either conflate, confuse or downplay the essence of each component and its unique role and contribution to the alliance and the NDR in general.

This is where the nuances, postures and overtures become more pronounced on either strategic or practical and tactical matters. This is very important for our shared understanding of the NDR in motion and how it will be continuously evolving and throwing new and unprecedented challenges.

We have been engaged in matters critical to workers and the working class in general, as the alliance and components, in the recent past, as has been the case throughout the history of our revolution. We have experienced the difficulty of clarifying what the NDR means for workers losing jobs, to workers losing CCMA (Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration) protection and the general disruption of the whole bargaining system as a result of the neoliberal restructuring of capital. We have sometimes felt each other to be on one or the other extreme. This is the challenge of the conjuncture and the necessity to clarify the actual stage of our revolution and its practical meaning for us as revolutionaries and leaders of the NDR.

Cosatu pays special tribute to the role and contribution of communists in building Cosatu and working class power in general, with the result that our revolutionary character as a trade union basing itself on the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism is to a very huge extent, the influence and contribution of the SACP. In the same way, that the ANC can be regarded as being a force of the left and, using revolutionary tools throughout its history of struggle against apartheid, as a tribute to that role we are speaking about.

Cosatu and the SACP are the key axis of the left in the alliance and critical forces of the NDR in driving a revolutionary and progressive content of the whole struggle. The dismantling of apartheid is not complete, neither is the transformation of society. We are still in a stubborn transition from a racist, capitalist society to a democratic and developmental society. This is the imperative and understanding we must always never take for granted.

The journey the SACP has undertaken towards this centenary is a very arduous and difficult one, but filled with rich lessons and experiences that make us a lot richer, wiser and more sharpened. In that way, we all share in these evolutionary and revolutionary gains and insights of that journey.

Towards that end, Cosatu would want to use the Centenary celebrations moment to call for a broad strategic focus on the following pointers;

Deliberate focus on heightening ideological development, to intensify the building of working class consciousness and advancing unity of workers against neo-liberalism and imperialism, particularly in this difficult period of outright capitalist barbarism, extreme exploitation and poverty;

Building a Popular front for social and economic justice, bringing together community and social justice movements, coordinated by both the SACP and Cosatu in actual struggles against the ravaging crises in communities and job losses;

Dedicated focus on organisational development and building peoples organs to strengthen our organisations, build organs of people's power and reclaim the mass movement for revolutionary transformation, including fighting corruption, as well abuse of public resources and parasitism;

Being more decisive in fighting against Gender Based Violence,

women and children abuse, crime, as well as for environmental justice to save the planet and the future of humanity from the path of capitalist greed;

Building more joint Technical Oversight capacity to advance and monitor policy development, implementation and evaluation in the state; and

Advancing a more robust internationalism and solidarity movement, with special focus on Africa, Cuba, Palestine and Venezuela and the whole Latin America and the Caribbean. ●

SACP CENTENARY

The CPC and SACP: shared ideals, common goals

The Communist Party of China's **Song Tao** reviews the paradigms and practical struggles of the SACP and the CPC as both mark their centenaries

As the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) celebrate their centenaries in 2021, it is of great significance that we take stock of the 100-year struggle of both parties so as to deepen our solidarity and cooperation and bring greater benefits to our two peoples. At the outset, I wish to extend warm congratulations on the centenary of the SACP and salute the SACP for the important contributions it has made to national liberation and independence as well as to the explorations and development of the socialist cause in South Africa. Being the largest and most influential Marxist political party in Africa and taking Marxism as its guide, the SACP, for the last century, has provided theoretical guidance for the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) in South Africa, and played a historic role in the struggle for the emancipation of the black poor, the dismantling of the apartheid regime, and the founding of the new South Africa. In the post-1994 period, the SACP, while holding high the banner of Socialism is the future, build it now! in its relentless efforts to build the New South Africa, has stayed committed to the ANC-led Alliance and relied on the working class and the poor, as it persisted in

advancing the NDR and in marking socialist explorations in light of the national realities. The century-long struggle of the SACP testifies to the tenacious vitality of scientific socialism.

The SACP has been among the pioneers in South Africa and indeed in Africa to develop contacts with the CPC. As early as in 1947, the news on the opening of the SACP national congress appeared in the People's Daily, the official organ of the CPC Central Committee. In the early days of the People's Republic, both Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai devoted particular care to supporting the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. SACP leaders including Yusuf Dadoo visited China on many occasions and found their warmest welcome from the CPC and the Chinese people. The special bond of "camaraderie + brotherhood" between our two parties has developed further in recent years as highlighted by the frequent interactions between top leadership and the growing depth of our exchanges. In the wake of Covid-19, we have strengthened cooperation on pandemic response and maintained active contact through cloud meetings. What we have done together served to inject a powerful impetus to the development of relations between our two parties and two countries. We wish to place on record our heartfelt appreciation for the SACP's consistent stance on the one-China principle and valuable support it has rendered on issues regarding China's core interests and major concerns, such as those related to Hong Kong, Xinjiang and the South China Sea. On our part, the CPC will, as always, continue to deliver our support to the just causes of the SACP.

Having pulled through a magnificent century of arduous struggle, the 100-year-old party is at its prime and becoming stronger than ever. As the centenary of the CPC approaches, we recall the glorious century in which the CPC has stayed true to its original aspiration and founding mission, in which a solid foundation has been laid against all odds,

and in which the outstanding achievements have opened a new horizon for the future. Under the leadership of the CPC, the Chinese people have made the historic leap from independence to prosperity and strength. At present, in the run-up to the grand centenary celebrations, the CPC has launched an intensive Party history study and education programme among its membership to reaffirm the Party's original aspiration and founding mission, and fortify the ideal and conviction, so as to gain a better understanding of the law of history on the new journey of building a modern socialist country in all respects. In light of this, I may share with our SACP comrades what we have learned from our experience over the past 100 years.

– Consistent efforts must be made to uphold the leadership core of the Party and strengthen the leadership by the party.

The century-long struggle of the CPC has amply demonstrated that so long as the whole Party firmly upholds its leadership core, the cause of the Party would achieve one resounding victory after another, and likewise, if the leadership by the Party is weakened, the cause of the Party would suffer setbacks. Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, under the leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core, China has made historic achievements and undergone historic changes, with the solution of many tough problems that had been long on the agenda but never solved, and the accomplishment of many undertakings that had long been wanted but never done. As a result, the task of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects has been completed on schedule and the first centenary goal the Party set for itself has come to fruition. We shall firmly uphold the core position of General Secretary Xi Jinping in both the Party Central Committee and the Party as a whole, firmly uphold the Central Committee's authority and its centralised, unified leadership, and rally

more closely around the Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core, so as to ensure that the Party unities and leads the Chinese people from victory to victory.

– Consistent efforts must be made to pursue a development path suited to specific national conditions and stay committed to advancing the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The future and destiny of a country hinges on the direction and the path it chooses. When it comes to building socialism, there has been no precedent to follow for China, a large country of 1,4-billion people with over 5 000 years of civilisation. The century-long struggle of the CPC has demonstrated that the path, the theory, the system and the culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics conform to China's specific conditions, and thus open a broad road to the development of contemporary China. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core has steered socialism with Chinese characteristics into a new era. China has grown to be the world's second largest economy, the largest industrial manufacturer and the largest trader of goods. It was the only major economy registering positive growth in 2020 with its economic aggregate exceeding US\$ 15-trillion. We will stay on the right path to promote the modernisation of China's governance system and capacity, and to pursue the continued progress of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

—Consistent efforts must be made to ensure the guiding role of Marxism, and equip the minds of the entire membership with Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

Marxism is a powerful ideological weapon for us to understand the world, grasp its underlying laws, and seek truth. For the past 100 years, the CPC has adapted the basic tenants of Marxism to the Chinese context with continuous theoretical and practical innovations. Xi Jinping

Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era represents the latest achievement in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and encapsulates the practical experience and collective wisdom of our Party and the people. It is part and parcel of the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and serves as a guide to action and fundamental principle to achieve national rejuvenation. Under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, we shall continue to equip our minds with the latest theoretical innovations of the Party, and apply them in our practice and actual work, so as to open up new vistas for Marxism of the 21st century.

– Consistent efforts must be made to adopt the people-centred approach and act upon the Party’s fundamental purpose of serving the people wholeheartedly.

“The people are the foundation of governance.” For the past 100 years, the CPC has always put people in the uppermost position. Devoted to the goal of meeting the people’s aspirations for a better life, we have worked relentlessly to ensure all our people have a greater sense of fulfilment, happiness and security. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC, under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, has organised and implemented a decisive battle against poverty that is unprecedented in scale and intensity, benefiting the largest population in human history. A total of 98.99 million rural population living under the current poverty line were lifted out of poverty in China. By addressing extreme poverty, an issue haunting the Chinese nation for thousands of years, China has met the first target of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 10 years ahead of schedule. Going forward, we shall continue to put people above everything else, work hard to meet people’s urgent

needs and expectations, so as to march steadily towards the goal of common prosperity.

– Consistent efforts must be made to strive for human progress and promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Over the past century, the CPC has always taken it as its mission to constantly make a greater contribution to the humankind to play its significant role in promoting world peace and human progress. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping, with the future of the entire humanity in mind, has firmly grasped the major domestic and global development trends, and set forth a series of global public goods to steer human development and progress, including the building of a community of a share future for mankind, a new model of international relations, Belt and Road cooperation, a global community of health for all, and a community of life for humanity and nature. Committed to serving the fundamental interests of the people in China and that of the world people at large, we shall safeguard our own interests and at the same time promote the common development of humanity. We shall closely relate the future of China with that of the world, and work tirelessly to build a better future for the world we live in.

Today, the concurrence of changes unseen in a century and the once-in-a-century pandemic has brought the world into a period of fluidity and transformation. Instability and uncertainty are clearly on the rise. Humanity now stands at a new crossroads. As the like-minded good comrade of the SACP, the CPC is more than willing to enhance solidarity and cooperation with the SACP, thus making even greater contributions to the wellbeing of our two peoples and the progress of mankind.

First, we need to strengthen exchanges and mutual learning between our two parties

As General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out, political parties in various countries should strengthen mutual trust, dialogue and coordination, and explore the building of a new type of party-to-party relations that seeks to expand common ground while reserving differences and enhance mutual respect and mutual learning on the basis of a new model of international relations. He stresses that we do not want to “import” a model from other countries, nor do we want to “export” the Chinese model, still less will we ask other countries to “replicate” the Chinese practice. We are ready to further uplift the level of structured exchanges and share governance experience between our two parties so that both parties can grow even stronger and develop even better.

Second, we need to do more to promote the development of relations between our two countries

Political parties are the fountainhead of a country’s domestic and foreign policies, representing and shaping public opinion on the one hand, and on the other, working to implement various policies. As the governing party of China and a member of the Alliance of South Africa respectively, the CPC and the SACP need to strengthen solidarity and cooperation through firmly supporting each other in pursuing development paths suited to specific national realities, rendering mutual understanding and support on issues of each other’s core interests and major concerns. This will be conducive to the development of the China-South Africa comprehensive strategic partnership and to the building of an even closer China-Africa community with a share future.

Third, we need to do more to improve the wellbeing of our two peoples

To seek happiness for the people is the common goal of our two par-

ties. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the CPC is willing to share with the SACP our experience and practice in coordinating epidemic response with economic and social development. We need to strengthen solidarity and cooperation in the fight against Covid-19 and work together to build a community of health for all. As China is completing the task of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, we are able to strengthen practical cooperation with the SACP on poverty eradication, betterment of people's lives, and Belt and Road development with the view to improving people-to-people bonds and bringing more tangible benefits to our peoples.

Fourth, we need to work together to advance human progress

Faced with the complex international situation, our two parties shall keep in mind the future and destiny of mankind, uphold the common values of the entire humanity, and stand opposed to hegemony, unilateralism or interference in other countries' internal affairs. We should take firm actions to counter "colour revolution" and help establish a new model of international relations featuring mutual respect, equity, justice and win-win cooperation. In our concerted efforts to build a global community with a shared future, we need to adapt to the tides of history, promote and facilitate the free flow of trade and investment, uphold diversity of civilisations, and more importantly, enhance the representation and voice of developing countries in global governance. ●

Cde Song Tao is Minister of the International Department and a CPC Central Committee member.

SACP CENTENARY

Mzala – a noble life cut short

Much of it from first-hand experience, **Ronnie Kasrils** offers a comradely and affectionate portrait of a young communist lost to the Party and the struggle 30 years ago

Jabulani Nobleman Nxumalo (1955-1991)

There is much to consider on the historic centenary of the SACP. An intriguing topic worthy of study, research and interrogation is what has drawn individuals into the Party's ranks over the decades.

While there are many fundamental similarities relating to objective conditions, there are also many differences that relate to ethnic diversity and origin, the peculiarities of context, time and place. Such studies provide an important insight into the role of the SACP and its place in the country's history.

Regardless of class origin and background, each successive generation of communists, from 1921 onwards, have been driven by the same heroic and noble motivation: the struggle against racism, oppression and class exploitation for the cause of socialism and communism. The development of theory and practise over the 10 decades has been the product of the struggle and sacrifice of those who served, organised and fought in its ranks.

This article examines the emergence and political development of one of the class of 1976, Jabulani Nobleman Nxumalo, whose nom de guerre was Mzala¹. Within a decade he would become one of the rising

stars of the SACP; but sadly, all too soon he died, at the age of 35.

Cde Mzala was born in the rural town of Dundee, in northern Zululand, in October 1955. His parents were well respected school teachers, who attended church regularly. They soon moved to the nearby town of Vryheid, a centre of cattle farming and coal mining. The young boy grew up revelling in the Zululand countryside, of rolling hills and forests. The flat-topped outcrops had afforded the Zulu warriors of the region fortified posts to defend their land, people and cattle. He grew up revelling in the stories of their bravery and patriotism, particularly their military triumphs over the colonisers, British and Boer.

His parents sought to provide him with the best possible education open to Africans at the time. He was sent to study at Bethel College, Butterworth in the Transkei; then closer to home at KwaDlangezwa High at Empangeni. Seemingly a born rebel he was expelled from both for confronting injustice. These were stormy years of protest against the indignities of apartheid discrimination and poor educational conditions in black schools. From the age of 15 he became an activist and soon ran foul of the authorities, influenced initially by a radicalising Christian theology, and soon by the black consciousness movement (BCM) and his membership of the South African Student Organisation (SASO). He had instinctively rebelled against the ethnic Zulu conservatism inculcated at KwaDlangezwa in particular. This saw him harassed by the police and authorities of the Kwa-Zulu homeland, headed by Inkosi Buthelezi, giving him an abiding contempt for the apartheid bantustan system. This led him into confrontation at KwaDlangezwa which expelled him in his matric year so that he had to write the examinations elsewhere.

Two MK cadres whom he caught up with in exile, observed him during his schooldays.

Cde Vuso Shabalala (MK name Paul Kgoitsimang), two years his

junior, in a discussion with me, recalls him as being regarded as a “political animal”. He was a school prefect who was referred to by his middle name – Nobleman. The name becoming synonymous with his endeavours. Shabalala explains: “Nobleman was... a legend for being troublesome. [He] was chairman of the entertainment committee [and] used the position to arrange films [and] insert himself as a pianist in the rendition of songs with a political message. [He] was known to contradict the SABC propaganda commentary the acting principal used ostensibly to raise knowledge of the English language. He used his position of leadership of the student body to spark the student strike that led to the closure of the school in June 1973. The police were brought in to quell the strike and a number of students, including Nobleman were questioned, some briefly detained. A number of students were expelled....” Mzala among them.

Cde Vusi Mavimbela (MK name Klaus Maphepha) remembers Cde Mzala from schooldays “as a young man...with a constantly inquisitive mind, always searching for the essence of life and the meaning of truth. What distinguished him from the rest of us was that his questioning and probing mind was most fearless, most constant and most robust.”² Matriculating with flying colours, he enrolled as a law student at the University of Zululand (Ongoye) which soon became a hotbed of radicalism, echoing the defiant mood spreading throughout South Africa. He was expelled in 1976 as one of the leaders of student unrest. With police hot on his trail he crossed the border into Swaziland on foot to join MK.

I first met Cde Mzala, as Jabulani Nobleman Nxumalo was referred to by one and all in Luanda, towards the end of 1977. (Few knew his real name at that time as it was customary and necessary to hide actual identities for security reasons). The word ‘mzala’ was a popular term of endearment, meaning ‘cousin’. I had been deployed to work in the MK

training camps as a political instructor. I met Mzala at a MK residence in Luanda. A trim figure, with magnetic, fierce and inquisitive eyes, and flaying arms as he addressed meetings. He reminded me of Samora Machel. He never seemed to let up, debating issues day and night, indoors and out on the streets, on the back of military trucks, over cooking and gardening duties. You could spot him a mile off as a firebrand with an insatiable appetite for politics - the politics of liberation, and how the struggle should be waged to achieve freedom.

He had a noticeable scar on his right cheek close to his ear. I learnt that this injury was caused when a rifle accidentally discharged wounding him in the face. He was recently out of hospital at that time, recovering from the injury, behaving as though nothing untoward had occurred. He had been treated by Cuban doctors at the military hospital in Luanda. I believe the devotion of the doctors in saving his life gave him a lasting regard for their skills.

Cde Mzala had already completed his training at Nova Catengue, near Benguela, as a member of the June 16 Detachment. I roped him in to serve on a commissariat I was establishing, to develop political and cultural activities for the various camps scattered around Angola. Novo Catengue, the main Angolan training base from 1977-79, was the initial source of MK commissars such as Cdes Edwin Mabitsela, Vumile Ngculu (James), Lungile Pepani (Sbali), Alec Tshabalala (Arthur), January Masilela (Che O'Gara) and Mzala.³ With Cde Mzala, who became my assistant in Luanda, they transformed into a dynamic collective, very bright and capable, and they stimulated one another's development. They were all brave and dedicated, and I would say that they raised political understanding in the camps to a very high level.

They were also fun and engaging to be with, loved sport, concerts and organising cultural programmes in the camps. Had they been around in the difficult 1983-4 period when MK was mobilised to counter Unita

banditry, the confusion that led to a mutiny would probably not have occurred. By then these comrades had been deployed to serve in the underground structures in the forward areas neighbouring South Africa. The absence of developed cadres such as them left an unfortunate vacuum of political leadership in Angola despite the outstanding calibre of those such as the MK commander Timothy Moekwena (Godfrey Ngwenya, who later became chief of the South African National Defence Force)

Concerning Cde Mzala's ideological development, he was fortunate that his parents were both devoted teachers. A disciplined upbringing gave him an affinity for study and debate, and a thirst for information in the quest for the truth – more especially for a young African with a passion to right the wrongs of racism and colonialism. Cde Mzala, at the outset of his student days of awakening political consciousness, had followed a trend in black consciousness thinking that influenced the majority of young people who flocked to join the ANC and MK in the immediate aftermath of the 1976 Soweto uprising. Initially there was the simple clamour for weapons so that they could go back home to “shoot the Boers”. The ANC patiently introduced them to its policy and strategy. The recruits proved thirsty for knowledge and information, and showed a great interest in Marxism-Leninism. They pressurised the ANC to introduce this education into their training. Cdes Oliver Tambo, and Mzwai Piliso, in charge of the training in Angola, agreed. This brought theoreticians such as Cdes Jack Simons, Mark Shope and Francis Meli into the training programme, and subsequently myself. Cde Simons was a maestro in introducing students to Marxism. Cde Shope focussed on trade unionism and working-class struggles and Cde Meli on the history of the ANC. I dealt with the history of MK, and international guerrilla struggles, including the theory and practice of guerrilla warfare.

Cde Mzala was one of the first converts to Marxism, and quickly grasped the essentials of political theory and the strategy that went with this. His subsequent military and political training in the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) provided further introduction to Marxism-Leninism. He proved to be an outstanding cadre and studiously followed the lectures, devouring the literature, and having the courage to interrogate his mentors, among other key topics the Marxist approach to the national question. He did not feel the topic had been resolved as claimed by the socialist countries, as much as he admired their achievements. He was not one to simply swallow the slogans and basics but strove to raise critical questions and shone in debates. His development from black consciousness ideology is evident from his writings on the Freedom Charter in which he contrasted its depth and superiority compared to the Azanian People's Manifesto.⁴

He showed a keen interest in Party literature and theory very early on, and involved himself in regular debates about key articles in the *African Communist*. He showed a great interest in international topics. He was an Africanist in the sense of pride in the revolutionary struggles of the continent and was inspired by great leaders such as Cdes Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Samora Machel, Agostinho Neto and Amilcar Cabral. At the same time, he lauded Cdes Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Ho Chi Minh and others. His search for the truth and his honesty were instrumental in his being attracted to the writings of Marx and Lenin. Add to this, his critical reading and observations of the failures of nationalism to deal with the transformation of the economy saw him being drawn to communism. This was key to the process which saw his political understanding deepening, the ideological shift to socialism and his joining the SACP.

This period in Angola was a major stage of his theoretical and ideo-

logical development. It was there that he was recruited into the SACP around 1978. Later, when he was based in the forward areas, he developed his ideas concerning the implementation of guerrilla warfare in the most practical sense, first in Maputo and then in Swaziland when he came to grapple with the challenges we faced to advance the political and armed struggles within South Africa.

I recall his arguments, later incorporated in some published articles, about the need to “cook rice inside the pot” - meaning the armed struggle had to be developed on home terrain. This choice of word play was a forte of his, and invariably induced comrades to take up the refrain. When there was no written response to his article, it was widely believed that he himself wrote a rejoinder, using the pen name Alex Mashinini, and titled the contribution, “Preparing the fire, to cook rice inside the pot”, stressing the need for thorough preparation before the armed struggle could take off.⁵ While I believe this was indeed Mzala, the style of writing needs to be analysed for certainty, or the real Alex Mashinini needs to be identified. This has not been forthcoming to date.

After I was deployed to Maputo, to serve in the underground, I had Cde Mzala deployed to join me. For a year in 1981 he worked with the Political Committee, which focussed on establishing underground structures within South Africa. This prepared him for deployment in Swaziland in 1982, where he became a key member of the MK structure, headed by Cde Shadrack Maphumulo, responsible for organising the then rural Natal. This was a very testing period for his skills, working under dangerous and difficult conditions, with the possibility of catastrophe at any moment. Swaziland was a country where South African death squads operated with impunity, in league with some treacherous elements of the Swazi security forces. Cde Mzala showed tremendous creativity and audacity, posing initially as a Swazi journalist which assisted him in moving relatively freely around the country.

An underground operative needs to be able to socialise with people in every walk of life, and carry out public activities if possible. He had befriended some Swazi students and journalists who assisted him. In an act of sheer audacity, he managed to fool Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the KwaZulu homeland leader, who was visiting the kingdom, into giving him a lengthy interview about his political activities. This gave rise to a number of newspaper articles, initially in the Swazi press, but then in ANC and SACP journals such as *Sechaba* and the *African Communist*, and the MK camp journal *Dawn*. The end result was his acclaimed and sensational Gatsha Buthelezi – chief with a double agenda.⁶ In this Cde Mzala was the first member of the ANC to publicly raise huge doubts about Buthelezi's true intentions. He came under some fire over this, at a time when the ANC was seeking to influence the Inkatha leader, but as they say, history vindicated the young man.

Perhaps Cde Mzala's most significant achievement in this period was his role in pressing for the opening of a guerrilla front in the Ingwavuma region of KZN. The area runs along Swaziland's eastern border, atop the Lebombo mountain range.

The area was conducive to guerrilla infiltration and the establishment of bases which appears obvious in retrospect. It had been overlooked, however, by MK until Mzala appeared on the scene, and he was quick to recognise the potential. This reflected his natural bent for such opportunities.

He was engrossed in putting to test his theoretical advocacy of “cooking the rice inside the pot”.

The opening of the area was Cde Maphumulo and Mzala's work, later to be developed by Cdes Shabalala and MK commander Thami Zulu (real name Muzi Ngwenya), after Cde Mzala had been deported from Swaziland. Subsequent operations within Ingwavuma, and engagement with the SADF, were later to be described by the MK commander

in the area, Cde Robert Dumisa (MK Comrade Mugabe), in his diary.

In an impressive piece of writing by Cde Mzala in *Dawn* he incisively analysed “Operation Ingwavuma”, paying tribute to those who had fallen and been captured; drawing on the lessons, successes and failures, of the operation.⁷ Cde Mzala was not just a talker. He put theory into practice and he spent time with the MK operatives in Ingwavuma on several occasions. He wrote of his experiences: “Everywhere we went, the people received us...with enthusiasm, and although we had [funds] with us, I can say it with all the power of truth that we never spent even a cent from our pockets for food or for anything we needed for our survival there. ...Given these favourable conditions, we made other preparations...for the reception of our comrades; we also reconnoitred bases as well as areas that could serve as training camps for small units of people in the localities.” Cde Mzala was not present in Swaziland when the Ingwavuma setback occurred. In 1984 he had been arrested by the Swazi police and deported to Tanzania. One evening I had encountered him by chance at a local cinema, showing an epic film of resistance to colonialism in Libya against Italian conquest in the first decade of the 20th century⁸. The theatre was packed, half the spectators were MK cadres in various disguises who slipped in as the lights were downed. I was there with Cde Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim. In the middle of a harrowing scene of torture by Italian soldiers a voice shouted out: “Fascists! Damn fascists!” The voice was unmistakably that of Cde Mzala. When I met him sometime later and pretended to admonish him for putting us all at risk of exposure had there been a police agent present, he was initially perturbed but then twigged that I was pulling his leg.

Cde Mzala spent a couple of years working as a commissar in Tanzania and Lusaka, yearning to be called back to the front. By 1987 he was deployed to Prague as the SACP’s representative on the editorial board of the *World Marxist Review*, succeeding Cde Essop Pahad and a

long line of senior Party representatives including Cde Michael Harmel. This was a singular honour for the young man, then aged 32, and reflected the Party's high regard for his ability and discipline. Unfortunately, within a few months he became ill and transferred to London to undergo medical treatment while serving on the Party's international committee, and assisting Cde Brian Bunting in editing the *African Communist*. He grew very close to Cde Bunting and his wife Sonia, and I believe they made a huge impression on him, and he on them.

By then Cde Mzala had written 17 quality articles for the *African Communist*, using a variety of pseudonyms. These are cited in the end notes, and are a prodigious amount even compared to contributions of the AC's seasoned stable of contributors.⁹ A reading of this impressive body of work illustrates his ideological development over the years. There were some comrades who were critical of Cde Mzala's passionate style and never giving up on questions of debate. Cde Joe Slovo, in defence of Cde Mzala, would snap at them, "At least he writes".

And write he did. As with the *African Communist* he was prolific in his contributions to *Sechaba*, producing numerous articles of note between January 1985 and August 1989. In these, he raised his views about the armed struggle, insurrection, people's war, the negotiation process, as well as a series on the Freedom Charter and its application.

Cde Mzala never tired of putting his words and ideas into written form. I have mentioned his Gatsha Buthelezi – chief with a double agenda, which showed his contempt for chicanery and deception, and the need to expose such dangers. This was his earliest published work of note, but from his time in Angola working as commissar and involved in the production of *Dawn*, through to his last days, he was engrossed in issues of class and race, the national question, and its relevance, the range of issues relating to the armed struggle, mass mobilisation, insurrection and people's war. He was one of the foremost of MK cadres, and

writers within the national liberation movement, to engage not simply in debate but in the writing and theoretical development of how to overcome the problems engaging us from the early 1960's.

I refer to the abiding challenge of how to establish the guerrilla struggle within the country from exile, and link the armed struggle with the mass struggle. This dominated discussion over three decades and in a sense the problems of infiltrating trained cadres back home from the time of the Rivonia Trial, when the arrests of the top leadership and thousands of rank-and -file members, had seen the internal organised structures of the ANC and SACP virtually smashed. Such structures were indispensable to receiving and embedding trained cadres back in the country. Without such a safety net returning cadres were at the mercy of informers and police. Without such a springboard to link MK with the people our efforts were extremely difficult to sustain. This bedevilled much of our work. Cde Mzala never tired of what to some appeared an endless debate: the topography of the country; the lack of suitable terrain for guerrilla warfare; the lack of an internal underground to receive returning cadres; security problems and distance from home; the relationship between political and military work. These topics confronted and frustrated an exiled movement's efforts. The emergence of the Mass Democratic Movement, the UDF and Cosatu shifted opportunities in our favour, but the externally based ANC, SACP and MK grappled with the problem of connecting the mass political, underground and armed activity. Cde Mzala instituted fresh thinking into the debate with his "Cooking the rice inside the pot" thesis, which I have already made reference to. He had that wonderful ability to coin catchy, relevant phrases which caught people's attention. He argued for the preparation of the conditions to lead to the arming of the masses early on, well before the SACP's insurrectionary thesis was developed and adopted at its Cuba Congress in April 1989. Cde Mzala

was ahead of the times. The mark of an innovative thinker.

The question of Cde Mzala and MK's approach to negotiations is often raised. I wouldn't say that there was outright opposition to the idea of negotiations in MK circles, but there were understandably serious concerns, including doubts and questions that people like Cde Mzala had. There certainly was justified concern that we might be walking into a trap, and that negotiations were a ploy of the regime, and its Western supporters, to disarm and deradicalise the ANC. There was no surprise that such questions could arise. Patient explanation was needed and that is exactly what the Tambo leadership provided. Bear in mind that from the outset the MK Manifesto had expressed the hope that civil war could be averted if the whites were prepared to negotiate a transition to democratic change. Cde Mzala's generation had been schooled in the concept of politics being primary with armed struggle the means to reinforce a democratic political outcome. Of course, by 1990 there were heated debates as the struggle began to change course. The caveat was that the liberation movement had to remain vigilant, keep our gunpowder dry so to speak, ensure that mass mobilisation and organisation would strengthen our position at the negotiation table. From what I heard Cde Mzala, at that stage in London working as deputy editor of the *African Communist*, was outspoken about such requirements, and emphasised how necessary it was to counter the violence of Inkatha impis. This did not negate an acceptance that negotiations could deliver the necessary change, as long as we remained true to the path of overthrowing the apartheid system and ensuring people's power through the ballot box. Yes, it was important to be sceptical as Cdes Mzala, Chris Hani and others were; but then so had Cde Tambo been when, as early as 1988, he had begun to formulate the Harare Declaration about a negotiated strategy.

Cde Mzala's untimely death at the age of 35 in London in February

1991, was an incalculable loss to the SACP, ANC and South Africa's future. His death robbed the liberation movement of a charismatic young man's unique contribution. He had enormous qualities of leadership, was passionate about political education, was an extraordinary communicator, a fine orator and writer, constantly determined to develop his skills for the service of the struggle.

He was devoted to his wife Mpho, daughter of jazzman Jonas Gwangwa, and their two children.

Hopefully the youth of our country will be inspired by the moral life of Cde Mzala, a freedom fighter of enormous integrity who did not spare himself in serving the destitute and downtrodden.

On the occasion of his death the SACP wrote: "His tragic death at the age of 35 has robbed the national liberation and working-class movement of a powerful thinker, orator and writer.... The death of Comrade Mzala has deprived our movement of one of its most brilliant talents. Perhaps the greatest loss of all is to our Party's ongoing attempts to indigenise Marxism-Leninism on South African soil."

Jabulani Nobleman "Mzala" Nxumalo. A young man who led a noble life. ●

Endnotes

1 Some of the material on this paper derives from an interview I have given to Dr Mandla Radebe, towards a book he is engaged in writing about Mzala. My thanks to him for agreeing that I can go ahead and publish my material, which derives from questions he put to me.

2 Vusi Mavimbela – An unpublished tribute, The Mzala I knew, and his memoir Time is not the Measure (Reach Publishers, 2020)

3 Nova Catengue, in the south of Angola, an hour's drive from the city of Benguela, was bombed by South African Air Force Canberras in March 1979. A new camp

was soon established at Pango near the Quibaxe camp, northeast of Luanda. By the mid-1980s the largest camps were at Malanje and environs in the eastern heartland of Angola.

4 "We Are with the Communists– a Tribute to Ruth First" (AC, Issue 93, 2nd Quarter, 1983)

5 Mzala, "Cooking the rice inside the pot", Sechaba, January 1985, and Alex Mashinini, "Preparing the fire to cook rice inside the pot", Sechaba, April 1985. Both articles argued for thorough political and military preparation among the people, before the struggle could be successfully developed.

6 Mzala, *Gatsha Buthelezi - chief with a double agenda*; Zed Books, London, 1988

7 'Memoirs of a Political Commissar', *Dawn*, Journal of MK, Special 1986 edition, commemorating the 25th anniversary of Umkhonto weSizwe, edited by Brian 'Scratch' Hogo. Although not revealed at the time, Mzala was the author.

8 *Lion of the Desert* – Libyan historical film about Italian conquest; starring Anthony Quinn as Omar Mukhtar, a Bedouin leader fighting the colonisers and Oliver Reed as Italian General Rodolfo Graziani, who attempted to defeat Mukhtar.

9 Articles under various pseudonyms published in the *African Communist*:

- Under the name Comrade Mzala: 'Armed struggle in south Africa' (Issue 82, 3rd Quarter, 1980); 'Has the time come for the arming of the masses?' (Issue 86, 3rd Quarter, 1981); 'We are with the communists – a tribute to Ruth First' (Issue 93, 2nd Quarter, 1983); 'On the threshold of revolution: how should we raise the question of the armed insurrection?' (Issue 102, 3rd Quarter, 1985); 'Culture, the artists and liberation', (Issue 107 (4th Quarter, 1986); 'How the ANC was revived by the Youth League', (Issue 111, 4th Quarter, 1987); 'Chief with a double agenda', (Issue 115 (4th Quarter, 1988); book review;

- Under the name Sisa Majola: 'A Tale of two nations: the presentation of the national question in south Africa,' (Issue 97, 2nd Quarter, 1984); 'Education for revolution,' (Issue 103, 4th Quarter, 1985); 'Nation and class in the South African revolution,' (Issue 105, 2nd Quarter, 1986); 'The beginning of people's power,' (Issue 106, 3rd Quarter, 1986); 'The two stages of our revolution,' (Issue 110, 3rd Quarter, 1987); 'Perestroika and class struggle,' (Issue 113, 2nd Quarter, 1988); 'To whom does South Africa belong?' (Issue 115, 4th Quarter, 1988); '

- Under the name Jabulani Mkhathshwa: Africa Notes (AC Issue 114 3rd Quarter, 1988,); 'Senegal: what manner of democracy? Economic aid: till debt do us part; Mozambique: amnesty for the bandits; (AC Issue 115 4th quarter, 1988) Angola: a military defeat for the racists; OAU at 25 years; In addition, in Sechaba, writing as either Mzala or Mashinini, he wrote: 'The Freedom Charter is our lodestar, part one', July 1985; 'The Freedom Charter is our lodestar, part two', August 1985; 'The Freedom Charter is our lodestar, part three', September 1985; 'Building people's power', September 1986; 'Building people's forces for combat, war and insurrection', January 1987; 'Towards people's war and insurrection', April 1987; 'United States policy towards South Africa', June 1987; 'Aids – misinformation and racism', October 1988; 'Omelettes cannot be made without breaking eggs', June 1989; 'Negotiations and people's power', August 1989

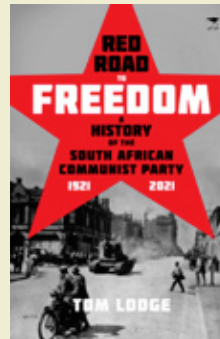
BOOK REVIEW

Rich historical resource on SACP's roots and trajectory

From a non-Marxist perspective Tom Lodge recognises our Party's often-underplayed contribution to the ANC becoming a victorious, mass-based organisation, writes **Jeremy Cronin**

In late July 1921 a pioneer Communist Party of South Africa, later renamed the South African Communist Party, was launched in Cape Town at a conference attended by 14 delegates, all of them white. Today, the SACP has a membership of over 300 000. Coinciding with the centenary of the party, Professor Tom Lodge has published this long-awaited work, the *Red Road to Freedom, A History of the South African Communist Party 1921-2021*. Some 40 years of research have gone into this major scholarly achievement, which is written sympathetically but from a non-Marxist perspective.

In the course of his own earlier research for his Black politics in South Africa since 1945, published in 1983, Lodge was intrigued by the relatively unheralded role of communists in the late 1940s and through the 1950s as



RED ROAD TO FREEDOM
A History of the
South African
Communist Party
1921-2021

Tom Lodge

Jacana,
Johannesburg

the African National Congress was transformed into a campaigning, mass-based organisation. The communist party's role in this, Lodge argues, was often seriously underplayed in earlier academic work.

"From 1945", Lodge now writes, "knowledge of the party's development becomes vital for any understanding of the mainstream of black politics in South Africa (p222)." In many ways the party's extensive ideological, organisational and mobilising impact on the South African freedom struggle, and particularly on the ANC, is the central theme of the book.

But to what extent has this role been beneficial or problematic? And what, if any, is the relevance now of this influence at a time when, after nearly 30 years as a ruling party in government, the ANC by its own admission is facing serious internal crises of factionalism, endemic corruption, and waning if still significant electoral support?

While re-balancing the tendency to diminish the influence of the SACP in the post-1945 period, Lodge is equally effective in countering arguments that the party's historical role was little more than a manipulative entryism into the mainstream ANC movement, perhaps acting on behalf of Soviet masters in the Kremlin. That was something the apartheid regime naturally frequently alleged. But it is also an argument advanced with greater sophistication for the period of the late 1950s through the 1980s by Cold War journalist writers like Stephen Ellis and RW Johnson. Lodge largely disagrees with these views, not least because, notwithstanding the party's frequently repeated aspiration to be a tight "democratic centralist", vanguard formation, its own composition and internal culture was typically diverse and pluralistic.

The detailed mapping of this diversity and Lodge's particular interest in the internal sociology of the party is one of the great strengths of the book. Building on archives, extensive interviews, and personal memoirs, Lodge has an acute eye for biographical detail that captures the

complexity of historical moments and of the party members immersed within them. The early chapters trace formative influences upon the party, like the important role of radical white trade unionists, and the syndicalism of Daniel De Leon. Lodge corrects the tendency, notable in some of our own SACP publications, to read the largely reactionary role played by white workers in the second half of the twentieth century back into an earlier and more militant period.

Another important early influence came from the wave of Jewish immigrants fleeing racist persecution in Eastern Europe. Immigrant anti-Zionist, Jewish Bund socialists provided an important channel of information on and communication for the South African left with the revolutionary developments unfolding in Russia. Their own direct experience of racist persecution also contributed to embedding traditions of anti-racism in the emerging party.

In fact, 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. As Lodge acknowledges, from the outset and for several decades, the Communist Party was the only political party in South Africa with a non-racial membership. But, in the first years there was, as Lodge delicately puts it, a certain “fluidity on the issues of race and cross-communal solidarity” (p65). The party’s non-racialism was derived from its founding commitment to proletarian internationalism. But who were proletarians? Eddie Roux, a key figure in the formation of a Young Communist League in the early 1920s, was later to remember: “I was not consciously hostile or prejudiced against black men. But for me the ‘workers of the world’ were the white miners, tramway-men, building artisans and so on, who had trade unions and fought strikes.” Bill Andrews, trade unionist and founding chairperson of the party, “is an exemplary case”, Lodge argues for these early years, “in his inconsistency and ambiva-

lence on racial issues, intuitively and emotionally finding his sense of community within the confines of white industrial neighbourhoods and yet intellectually ready to recognise that the real working class included black South Africans” (p65).

By 1924 the CPSA was already claiming a large majority of black members, who brought their own impact into the party. “[I]f South African revolutionaries depended initially upon imported visions and an immigrant lexicon”, Lodge writes, quite soon African party members “like William Thibedi and Hamilton Kraai began adapting and domesticating these exotic visions and applying this foreign lexicon to their own circumstances” (p66). This is certainly true. However, the resources drawn upon by the early African party members for this indigenisation of Marxism at a practical level do not receive the same attention in Lodge’s work as the diverse currents drawn upon by the early white pioneers of socialism. As they organised in black townships and rural villages these African communists invoked both cultural traditions of primary resistance to colonialism, including choral song and a liberatory Christian vocabulary that would have been familiar to their audience. This was not a simplistic case of Marxism being lost in translation, nor was it merely folkloric. These practices were embedded in traditions of collective resistance and self-help, co-operative effort that infused party activism and were to give the party a one-hundred-year durability, despite challenges and failings.

However, it was only in the late 1920s, and then unevenly amidst considerable internal controversy, that the party at least formally adopted a programmatic position that promised to ground its Marxism strategically in the South African reality. This was the so-called “native” or “black republic thesis” on South Africa developed by the Comintern (CI). It argued that the struggle for socialism in South Africa necessarily required, as an essential “first stage”, a broad national liberatory

struggle for majority rule with minority rights guaranteed for all. The party was urged to work with emergent movements among the African majority and transform them into “fighting nationalist organisations”. The ANC was specifically mentioned.

Lodge’s interests and strengths do not particularly lie in exploring Marxist theoretical perspectives and debates, nevertheless his in-depth archival work provides a useful account of the development of the black republic strategic perspective. This includes consideration of the contributory role of the South African communist and trade unionist James La Guma in the course of his engagements in Moscow with Bukharin and leading CI personalities.

As the official South African national section of the CI, the party at its 1929 Congress was obliged to endorse the CI’s “black republic” resolution as its own. While some in the leadership like La Guma were strong supporters, a majority of the leadership including other black leaders in the party were less than enthusiastic. There was concern that reference to a black republic would alienate white workers. There was also considerable scepticism about the call to work with and build the ANC into a fighting national liberation movement. At the time the ANC was seen largely as a dormant formation dominated by traditional leaders and mission-school educated liberal professionals.

The South African party’s internal differences on the strategic perspective were compounded by a sharp turn taken by the CI. Paradoxically, at the very time that the CI was insisting on South African communists engaging with the ANC, the broader strategy encouraging alliances with national movements in the colonial and semi-colonial world was being turned on its head. As Lodge usefully notes, the CI’s so-called “left turn” against “right deviationism” was partly precipitated by the April 1927 attack by the nationalist Kuomintang on its former communist party ally in China. There was also what was to

prove a disastrous hardening in Europe of the line on alliances with social democratic parties, now characterised as “social fascists”. The “left turn” in the CI, the beginning of Stalinisation, also saw the formation now asserting a much greater top-down, factional interference in the affairs of local parties.

The strategic potential of the majority-rule, “black republic” resolution for grounding a Marxist practice in the South African reality was no sooner advanced than the rug was pulled from under the feet of the already hesitant South African party. Strategic confusion was compounded by factional interference by CI emissaries and damaging party expulsions of “right deviationists”. Through the early 1930s membership and influence dwindled to such an extent that the newly elected national secretary, Moses Kotane, wondered at the time whether the party would survive at all.

It was only during the 1950s that the now banned, underground SACP began to recover a more effective strategic characterisation of the struggle for socialism in the South African reality. In doing so, it built on the earlier black republic thesis and the idea already implicit in the late 1920s that South Africa was a colonial formation of a “special type” – being at once a semi-peripheral, mineral exporting subordinate within the imperialist system, and a formation characterised by an “internal colonialism”, with a well-rooted white minority ruling bloc dominated by an established South African bourgeoisie nationally oppressing a black majority.

A central theme of Lodge’s book, as earlier noted, is the major influence of the SACP upon the ANC, in particular from the mid-1940s. The party, he writes, “brought with it a range of helpful resources to the larger organisation: technical and professional skills, organisational habits (...) and skilful managers – ‘cadres’ as the party liked to call them – renewing these successively through selective recruitment and

careful preparation” (p446). Inside the country in the 1970s, with the leadership of both the banned ANC and SACP largely in exile, “the party installed its own remarkably resilient networks that helped underpin wider political formations and bring to them a perception of inclusive loyalty” (p447). Coming from a non-party and non-Marxist scholar, Lodge’s detailed and generally sympathetic account of the massive historical contribution of the party to the South African struggle is a major and surely justified tribute.

However, there are two general weaknesses in Lodge’s account, both of which become more apparent in his final chapter dealing with the post-1990 period. In the first place, while Lodge is excellent in acknowledging the impact of the party on the ANC, less attention is paid to the significant reciprocal influence of the ANC and broader liberatory movements on the SACP. In the second place, for Lodge Marxism and the party’s programmatic perspectives tend to be treated as interesting curiosities, sometimes even as quasi-religious ideologies, rather than substantive attempts at strategic analysis of capitalism and of the South African and global reality.

For instance, in dealing with the period of the mid-60s to mid-70s, the years in which the movement was dealing with a major strategic defeat, Lodge is excellent in outlining the role of party activists in helping to rebuild a shattered and largely exiled movement. But the strategic perspectives that informed collective and individual party heroism and dedication in this period are not really taken seriously by Lodge. According to Lodge, the party’s Marxism, however mistaken it was, at least provided a “morale-boosting teleology” (p494), the idea that history was “on our side”, to a wider movement particularly in periods like the mid-1960s to mid-70s when the struggle was at a low point. Whatever their “flaws and mistakes”, he writes, “the party’s strategic understandings...served as sources of hope and moral certainty, not just for

party ideologues but among the ANC's own rank and file, helping to sustain the movement and ensure its survival" (p446). Of course, there is some truth in this. The party's Marxism of the late 1960s and 70s, with its optimistic, teleological inclinations certainly inspired many, including non-communists in the midst of the iron-fisted years of apartheid's ascendancy. This is evident, for instance, in the Strategy and Tactics document emerging from the ANC's 1969 Morogoro conference in which the prospects for a radical national liberation advance were said to be enhanced by the fact that the South African struggle was "taking place within an international context of transition to the Socialist system ... in a new kind of world...which is no longer monopolised by the imperialist world system".

As we know, this assumption of an imperialist system on the wane in the face of an ascendant socialism, was sadly overly optimistic. It assumed that history basically advances in a straight line, stage by stage. However, the ANC's Morogoro analysis of the prospects for and imperative of a radical South African National Democratic Revolution, taken largely from the SACP's 1961 programme, did not rest solely on what then seemed to be the steady advance of socialist-oriented national democratic struggles. It also rested on the correct analysis of the class character of South Africa, in which the overwhelming majority of South Africans were proletarianised. This reality remains absolutely relevant in the present but is effectively ignored by Lodge.

Another significantly under-researched area in Lodge's book, is the reciprocal influence of the ANC, and more generally of black emancipatory struggles upon the SACP. Implicit throughout but insufficiently explored for its contradictory pushes and pulls is the relative uniqueness and complexity of the ANC-SACP relationship. Going back to the 1920s there has been overlapping membership and, subsequently, overlapping leadership. At first "dual membership", as it came to be

known, was confined to black communist party members (including those who would later be considered “coloured”, like Jimmy La Guma and Johnny Gomas). But from the 1980s the ANC opened its national executive committee to non-Africans and then subsequently its general membership to all South Africans. This dual membership of two political formations has had a rich if complicated history.

Most obviously, it has resulted in a considerable degree of symbiotic influence. The ANC was launched in 1912, almost a decade before the party. With its own long tradition of struggle for an inclusive constitutional democracy, the ANC was not the creation of the party, not a simple communist front. Even at the height of the SACP’s influence upon the wider movement, the ANC retained its own independent lines of contact with, for instance, the Soviet bloc of countries.

If there were important conjunctures, as Lodge amply demonstrates, in which the party played a key role in assisting the ANC overcome stagnation or disorientation, there were also moments in which it could be argued that these roles were somewhat reversed, typically in complex ways.

The story of Elliot Tonjeni, briefly explored by Lodge, is illustrative and exemplary in this regard (p148-9). Tonjeni, along with fellow communists Johnny Gomas and Bransby Ndobe, had been expelled in 1928 because of their party membership from the influential and for some years genuinely mass-based Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (ICU). The three then devoted their energies to setting up a string of rural ANC (and interestingly not communist party) branches in the Boland in the Western Cape. One such branch in Worcester numbered some 800 members, mainly coloured farmworkers. Worcester became a hotbed of militant action, with Tonjeni leading a mass May Day demonstration through the town. It was followed by a second demonstration with police shootings in which five were killed. A conservative,

provincial ANC leadership disowned Tonjeni, and expelled him and Ndobe. The two then established their own “Independent ANC” with three key demands: land, free education and the vote.

After further strike action Tonjeni and Ndobe were banished in 1932 by the government to rural Eastern Cape and Basutoland respectively. “In exiling Tonjeni”, Lodge writes, “the authorities succeeded only in displacing his political activism” (p149). The significance of all of this for the wider history of the communist party is that Moses Kotane, the future long-serving party general secretary, thoroughly fed up with the internecine factionalism within the party had relocated to deep rural Eastern Cape and it was here, around Cradock and Tarkastad, that he encountered groups affiliated with Tonjeni’s Independent ANC. The experience motivated Kotane to write his now famous 1934 “Cradock letter” addressed to the Johannesburg party district committee. The dominant orientation of the party, at the time, Kotane observed critically was remote from South African realities, with an obsession with “the German situation and the comintern, Stalin and Trotsky and the errors of various communist parties” (*South African Communists Speak – Documents from the history of the South African Communist Party 1915-1980*, Inkululeko Publications, London, 1981, p120-1). While it should “not lose its international alliance”, he urged the party to “become more Africanised (...) we must speak the language of the Native masses and must know their demands” (ibid, p122).

It is, however, particularly in regard to the more recent decades that Lodge’s relative neglect in considering the reciprocal influence of the ANC upon the party that an opportunity is missed. Lodge frames his account of the SACP after 1990 in a global context he characterises as “post-communist”. What, then, are we to make of the contemporary SACP, a “post-communist” communist party? Lodge’s account of the party in the current period concludes with a seemingly upbeat declara-

tion of the party's continued central relevance within contemporary South African politics, but it is not clear wherein, substantively, this actual or at least potential relevance might lie.

This is related to the framing of the current national and global context as simply "post-communist" (post-Sovietism might have been a better characterisation). Lodge suggests that the party's continued relevance can best be seen in the fact that an "increasingly non-communist ANC leadership" nonetheless still routinely draws upon a struggle lexicon that it has borrowed from the party, notably in ongoing programmatic references to a "national democratic revolution" (p488). But Lodge believes that these borrowings are distant from the ANC's "everyday policy-making government decisions", which "are shaped by quite different imperatives". Lodge might not be completely wrong to suggest that much of this invocation of struggle concepts by a non-communist ANC leadership is a way of "legitimizing its performance among its own active following" (p488-9). However, this raises obvious questions. Why should the idea of a national democratic strategy still serve to sustain an active following? Are there substantive reasons for this? Or is it just a matter of struggle nostalgia? And if the latter is the case, is the SACP's current relevance simply that of a for-old-time's-sake window-dressing?

A different framing of the global context of post-apartheid South Africa that went beyond "post-communism" would have opened up a more fruitful exploration of the challenges, dilemmas, partial successes and, indeed, relative failures of both the SACP and the ANC over the past three decades. A different framing would also have better substantiated the potential positive contribution to the present of the pre-1990 seven decades of communist and broader liberatory struggles in South Africa so meticulously and richly recorded in Lodge's earlier chapters.

The collapse of Sovietism, emblematically represented by the fall of

the Berlin Wall, marked a critical historical turning point, the victory on a world-scale of globalised financial capital – neoliberalism, for short – not just an ideology so much as an increasingly crisis-ridden new phase of capitalism. But it was not just Sovietism that was impacted. The rise of neoliberalism marked the erosion of the three historical compromises (in Samir Amin’s suggestive term) imposed on capitalism after the defeat of fascism in 1945 – the existence of an expanded Soviet bloc, welfare states in much of the developed capitalist world, and the advance of decolonisation in the global South. The period running through the late 1970s to the early 1990s was marked not just by the collapse of the Soviet bloc, but also the interrelated dilution of the other two broadly progressive, post-1945 currents. Whatever the internal mistakes (and there were certainly many – bureaucratisation, state-centric illusions, stagnation, a democratic deficit, in some cases chronic corruption), the Soviet bloc, social democratic welfarism, and the national liberation momentum were all variously hollowed out by a neoliberal, globalised financialisation that eroded Sovietism, outflanked national social accords in pursuit of low-wage economies elsewhere, and throttled the global South with debt.

Without understanding this global context, it is not possible to understand post-apartheid South Africa. In 1990 this was the global reality that confronted the newly unbanned SACP (illegal since 1950) and ANC (illegal since 1960). It presented the SACP in particular with a deep paradox. The party’s key external strategic reference point for seven decades, the Soviet Union, was unravelling. Around half of the central committee elected to the Party’s senior leadership in April 1989 quietly left the party a few months later in early 1990. This included two future national presidents, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma. On the other hand, the moment coincided with an unparalleled domestic high point for the SACP’s national popularity with 40 000 attending its 1990

coming out rally in Soweto. There was a five-fold increase in membership reported at its 1991 congress. Opinion polls found that a leading SACP personality like Chris Hani was easily the second most popular political figure in the country (after Nelson Mandela).

What was the way forward? Notwithstanding the SACP's frequent aspiration to be rooted in a rigorous and orthodox "Leninist" democratic centralism, it is here that Lodge's earlier appreciation of continuous complexity and contradictory pulls might have been more forcefully deployed. Earlier chapters lay a useful basis for understanding what we might call the pluralist sociology of the party, marked not just by its obvious racial and ethnic diversity, but also often by sharp generational breaks exacerbated by waves of repression (with little new recruitment) and subsequent resurgence. There was also the often distant and for many a lengthy diaspora with non-African members forced into exile unable to base in Africa for more than a decade, resulting in diverging political cultures between the two main exile poles of London and Dar es Salaam. Inside the country, the resurgence of progressive trade unionism from 1973 and a new militant student and youth rebellion from 1976, the latter strongly influenced by Black Consciousness, caught the exiled SACP by surprise but impacted on an internal and initially attenuated SACP underground with the writings of Frantz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral and Steve Biko circulating. Outliers among the older generation of the exiled SACP in the 1970s, like Ruth First and Harold Wolpe, were active in the burgeoning academic flowering of New Left influenced Marxist theory in Western Europe. Their writings, along with the important contributions of the Trotskyist-inclined Martin Legassick, circulated internally in dog-eared cyclostyled copies and had a significant impact on activist, including party, circles leading the upsurge of mass democratic mobilisation through the 1980s. Other influences on the internal movement, including SACP-aligned structures,

were Antonio Gramsci and left Eurocommunist writers like Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband, as well Andre Gorz and Boris Kagarlitsky, all of whom challenged the overly simplistic reform versus revolution divisions that had haunted much of the twentieth century left.

In the context of the collapse of the party's Soviet reference point, insufficiently explored (and not just in Lodge's work), is how the re-orienting influence of these left intellectual currents on the SACP was reinforced by a long-standing ANC political culture. It was a culture anchored around decades of struggle for an inclusive constitutional democracy. From at least 1955 and the adoption by both the ANC and the SACP of the Freedom Charter, and definitively from the ANC's 1969 Morogoro conference, these alliance partners understood, in varying degrees, that the "national democracy" to which they were committed was about the qualitative, progressive expansion of universal human rights and not their abolition in the name of either proletarian class dictatorship or a narrow Africanist nationalism. It was the impact of all these additional factors, along with the popular acclaim for the SACP, given its major role in the defeat of apartheid, that helped the SACP better survive the collapse of the Soviet bloc, when compared to many of its communist party counterparts elsewhere.

But what was the National Democratic Revolution? Was it a "stage", a liberal bourgeois democracy in which capitalism would be "de-racialised"? And if so, what was to be the "second stage" – a "dictatorship of the proletariat", in which multi-partyism and universal rights would be abolished? And where would the ANC be in that scenario? Or was the National Democratic Revolution a relatively prolonged, but hopefully uninterrupted, transitional period towards socialism, a mixed economy in which the working class and popular forces in struggle would assert increasing hegemony within the context of a popular democracy?

Lodge's deep plunge into the history of the party provides a fascinat-

ing picture of the continuous and unfinished debates on these matters not just between the party and non-communists in the ANC, but within the party itself. The 1928 CI resolution on South Africa unambiguously portrayed the black republic as a “first stage” in a “two stage” process towards socialism. This notion of a “two stage” struggle was largely carried through in party programmatic formulations for some six decades, with considerable emphasis on the characteristics of the “first stage”, and not so much about an eventual “second” stage.

However, already in the late 1920s at least one leading party personality, SP Bunting, was writing dismissively that “the language about ‘stages’ represented sociological rather than chronological sequences”. In fact, the notion of a “stage” was simply “verbiage”, he argued (p136). Had Lodge deployed these earlier debates into his concluding chapter on the post-apartheid period he might better have anchored an understanding of the internal SACP and broader ANC-led alliance dynamics, and particularly of how the different contesting protagonists conceptualised their role and mobilised support for it in the post-1990 period.

The senior personalities who left the party upon its unbanning in 1990 were grouped around Thabo Mbeki. After the country’s first non-racial 1994 democratic elections Mbeki became deputy president and the effective prime minister to Mandela’s presidency. With considerable energy and skill, Mbeki sought to chart out a new vision for the ANC, seeking to transform it into a centre-left electoral formation and no longer a broad movement. Strongly influenced by the emergent third-way politics in the West, the Mbeki circle mistook the positive international reception for South Africa’s “peaceful” (it was not peaceful) negotiated transition and the international acclaim for Mandela for the promise of imminent Marshall Aid-style support for the new rainbow nation, poster child of a supposed “Third Wave” of democratisation.

The support for the constitutional negotiations by established South African monopoly capital was also misunderstood. There was the strong belief in the Mbeki circle that a socio-economic accord with South African monopoly capital to accompany the constitutional settlement was at hand. In fact, established monopoly capital, restrained by anti-apartheid, UN-imposed financial, economy, oil and other sanctions and largely locked into South Africa by the apartheid regime's defensive exchange control measures, looked to a post-apartheid settlement and the lifting of sanctions as the road to belatedly pursuing globalisation. Internal investment, support for re-industrialisation, or contributing to a major redistributive effort were remote from its collective ambitions. While all these good things were promised by established capital, their delivery was said to be dependent upon removing exchange controls, lowering corporate tax, slashing trade tariffs, and generally introducing a neoliberal, shock therapy package. This duly arrived in 1996 when the ANC government unilaterally, without consultation within its own ranks (let alone within the wider Alliance), imposed the Gear macroeconomic package.

The gambit did not work with largely jobless growth, de-industrialisation and a major outflow, both legal and illegal, of domestic capital. From at least 1997 the Mbeki circle began actively and openly to pursue a further dimension to the strategy, a supposed additional core pillar of their version of a National Democratic Revolution, so-called black economic empowerment (BEE). This was the active promotion of politically connected, aspirant black capitalists who, so it was reasoned, would be more patriotic than their established white counterparts were proving to be. However, the primitive accumulation process required to promote these aspirant capitalists-without-capital has had outcomes that are not particularly patriotic or developmental. The primitive accumulation process has been largely premised on the regulatory require-

ment upon established capital to provide a percentage of encumbered shares to black partners, and on the diversion of public resources into politically connected black hands through state procurement, both legally in terms of preferential procurement regulations and, increasingly under the Zuma presidency (2009 – 2018), through so-called “state capture” plunder. The BEE policy has tended to produce dependent compradorist and parasitic strata, rather than an emergent “national bourgeoisie”. The impact of these primitive accumulation processes on the ANC has been deeply damaging, with most of its internal factional turmoil from the local branch level up associated with often violent competition for positions to secure access to public sector procurement, “tenderpreneurship” as it has come to be known. The desperate nature of this factional turmoil needs to be understood in the context of massive unemployment (currently at 44% in the expanded definition to include those who have given up looking for work, and an incredible 74,8% for those between 15 and 24 years old). Access to ANC positions and to public office can be the difference between personal advancement or a lifetime of grinding poverty.

What of the SACP over this period? From the early 1990s the Mbeki circle, not content with having left the party, launched an increasingly hostile attack on the SACP and on its attempt to re-define itself and its role in the new reality. Part of this attack from the Mbeki circle took the form, ironically, of resurrecting, but in its own version, the old CI two-stageism. It characterised the post-apartheid period as a “national democratic” stage of “normalising”, by “de-racialising”, capitalism, a stage in which there was little relevance for a communist party. In contrast, at the same time, the SACP sought to definitively abandon any lurking two-stageism in its programmatic perspectives. A national democracy in South Africa could only be consolidated, so it now argued, through a progressive consolidation of socialist advances in the context

of an ANC-led national democratic transformation. The national tasks involved consolidating a non-racial social formation, transforming the physical and social infrastructure of the country, which was reproducing racialised inequality, and, critically, enhancing as much as possible national sovereign capacity in what had become a uni-polar imperialist world. All of this would only be possible through a national democracy, the SACP argued, that was deepened through a progressive consolidation of socialist-oriented advances.

Through the 1990s and early 2000s, and still at present although now, perhaps with less conviction, the SACP sees this as a broad ANC-led process – and a great deal of SACP effort has gone into what it characterises as a struggle for the “heart and soul” of the ANC to win it back to its days as a broad popular movement grounded in the daily struggles of the workers and poor.

Whether this is possible, and, if it is, whether the SACP has the capacity to effectively play a key role in this regard are challenging questions. The SACP’s relatively tight and targeted recruitment of the underground years no longer applies. Partly responding to its immediate post-apartheid popularity and then increasingly as a defensive move in the face of the anti-party aggression emanating from some ANC factions, the party has grown significantly to a current membership of over 300 000. A significant number are unemployed youths whose exposure to politics is often of a narrow ANC and student electoral variety, in contrast to earlier periods richly explored by Lodge, when the party’s influence was grounded in community and trade union activism. The party has a very limited full-time staff battling to effectively service its large membership. Many, not all, of the party’s several hundred national, provincial and even district level elected leaderships are in government serving, in their day jobs, as ANC ministers, deputy ministers, members of legislatures and municipal councils, or in the state administration.

Others in party leadership are employed trade union officials. Between this relatively thin leadership layer and the large youthful cohort stuck in Third World precarity there are inevitable strains, with the latter alleging the former to be too often “more ANC than SACP”, “sacrificing the party for careers”. However, among the broader party membership there is also a considerable fluidity in shifting activism between the SACP and ANC according to local conditions and prospects.

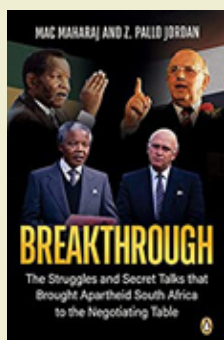
Whatever its shortcomings, Lodge’s *Red Road to Freedom* provides a very rich historical resource for understanding many of the roots and much of the trajectory not just of the SACP but of the broader liberatory struggle in South Africa. At a time when the early, perhaps always over-optimistic expectations, both within the country and globally, for a post-apartheid South Africa have been disappointed, Lodge’s work is a major resource for ongoing, collective academic and activist reflection, discussion and debate. ●

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BOOK REVIEW

On the road to negotiations

Maharaj and Jordan provide a detailed & intimate insiders' account to the process towards a negotiated settlement, writes **Janet Cherry**, but are silent on the SACP's role



BREAKTHROUGH:
The Struggles and
Secret Talks that
Brought Apartheid
South Africa to the
Negotiating Table
**Mac Maharaj and
Pallo Jordan**
Penguin 2021

We are familiar with Karl Marx's famous dictum, that "men make their own history, but they do not make it ...under circumstances of their choosing" (*18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852). Mac Maharaj and Pallo Jordan's book makes a strong assertion of the agency of people – not only 'big men' but ordinary people – in making history. Their central argument is that the liberation movement – through all its four pillars – put sufficient coordinated pressure on the National Party (NP) that it came to the negotiating table. This was the breakthrough that allowed for the transition to democracy. Difficult and violent as the transition was, it did result in a free, unitary and democratic South Africa: the goal of the liberation movement.

There are many strengths to this book,

which makes a significant contribution to the literature on the South African transition. Perhaps the most important is the dispelling of the myth that Mandela betrayed the liberation movement and the people of South Africa, by giving in to the forces of global capital through a process of ‘elite pacting’. Another argument heard frequently these days, emanating, in particular, from those who were activists in the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) in the 1980s, is that in the process of transition, the ANC suppressed the expressions of popular power that had developed through mass struggle inside the country, including dismantling the United Democratic Front. This precluded the potential for a transition to socialism and allowed the development of a new black elite.

Breakthrough deals with the 1980s and the events leading to the start of negotiations between the ANC and the NP in May 1990. The book sets out to answer the question: “How did we get to the negotiating table?”, and the narrative ends in May 1990, with the beginning of formal negotiations between the ANC and the NP. It is no good looking for answers regarding what happened during the four years of transition to democracy that followed, or during the negotiations for the new Constitution adopted in 1996.

In relation to the ‘people’s power’ argument, the important contribution of this book is the care taken to explain the relationship between the ANC and the MDM. This is done through the intimate understanding of Jordan and Maharaj, as insiders with many decades experience, of all four of the pillars of the liberation movement’s strategy. The role of international actors in relation to both the regime and the ANC; the relationship of the armed struggle to the mass movement; and the communication of the ANC leadership in Lusaka with the leadership on the Island and with the MDM through the underground, so that all components were on the same page as nego-

tiations became a possibility – all is clearly laid out. In the process the book dispels the myth that there was a division between the ANC in exile and the MDM; and that there were two factions in the ANC, one the ‘real revolutionaries’ who were committed to insurrection and/or people’s war, and the other selling out through negotiation. The ANC principals were consistent in holding out for the minimum demands as laid out in the Harare Declaration: a unitary state with a universal franchise. The democratic breakthrough that happened was consistent with the two-stage theory of National Democratic Revolution: national democracy was decisively won.

It does raise a niggling question, though: what happened to the revolutionaries, in particular those who saw themselves as the vanguard, who subscribed to the Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution and state power – in other words, what happened to the SACP? We know that among the ANC leaders who negotiated the transition were the SACP leaders, including Joe Slovo, who played a critical role in formulating the “sunset clauses”; and Chris Hani, who was assassinated at another critical point in the transition. But this is jumping ahead; the book is confined to the events leading up to February 1990. What role did the SACP play in bringing about this breakthrough, and what was the strategy of communists within the liberation movement? *Breakthrough* is largely silent on this question.

In *Breakthrough*, the SACP plays hardly any role in the events leading up to the breakthrough – as an independent actor, that is. There are two brief mentions of the SACP as part of the Alliance, involved in supporting mobilisation and distributing revolutionary literature inside South Africa. A reader unfamiliar with the Alliance would be left with one of two possible conclusions: either that the SACP was so intimately part of the events leading up to the breakthrough that it did not play any independent strategic role; or that there were some actors

who were left out of this process; and/or who were committed to a revolutionary path which was no longer a realistic possibility. The book does not explore this, and it seems necessary to find some explanation for this omission.

The first explanation is the most convincing, and it is corroborated by Tom Lodge's 2021 *Red Road to Freedom: a history of the South African Communist Party – 1921 - 2021*. In the events of the 1980s, in particular in MK as well as in the township uprising, the SACP does not seem to be asserting a position independent of the ANC. Lodge avers that the Party's presence inside South Africa in the 1980s was 'limited and scattered' (Lodge 2021, p 440) and that for underground activists, the reality was that "ANC commitments left little time for party work" (ibid p 443). He describes the Party's relationship to the ANC as "entryist" and notes that the Party's "...members often occupied important and demanding ANC posts" (Ibid p 446). However, it is clear that the Party's influence was considerable, not only in the overlapping of many of the top leaders of the two organisations. The influence of the Party was felt both in MK, through members being appointed as commissars responsible for political education, and in the mass movement where Party literature was circulated and leadership of organisations was given through the underground, where the "most advanced" ANC members were carefully selected for recruitment into the Party. Maharaj himself notes in *Shades of Difference* that 'most trained members of MK were Communists' (O'Malley, 2007, p 363)

Regarding the second interpretation, Lodge notes that the "strategic scepticism" of some SACP leaders – notably Thabo Mbeki – was strengthened by "discernible shifts in Soviet African policy" in the late 1980s. The SACP held a conference in Cuba in mid-1989 at which the revolutionary seizure of power was still envisaged, although with important caveats, as adopted in the programme *The Path to Power*. Most

readers of the *African Communist* will be familiar with this document, which stated: “The situation has within it the potential for a relatively rapid emergence of conditions which make possible seizure of power. We cannot, however, be dogmatic about the exact moment and form of such a breakthrough. Conditions for a revolutionary transition will only emerge through a combination and interplay of objective conditions and subjective factors....

“Seizure of power will be a product of escalating and progressive merging of mass political and military struggle with the likelihood of culminating in an insurrection.

“There is no conflict between this insurrectionary perspective and the possibility of a negotiated transfer of power.”

This would seem to confirm the unstated assertion in *Breakthrough* that the ANC and its principal ally, the SACP, were on the same page; yet this was not as simple as it seems. The overlapping leadership of the ANC and the Party – which at that stage included Thabo Mbeki, Chris Hani and Joe Slovo – meant that certain individuals were engaged in initiatives on behalf of the ANC which were not discussed as Party strategy. Jeremy Cronin recounted in 2016, in a bitter exchange with Thabo Mbeki, how the SACP had been left out of these initiatives: “The South African Communist Party (SACP) programme that emerged from that congress, buoyed by the rolling waves of mass struggle at home, while not ruling out negotiations, was distinctly insurrectionary in character. I was one of those arguing for this perspective. During one of the breaks, the puzzled Cuban observers at congress approached some of us. “Is your comrade Mbeki not briefing you?” In the evenings, Mbeki had apparently been informing Cuban colleagues in detail about the secret negotiations process he was leading with the apartheid regime. He told the Cubans, but there was not even a hint of this from Mbeki, our chairperson through three-days of discussion within the sessions

of the SACP congress itself. He allowed us to wander on our merry insurrectionary way (*Daily Maverick*, 20 January 2016),”

Moreover, inside South Africa, Party leaders like Harry Gwala and Govan Mbeki were pursuing their own militaristic agendas. It was only the delicate underground communication (for which Maharaj was largely responsible) that enabled Mandela and the exiled leadership of the ANC (and SACP) to come to a common position on the way forward; and ultimately the exceptional and skilful leadership of OR Tambo and Nelson Mandela that managed to bring everyone onto the same page and hold them there for long enough to ensure that the position prevailed.

Regarding the apartheid regime’s view of the SACP and the communist threat, the point is made in *Breakthrough* that the Regime’s approach through much of the 1970s and 1980s was based on splitting up the alliance between the ANC and the SACP (p 78), and this view is reflected in Dunbar Moodie’s account quoted in the book – “Because it was controlled by the SA Communist Party there could be no conversation/negotiation with the ANC, although contact might be made with nationalist elements within the organisation” (p 174; cited from Moodie, 2012 p 13). The strategy of the NP securocrats was premised on the Soviet support for the SACP and the ANC, and their internal allies; NP securocrat propaganda is illustrated in the by an anonymously distributed poster claiming to come from the (white) UDF-affiliated Jodac, stating ‘Birds of a feather flock together’, and linking the ANC and UDF to the SACP – and, crucially, to the Soviet KGB intelligence service.

This was the position of the NP in 1987. Something changed between then and 1989 which led the NP to relinquish its fear of communism and unbanned the SACP together with the ANC on 2 February 1990. This something was articulated by FW De Klerk in 1990, when in

his 2 February speech to Parliament he stated that the end of the communist threat had enabled him to take the dramatic step that he did: “The dynamic developments in international politics have created new opportunities for South Africa as well. Important advances have been made, among other things, in our contacts abroad, especially where these were precluded previously by ideological considerations.

“For South Africa, indeed for the whole world, the past year has been one of change and major upheaval. In Eastern Europe and even the Soviet Union itself, political and economic upheaval surge forward in an unstoppable tide. At the same time, Beijing temporarily smothered with brutal violence the yearning of the people of the Chinese mainland for greater freedom.

“The year of 1989 will go down in history as the year in which Stalinist Communism expired.

“These developments will entail unpredictable consequences for Europe, but they will also be of decisive importance to Africa. Those who seek to force this failure of a system on South Africa, should engage in a total revision of their point of view. It should be clear to all that it is not the answer here either.”

When explaining the lifting of the ban on the ANC and SACP, he stated: “The most important facets of the advice the Government received in this connection are the following:

“The events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, to which I have referred already, weaken the capability of organisations which were previously supported strongly from those quarters.

“The activities of the organisations from which the prohibitions are now being lifted, no longer entail the same degree of threat to internal security which initially necessitated the imposition of the prohibition.

“There have been important shifts of emphasis in the statements and points of view of the most important of the organisations con-

cerned, which indicate a new approach and a preference for peaceful solutions.”

Breakthrough all but ignores the end of Soviet communism as it was known, and the end of the Soviet Union’s material support for the ANC’s armed struggle, as factors in the process leading up to the beginning of negotiation. It may be argued that while the fall of the Berlin wall was in November 1989, the Soviet Union had not actually withdrawn material support from the ANC at that stage, although it was under extreme economic stress at the time. Yet it is clear that by early 1989 the ANC was feeling the pressure.

OR Tambo delivered the following message to the SACP Party congress in Cuba in 1989: “What all this means is that our people, our movement and especially our alliance can expect to be subjected to immense and unprecedented pressures, pressures that could put a severe strain on our cohesion unless we react correctly. From our point of view, when the historic moment for negotiation comes in our situation - as it most probably will - we shall welcome negotiations. In a proper case they shorten rather than extend the route to victory.

“But we dare not allow our cause to be distorted and our objective deflected by the assumption that the conditions which compelled the Pretoria regime to negotiate, sign and honour the New York Accords, also exist in South Africa today, or that they will, in the immediate future.

“There can be no doubt however, that correctly channelled and directed by us, these pressures, precisely because of their immensity, can bring our victory nearer. We therefore need to rally together and turn these developments against the enemy and towards the attainment of our revolutionary goals” (OR Tambo, *Message to the Seventh Congress of the South African Communist Party*, April 1989).

If there is a weakness in *Breakthrough* it is that the ‘changes in the

external situation’ – in other words, the end of the Cold War – is not given significance as a factor. The conditions that compelled both the ANC and the NP to negotiate were not of their choosing. While the agency of individual leaders of the ANC (although not the vanguard role of the SACP) and of the masses is given prominence in *Breakthrough*, on reflection, it becomes apparent that it could so easily not have happened at all. Nevertheless, the genius of the leadership in responding to the changing circumstances is reflected in *Breakthrough*.

Jordan and Maharaj were both intimately involved in these events, but they do not rely on their own experiences; they draw on many sources including the archives of their former enemies. They convincingly weave together the complex empirical chain of events with the agency of various actors who were trying to find a way forward at that specific historical moment. They are both masters at “joining the dots” and their argument is that the democratic breakthrough was an important victory brought about by the combined pressures of these different pillars of strategy. The agency of the liberation movement is at the forefront of the argument. What the liberation movement — including the SACP — has done with the democratic space since 1994 is another question. ●

Cde Cherry, Professor of Development Studies at Nelson Mandela University, was an Eastern Cape UDF leader and in the ANC underground in the 1980s. Her many publications include Umkhonto we Sizwe (Jacana)



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The first of these is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a steady state only if the rate of change of the system is zero. In this case, the rate of change of the system is not zero, and the system is not in a steady state. The second of these is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a steady state only if the rate of change of the system is zero. In this case, the rate of change of the system is not zero, and the system is not in a steady state. The third of these is the fact that the system is not in a steady state. The system is in a steady state only if the rate of change of the system is zero. In this case, the rate of change of the system is not zero, and the system is not in a steady state.

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