



# African Communist

1st Quarter 2013

Issue Number 185

## THE ALLIANCE

*SACP and ANC 'brothers – moulding and moulded by each other'*

## THE STATE OF THE STATE

*Inherently capitalist or a site of struggle?*



## BELLING THE CAT

*Fikile 'Slovo' Majola and Jeremy Cronin assess the present through Slovo's lenses*





# African Communist

1st Quarter 2013

Issue Number 185



- 1. Editorial Notes**
- 3. The Alliance: A century of mutual reinforcement**  
*Thulas Nxesi*
- 8. The Alliance: A shared history of struggle**  
*Gwede Mantashe*
- 11. The Alliance: Brothers in arms**  
*Kgalema Motlanthe*
- 15. Joe Slovo: Seeing today's realities through Slovo's lenses**  
*Fikile Majola*
- 24. Joe Slovo: Belling the Cat**  
*Jeremy Cronin*
- 30. Behind the DA's equal opportunity society**  
*Jarred Martin*
- 34. The capitalist nature of the post-1994 SA state**  
*David Masondo*
- 42. The SACP, the working class and state power**  
*YCLSA discussion document*
- 56. Farewell Auntie Phyllis, a true all-round comrade**  
*Jeff Radebe*

The African Communist is published quarterly by the South African Communist Party as a forum for Marxist-Leninist thought  
Send editorial contributions to: [malesela@sacp.org.za](mailto:malesela@sacp.org.za), or to  
African Communist, PO Box 1027, Johannesburg 2000

## EDITORIAL NOTES

# The Alliance – still strong, but facing real challenges

The nature of the post-apartheid state influences the content and form of the Alliance

**T**he articles in this issue of *The African Communist* focus primarily on the history and nature of the Tripartite Alliance over the 100 years since the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) and on the nature of the current post-apartheid state. These two themes are linked as the content and form of the Alliance are influenced by the nature of the state and how the Alliance engages with it.

Work to develop a more careful periodisation of this relationship between the way the Alliance functions and the nature of the state at a given time is required, as it might offer us some useful lessons. The articles by Cdes Motlanthe, Nxesi and Mantashe help in this regard, but we need to take this matter further. For now, we have to acknowledge that while the Alliance is in some respects stronger than it has been in a long time, it faces new challenges, particularly on the way the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) is managing its relationship with its partners. Cosatu is facing serious internal challenges at a time when there is a concerted offensive by capital against organised labour.

Some of the divisions within Cosatu relate to differences on how to char-

acterise the current period and how to relate with the ANC, particularly its leadership. There are also differences within Cosatu on policies, including on the National Development Plan. Other divisions are linked to challenges from newly emerging unions to the hegemony of Cosatu affiliates in key sectors and how investment funds are managed. There are differences too on how office-bearers in Cosatu should function and relate to affiliates. All these differences are inter-related and make for serious challenges, especially in the context of the post-2008 global and domestic economic crisis.

A divided Cosatu only serves the interests of our class opponents. It is of critical importance that Cosatu overcomes its current difficulties and is strengthened. For us, the cause of socialism is being severely undermined by these divisions within Cosatu. Of course, Cosatu is primarily responsible for settling its internal differences and for forging greater unity. But all alliance partners can contribute to this objective – partly by scrupulously respecting Cosatu's internal democratic practices.

Cde Masondo seeks to take the debate on the nature of the current South

African state further by arguing that the SACP should not fudge the question of the capitalist nature of the state, its limited capacity to transform and some of the potential pitfalls of the Party's entry into government in the way it has since 2009. The YCL Discussion Document on the "The SACP, the Working Class and State Power" is not a direct response to Cde Masondo's article but represents a more general position of the YCL on some of the key issues raised by Cde Masondo.

The SACP's participation in government since 2009 on the current terms was spelt out in our 2009 Special Congress resolution that endorsed the Central Committee's "flexibility provided for in the approach in the above (*Central Committee*) document which allows SACP secretaries to be full-time or part-time as the political terrain, balance of forces, strategic considerations, and organisational challenges, among other issues, dictate." It is, in other words, not a principled decision and will be reviewed as necessary. In any case, both the article and the Discussion Document seek to facilitate a discussion – and we urge comrades to contribute responses for fu-

ture issues of *The African Communist*.

The articles by Cdes Cronin and Majola, which focus on Cde Joe Slovo's contribution, deal with the current post-Mangaung Conference political landscape and the present challenges of the Alliance and to some extent relate to the issues raised in the other articles. Issues about the nature of the "second phase of our transition" as decided on at the Mangaung Conference are raised and reinforce the need for the SACP to actively provide substantial content to the call for a more radical second phase.

This issue also carries a critique by Cde Martin of the Democratic Alliance's ideology, in particular its commitment to an "equal opportunity society" and exposes it for the sham it is.

We also carry Cde Radebe's fitting tribute to ANC and SACP veteran Cde Phyllis Naidoo who passed away recently.

We live in interesting, challenging times – and the need for discussion and engagement from within a Marxist perspective is greater than ever. We urge readers to contribute articles for publication in future issues of *The African Communist*.

## THE ALLIANCE

# A century of mutual reinforcement

The ANC-SACP relationship is symbiotic – for nearly a century each has contributed to the intellectual, ideological, strategic and tactical strengths of the other, writes **Thulas Nxesi**

*This article is an edited version of a speech delivered last by Cde Nxesi*

**T**his event was to be a celebration, to mark a combined 191 years of unbroken struggle (100 + 91 years) of the ANC and the SACP together. But it is difficult to celebrate in the wake of the Marikana tragedy. That is a matter to which I shall return.

But we must take strength and pride in the fact that for over 90 years, South African communists can point to an unbroken and heroic record of struggle against exploitation and oppression. Communists were present in all the major struggles in South Africa:

- We pioneered non-racialism in this country in the 1920s – shedding white chauvinism and embracing the slogan of the “Native Republic” in 1928.

- We fought for the unity of the oppressed and the path of mass mobilisation and struggle.

- We were alongside the workers in building trade unions – with comrades like Ray Alexander, Billy Nair, JB Marks and others.

- We organised amongst the rural poor.

- We were with women in their struggles.

- We fought as guerrillas and died as martyrs. We are the Party of Chris Hani.

- We are a Party of theory and education – from the night schools of the 1920s to the political education programmes run in MK camps, prison cells and trade union and Party branches.

- We are internationalist in our orientation. Indeed the very foundation of the Party was inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917.

In relation to our present theme of a shared history, communists have served in the ranks of the ANC. Shoulder to shoulder with other patriotic revolutionaries, communists have helped to build and sustain the ANC. But also, through their activism within the ANC, communist cadres have carried over into the SACP a deeper appreciation of the centrality of the national question within our struggle. Our shared history is a history of continuous cross-fertilisation. I want to do two things: draw the lessons of our shared history; and reflect on what this teaches us in relation to the present conjuncture and the challenges we face as a movement today.

### **Our shared history**

Our enemies – the ruling class and their

allies – have always feared and opposed the special relationship between the SACP and the ANC – and the labour movement – concretised in the Alliance that we have shaped in the heat of struggle against national oppression. Today we are told – by the bourgeois media in particular - that the Alliance has outlived its historic purpose:

- That the ANC must transform into a modern political party – and cease to be a liberation movement;

- That the SACP, like the Soviet Union, has passed its sell-by date, or, at least, should now go it alone and stand separately in elections;

- That Cosatu must concentrate on looking after the immediate economic interests of its members which are said to be in conflict – or subordinated to – the dictates and interests of the politicians.

This is divide and rule. From our side, all our historic experience and our political theory and practice point to the central importance of unity – of uniting people and organisations and of the interdependence of political and economic struggles. As trade unionists we know the need for unity almost instinctively. That is why we came up with slogans such as:

An injury to one is an injury to all

*Unity is strength*

*Solidarity*

*The workers united shall never be defeated*

*One union, one industry* (We have seen recently the dire and tragic result of disunity and splinter unions).

In fact Marx and Engels said it best in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848: “Workers of the world Unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to gain.”

It was equally important to build the unity of the oppressed in the face of co-

lonialism and later the apartheid regime. It was the Alliance – based on our shared history – that built, widened and defended that unity process – reaching out beyond the Alliance to build the UDF and the mass democratic movement in the final stages of our struggle for democracy.

It is vital that we continually reaffirm the importance of unity and our Alliance in the present phase of our National Democratic Revolution – as we seek to consolidate and deepen the democratic gains, while intensifying the struggle for fundamental social and economic transformation. I want to argue that the special relationship between the ANC and the SACP – based on our shared history – together with Cosatu and its predecessors, is characterised by the following:

It is a dialectical and at times highly contested relationship – particularly in terms of class content and direction.

Historically, when the relationship works well it is a symbiotic relationship – mutually reinforcing and beneficial.

It is a relationship that is firmly rooted in a concrete analysis and understanding of the historic realities of the society – and it has proved responsive to developments on the ground.

Let me give some historical examples:

The ANC was established in 1912 by African elites – educated professionals and progressive traditional leaders. That moment marked a milestone in the history of South Africa and the continent – in overcoming narrow ethnic identities and building the kind of unity that would be necessary to defeat colonialism and racial oppression.

It was only later that the black working class – led by the Party - was able to stamp its mark upon the national liberation movement – starting in the late

1920s, but continually contested into the 1950s – when the formation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu) firmly established organised black workers as full partners in the liberation struggle.

The need for maximum unity against an oppressive regime after 1960 dampened class differences within the liberation movement – for that period. Liberation in 1994 opened the flood-gates. But there were, among others, the following developments:

- Rapid class formation of a parasitic black bourgeoisie – often at the expense of black workers – with the official injunction to “enrich yourselves”;
- Looting of public assets through privatisation and tenders;
- The deliberate strategy of capital to buy support and create a buffer of dependent black business;
- Political attacks on the Left – the labour movement and the SACP – from within a faction of the ANC;
- The adoption of neo-liberal macroeconomic policies – Gear<sup>1</sup> and the shrinking of the role of the state;
- This is what we later analysed and characterised as the “1996 class project”. This intense class battle took place within the Alliance and the ANC – and that is where it had to be defeated; and
- Led by the Party – with Cosatu and a majority of cadres in the ANC – we mobilised to defend the pro-working class heritage of the ANC.

At Polokwane we defeated the '96 Class Project as an organised faction within the liberation movement – but we did not end class tensions and conflict within the movement. Hence we see the survival of tenderpreneurs and the emergence of the “new tendency”. In this respect the struggle continues.

### **Nature of the relationship**

The Alliance relationship is a symbiotic relationship. Historically, the relationship has been mutually beneficial and reinforcing. Some examples:

In the 1930s – at a time when the international communist movement was going through an ultra-Left sectarian phase – ANC structures which remained grounded in the realities and needs of South African society.

In 1960, with the banning of the ANC, the national liberation movement was forced to operate underground – a difficult step for a mass organisation which had traditionally operated in the open. The SACP had been working underground since 1953, and was therefore able to share that experience with comrades in the ANC – definitely helping to ease the transition to underground work.

In 1990, the collapse of the Soviet Union had a hugely negative effect on the international communist movement. The SACP was a notable exception to this trend. There can be no doubt that our strategic and long-term alliance with the national liberation movement, the fact that we were grounded in the national struggle, helps explain the continued growth of the Party. The subsequent resurgence of class politics post-1994 contributed to the rapid growth in membership of the SACP in later years.

The main point here is that, again and again, we see evidence where the relationship between the ANC and the SACP has benefitted both equally.

Similarly, historically, the labour movement has also benefitted greatly from that Alliance. It was only after the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu), founded in 1979, transcended its narrow trade union and economic

focus to link up with community and national struggles that the stage was set for wider working class unity and the launch of the mighty Cosatu in 1985.

The SACP-ANC relationship is a relationship firmly rooted in a concrete analysis and understanding of the society – and the ability to learn from developments on the ground. Examples include:

In the aftermath of the First World War and rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, we see both the ANC and the Party adapting to the new socio-economic conditions. Despite its elitist origins, the ANC under the presidency of Comrade Makgatho, was able to shift from a lobbying organisation to lead protest action and take up the struggles of urbanised Africans and black workers.

Similarly in the late 1920s the Party worked among urbanised African workers to organise industrial unions, following the implosion of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) due to its populist style of leadership and poor organisation.

So as Cosatu, we didn't invent the notion of "one union, one industry". The Party was doing it 85 years ago. The theory of industrial unionism came to South Africa via immigrant British trade unionists such as Party member, Cde Bill Andrews. The same goes for the position of shop steward, which emerged strongly out of the shop stewards' movement in Britain during the First World War.

Later, during the 1940s, intensified urbanisation and industrialisation laid the concrete conditions for the rapid organisation of black workers into the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) – led by communists, by giants such as Cde JB Marks – culminating in the Great Mineworkers' Strike

of 1946.

The same developments also laid the conditions for a new generation of national liberation leaders – the generation of Comrades Mandela and Sisulu – to challenge for the leadership of the ANC and to begin to transform it into the mass campaigning organisation of the 1950s. In the process the ANC drew on the support of communists with their years of struggle experience.

This ability as a movement to learn and adapt tactics from elsewhere is also very clear in the case of the Defiance Campaign of 1953, in many ways based on the tactics of Ghandi's *Satyagraha* – passive disobedience – which came to the ANC via the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses, which had organised passive resistance campaigns in the 1940s.

The great achievement of the ANC, particularly from the 1950s onwards, was always, through the ups and downs of struggle, to recover its balance, to learn from and instruct popular militancy, to build the shield of a progressive unity, and to provide the spear-point of a clear strategic line of march.

### **The present conjuncture**

I have to say something briefly about the events at the Marikana Mine – and more generally around the Rustenburg platinum mines. The conflict on the Rustenburg platinum mines is the outcome of real class dynamics – both in the workplace and in the surrounding working class communities:

- Inadequate salaries – driven further down by the use of labour brokers in some cases;
- Major health and safety challenges in the mines;
- Squalid and insecure living conditions and lack of social infrastructure in

the surrounding communities;

- All of this is compounded by the continuation of the migrant labour system and artificial divisions between workers and fostered by the employer.

Nothing excuses the massive loss of workers lives. As socialists we must be indignant at the sight of striking workers shot down in droves. It must never happen again. Indignation alone is not enough: we need to know and analyse what actually happened here – and for that we await the findings of the Commission of Inquiry. But we must also act now.

Divisions, splinter unions, reckless adventurism and opportunism on a grand scale allowed this damage to be inflicted on workers. Our primary task as socialists and trade unionists is to unite workers in this industry. We look to Cosatu and the National Union of Mine-workers (NUM) to lead this process

But as the Alliance we must provide every support to the labour movement. As the SACP we have to show the central role of capital in this disaster – and we have to provide the analysis of the workings of capital in this particular industry – to arm the workers and the union as they strategise to defend and improve the conditions of their members.

Nothing excuses the behaviour at the memorial service in Marikana:

It was highly disrespectful to the dead and their loved ones. It deliberately endangered the living – with the so-called “Friends of the ANCYL” working with Association of Mining and Construction Union (Amcu) thugs to threaten the leaders of our movement. This was a declaration of war against all of us.

Nothing could be more obscene than the sight of a corrupt former youth leader – bloated on his ill-gotten gains – claiming to speak on behalf of poor

workers. We are facing a physical threat from populist proto-fascists who exploit the vulnerability of the poor and unemployed – while looting public funds.

As the Alliance, as we develop our response to this threat, we will need to take a strategic and tactical debate – drawing on the lessons of our shared history. Politically we have to unite the working class and society against this – and we have to take very seriously the real grievances and demands of the masses:

- unemployment (particularly youth unemployment);
- low wages and poor conditions; lack of service delivery;
- poverty and inequality etc.

We cannot allow the DA and the “New Tendency” to pose as champions of the unemployed and poor workers. We have to redouble our efforts in this respect.

In the meantime we have to combat thuggishness with the full force of the law. Similarly, we need to combat corruption in terms of the law.

Marikana has sharpened political divisions in the country, while focusing attention on real fundamental socio-economic challenges. Our task now – as the SACP and the Alliance – is to learn from this experience, draw on the tried and trusted lessons of our past, and develop a bold strategy that takes the fight to the enemy.

*Cde Nxesi is the SACP Deputy Chairperson, an ANC NEC member and Minister of Public Works.*

**(Endnotes)**

1 Gear: the five-year macro-economic policy titled *Growth, Employment and Redistribution* introduced in 1996

## THE ALLIANCE

# ANC and SACP: a shared history of struggle

From vastly different origins, the organisations have grown together and intertwined. The Alliance will be around for many years to come, says **Gwede Mantashe**

*This is an extract of a speech delivered by Cde Mantashe*

**T**he African National Congress was formed in 1912 by a team of aspirant black middle class men, all of them with impressive academic qualification. All these distinguished founders of the South African Native National Congress<sup>1</sup> had one thing in common: resentment for the oppression of the African people and commitment to fight it. Pixley ka Isaka Seme, a Columbia-, Oxford- and London-educated lawyer, is credited for being the front-runner in providing the theoretical framework for uniting the African people, starting from his joining Columbia University in 1906.

On the other hand the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was formed in 1921 by a group of white workers and socialists. In the inaugural congress only one black person attended, TW Thibeli. This was the Party whose primary objective was to struggle for socialism in South Africa.

Both these organisations had to confront concrete challenges on the ground.

Having been formed in 1912, the ANC was confronted by the Native Land Act in 1913. This the situation was described by Sol Plaatje in the most graphic way: “Awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African Native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth.” President Sefako Makgatho affirmed the centrality of the land question in the struggle for freedom in his presidential address in 1919: “We are not asking for any favours from this government but demanding the land of our forefathers”.

Hardly a year after the birth of the SACP they had to join the picket line in the 1922 white miners’ strike and replaced the slogan “Workers unite for a white South Africa” with the international slogan: “Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains.”

At that point there was no alliance between these two organisations, but their pre-occupation with the plight of our people was a point of convergence. The decision of the Communist Party to organise African workers translated into cross-pollination between these two organisations.

This is what Cde Moses Kotane described as the *Africanisation* of the Party.

The relationship between the organisations started in earnest in 1927 when the President of the ANC Cde Josiah Tshangana Gumede went to the inaugural congress of the Anti-Imperialist League in Brussels. President Gumede went with the Communist Party delegate who was an ANC leader, Cde J.A La Guma and a trade unionist, Cde D Colraine. It was at this congress that Cde Gumede made a declaration that is normally regarded as the introduction of progressive politics in the movement, when he said: "I am happy to say there are communists in South Africa. I myself am not one, but it is my experience that the Communist Party is the only party that stands behind us and from which we expect something. We know there are now two powers at work; imperialism and the workers' republic in Russia. We hear little about the latter, although we would like to know more about it. But we take an interest and will soon find out who we have to ally ourselves with."

This assertion by President Gumede in 1927 was confirmed by President Oliver Tambo in 1981: "The South African Communist Party supports and actively fights for the realisation of the demands contained in the Freedom Charter. It accepts the leadership of the ANC and therefore cannot but be an ally of the ANC as would be any other organisation that adopts the same position." The adoption of the "Black Republic" thesis in 1928, with its emphasis that there can be no successful struggle for socialism when the majority of the people is oppressed, formed the basis for what became the primary objective of our revolution, liberation of black people in general and Africans in particular.

The most interesting part of the rela-

tion between the Party and the ANC is that the leadership of the two organisations overlapped. Cde Kotane was the Treasurer-General of the ANC between 1963 and 1973, and honoured as Isithwalandwe in 1975. The period overlapped with his term as General Secretary of the SACP between 1939 and 1978. We must appreciate that all but one of Secretaries General of the ANC since 1949 were communists. Almost all the leaders of the Communist Party served in the NEC of the ANC: JB Marks, Moses Mabhida, Dan Tlhoome, Chris Hani, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Harry Gwala, Joe Slovo and many others up to this day.

The contribution made by the Party to the theory of the revolution has made these allies closer than one can imagine. It is the 1962 programme of the Communist Party that started theorising the reality of the coloniser and the colonised claiming the same piece of land. To distinguish our situation from the rest of the continent this programme described this reality as "colonialism of a special type". This theory has been expanded and refined as the theoretical framework for the broader movement. It is in this refinement that our movement identified the three antagonistic and interrelated contradictions of racial oppression; class super-exploitation; and gender triple oppression. Resolving these contradictions is the primary focus of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR).

The NDR is a minimum programme for the Alliance. To understand the concept of a minimum programme we must appreciate the character of the Alliance. This is an inter-class alliance between a multi-class liberation movement on the one hand and two working class formations on the other. With the Party and a big body within the trade union fed-

eration wanting to build a socialist South Africa, and the ANC wanting to build a national democratic society, the NDR becomes a point of convergence for all. But the reality is that these independent parties do not melt into a single organisation called the Alliance. They remain independent entities taking their own decisions separately from each other. Once we understand this character of the Alliance it is easier to understand the concept of the NDR as its minimum programme.

Communist Party cadres in their own right as leaders of the ANC paid the highest price. In the massacres in Maseru, Gaborone, Matola, and the assassinations of Ruth First, Joe Gqabi and Dulcie September, no distinction was made between communists and non-communists. The regime was just brutal against the struggle for freedom. It is the sharing of trenches and fighting shoulder-to-shoulder facing the enemy as one that consolidated the Alliance. It is this shared history that forced the regime to negotiate power away (and try hard to preserve some privileges).

The decision by the SACP not to contest elections was a correct and revolutionary one. It is the liberals and those among us who do have the sense of the risk of counter-revolution regrouping who continue to either attack this decision or be cynical about it. When the Party opened this debate in 2007, the proposal that it contest elections was defeated. The strongest argument was that it would divide votes for the movement.

The Congress of the People (Cope) experience is a clear vindication of the correctness of this decision. When the Party comes out very clear and strong in support of any position taken by the ANC, it gets attacked and labelled as being parasitic and being an NGO. Those

criticising it understand the importance of the Alliance and pray every day for it to split.

The Marikana disaster highlighted one danger that we hardly pay attention to, that of the counter-revolution creating liberated zones and expanding to undermine the movement. The most unfortunate part of this development is the sympathisers from within the movement of those who see it as increasing their opportunity to take over the movement. What is not clear is what they will do with it after taking it over. We must begin to ask pointed questions and clarify the positions taken. What is the fight all about? Is it about the movement? Is it about access to resources and self-enrichment? Or is it about handing over South Africa to foreign agents? From where we all come, it is a sign of a bigger problem when an individual is preoccupied about his or her own survival even if the movement is undermined and weakened.

The reading of both the strategy and tactics and organisational renewal documents must be anchored in this history and seek to take the movement to new heights. I believe that the Alliance is going to be around for many years to come. The strength or weakness of the Alliance will continue to be the deciding factor on how well the democracy movement will perform politically into the future.

***Cde Mantashe** is Secretary General of the ANC. He is a former Chairperson and current Politburo member of the SACP and a former National Union of Mineworkers' General Secretary*

#### **(Endnotes)**

1 The SANNC was formally renamed the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923

## THE ALLIANCE

# True brothers in arms

Like siblings, the SACP and ANC have learned from and been moulded by and moulded each other explains **Kgalema Motlanthe**

*This is an edited version of a speech by Cde Motlanthe at the SACP's 91<sup>st</sup> anniversary dinner in Durban*

Let me start off by thanking the South African Communist Party (SACP) for inviting me to this 91<sup>st</sup> celebratory gala dinner. Though I am not privy to the deliberations of the Congress itself I do believe that delegates certainly grappled with pivotal issues that are not only important to the SACP but to the ANC and the nation at large.

Precisely because this is a dinner – an occasion for us to break bread as comrades, brothers and sisters – it puts me in an unenviable position where I should try as much as possible to share my humble thoughts which must nevertheless befit an august occasion of this nature, while avoiding the pitfalls of perorations and long-windedness. This is all the more difficult given that the mouth-watering prospect of a sumptuous dinner is not known to be in keeping with indigestible political discourse.

Because the relationship between the SACP and the ANC is and has always been familial it can best be described as that of siblings; brothers – with the ANC

as the elder brother and the SACP the younger. Before you jump out of your skins about this comparison, thinking that I am elevating the ANC at the expense of the Party, I must forewarn you that despite this age difference matters between the two brothers did not turn out in accordance with these expectations. In the nature of things, the elder brother is invariably expected to identify and recognise the physical and social world way before the younger one. Inversely, the younger brother is expected to learn the basics of life from the older brother, mimicking him and following in his footsteps.

Yet if by any chance the younger brother comes into contact with advanced training and education environment that the older brother could not access, he is likely to show a precocious mind which grasps intricate matters far beyond the usual limitations of his age.

Another way of expressing the same thing is the analogy of the relationship between nature and humanity. Human beings are part of nature and depend on it for sustenance and prolongation of life. As you know without food there is no life – this is not just a biological fact but a basic law of nature as well. Before

engaging in any activity, human beings must eat. However, it is during the process of acting on nature in order to produce the means to sustain life that nature reveals her ways to human beings. Once human beings learn these laws they will also teach nature to behave differently. For instance, ancient human beings had to learn to identify seeds fit for human consumption. Then they had to learn the suitability of different soils for planting particular seeds as well as harvest time. As you can see, whereas at the beginning they were students of nature, learning its ways and the best conditions under which to carry out certain tasks for their own survival, human beings would, through the act of interacting with nature, subsequently become its teacher, bending it to their will.

These analogies seek to explain the history and nature of the relationship between the SACP and the ANC that I wish to delineate this evening.

Despite their limitations these analogies help illuminate comparable social and historical conditions in a manner that is far more digestible than would have otherwise been the case. So whereas the ANC precedes the SACP, we did not have a big brother superiority complex and in the course of time it turned out that the SACP would become the responsible younger brother who gives back by becoming a teacher to the older brother. This equipped those of us in the ANC with the necessary tools of analysis and education needed for us to develop ourselves and successfully prosecute the struggle. It also helped us to understand the needs of the oppressed people better and to articulate our vision for a free and democratic South Africa that belongs to all its people, black and white. Most impressive about the SACP's teachings, was

its ability to teach scientific methods of analysis by using every day material experiences to peel through layers of complex phenomena, making them understandable to the ordinary person on the street. This way the SACP equipped us with the mettle to keep our wits about, holding our own in rendering the apartheid machinery obsolete and unworkable. As members of the ANC were recruited to the CPSA, they were exposed to the advanced training the Party offered.

One of the most illustrious leaders in the history of the struggle, Moses Kotane, typified this analogy of an older brother learning at the knee of the younger one.

Having joined the ANC in 1928, Cde Kotane found the organisation ineffectual and without a programme. A year later while working in a bakery and active in a trade union he was recruited to the CPSA. At the CPSA he received education in the night school and political training through work in the ANC and the trade union which made it possible for him to comprehend the underlying nature of the South African political conditions and their meaning. Moses Kotane's example demonstrates the importance of both the capacity and the capability the Party possessed, which produced comrades with cutting edge political thinking.

Emphasising the point about the content and quality of the education required to arm working people and party members, Cde Kotane said: "Proper education is a mirror in which man sees the world around him and learns to understand it. The right kind of education enables man to see what the world has been, what it is, and how it can change to suit him or his way of living.

"Education can be and has been used

to befuddle the minds of the common people. But education can also be used as an important instrument in the struggle for freedom and human progress. It is this kind of education which we need. We must learn geography to know the universe, that there are other countries besides our own and to know the people of different nationalities inhabiting these countries. We must learn history to know and understand the story of man's development through the ages - the various forms of social organisation and the causes of the rise and fall of those forms of human relationships."

This lengthy quotation from Kotane serves not only to show how mature he was after joining the CPSA but also provides insights into how developed the Party was as demonstrated by the theoretical clarity of its membership. I am dwelling on Moses Kotane at length because he embodied the remarkably spirit and history of the extraordinarily dynamic and mutually beneficial relationship between the SACP and the ANC.

Coming from an under-class background, Kotane started working at the age of 12, and only began formal schooling at the age of 15, an age at which he started learning to read and write. His schooling, however, only lasted for two years, as circumstances forced him to go back to work. By the time he joined the CPSA, on 22 February 1929, he was only 24 years old and to all intents and purposes functionally illiterate.

Yet from this effectively illiterate state he was moulded into a fine thinker and leader. His impact on the complexion of the South African history is best captured by yet another luminary leader of the SACP, Dr Yusuf Dadoo. In his eulogy at Cde Kotane's funeral, he said: "In the

life of every nation, there arise men who leave an indelible and eternal stamp on the history of their peoples; men who are both products and makers of history. And when they pass they leave a vision of a new and better life and the tools with which to win and build it. Moses Kotane was such a man."

All we need to lift from this is that through advanced political education members of the SACP provided the ANC with formidable political clarity and superior ideas needed to mobilise the people in the struggle against apartheid.

In this regard, one among the many key concepts that we learned from the SACP is the question of non-racialism. From its very formation in 1921, the then Communist Party of South Africa embraced a non-racial outlook and drew to its ranks a number of black members. Thus by 1928 the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) had 1 600 African members out of a total of 1 750, after adopting the "Black Republic" thesis which nailed the Party's non-racial colours to the mast and cemented its genetic make-up as a force for an equal and non-racial society. We can thus argue without fear of hyperbole that the SACP is the pioneer of non-racialism in South Africa. This philosophy of non-racialism embedded in our struggle made it possible for the liberation movement to marshal the broadest cross-section of progressive forces in the country behind the vision of a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and just society.

However, it is worth noting that this was not only one-way traffic. It is a dual traffic between older brother and younger brother; between nature and human beings; between the ANC and the SACP. Party members who were also ANC members could not work within the

ANC as loyal members without being influenced by the viewpoint of the ANC. A clear inter-penetration of influences was always in evidence in the course of drafting and implementation of programmes as well as debates. For instance, with the vantage of ANC immersion, Kotane could advise Party members, in his *Cradock Letter* of 1934, to learn about the concrete South African conditions to enable them to understand the South African revolution instead of merely being experts on the European revolution. In consequence ANC members also developed keen minds politically, impacting on the Party in various ways during the course of the struggle.

This then brings us to the current relationship between the SACP and the ANC and the latter's attendant expectations. Having benefited from the SACP; we in the ANC continue to regard the SACP as a reliable ally capable of analysing the challenges of today as well as producing theoretical clarity on how to tackle them. The SACP taught us to base our expectations on this excerpt from Karl Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*: "Proletarian revolutions, like those of the nineteenth century, constantly criticise themselves, constantly interrupt themselves in their own course, return to the apparently

accomplished, in order to begin anew. They deride with cruel thoroughness the half-measures, weaknesses, and paltriness of their first attempts, seem to throw down their opponents only so the latter may draw new strength from the earth and rise before them again more gigantic than ever, recoil constantly from the indefinite colossalness of their own goals – until a situation is created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves call out: Hic Rhodus, hic salta! (here is the rose, here dance)"

In this regard we are confident that this 13<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the SACP will have eloquently answered the question: "What is to be done?" as it has always done attuned to the *modus operandi* of proletarian revolutions.

We are gathered here for two purposes, firstly to raise funds in support of the SACP and secondly, to do justice to the eatables. With regards to the first purpose and this alone I say with the entire conviction of its truth: give the Communist Party money!

Dinner is served.

**Cde Motlanthe** is Deputy President of South Africa, a former ANC Deputy President and former SACP Central Committee and Politburo member

## REMEMBERING JOE SLOVO

# Seeing today's realities through JS's lenses

The current communist generation must emulate Slovo, deepening its understanding and determining the way forward based on today's concrete conditions, argues **Fikile 'Slovo' Majola**

*This article is an edited version of a Joe Slovo memorial lecture delivered in the North West*

Yesterday, yet another World Economic Forum ended in Davos, Switzerland. Through the IMF and World Bank, global finance monopoly capital once again preached the gospel of neoliberalism to thousands of the global political leadership gathered at this talk-fest. It did so despite the fact that these policies have not worked over the past five years since the current round of the crisis of capitalism began.

The neoliberal regime of accumulation that began 40 years ago has run its course and it is fast approaching its limits, but capitalism itself is in the throes of an inherent systemic crisis which neoliberalism has not been able to resolve. Here on our home front, our economy has still not recovered to the levels of growth scored ahead of the 2009 recession or from the 1-million jobs lost subsequently.

In 1989, in the midst of the epoch-making collapse of “actually existing socialism” in Eastern Europe, Comrade Joe Slovo wrote an internationally acclaimed pamphlet, *Has Socialism Failed?*, which

helped us in South Africa and across the world to grapple with the meaning and implications of those developments in relation to our struggle of the national democratic revolution (NDR) and socialism. It is instructive to remember that when the fatal bone-marrow cancer took its toll on him, Comrade JS had just begun to write what would have been an even more pertinent discussion document today in the midst of the current crisis of capitalism, which he had entitled *Has capitalism succeeded?* Unfortunately, his death deprived us – and especially many of the young militants who were swelling the ranks of the Party in droves after its unbanning – of a South African contribution to Marxist political economy at the height of neoliberal globalisation and aggressive imperialism in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, it is up to us, the current generation of communists in South Africa, to emulate this outstanding revolutionary in developing a deeper understanding of the world as it is today and the related tasks arising from the present reality. In the midst of the sweeping capitalist crisis both internationally and domestically, it is easy to overlook this central principle in our philosophical

outlook. “Dialego” encapsulates this in his booklet, *Philosophy and Class Struggle*<sup>1</sup>, emphasising that there is always “the need to understand the world as it really is – which is, broadly speaking, a materialist approach, an approach which treats the world as a material force in its own right that exists independently of what we may think of it or like it to be”.

But even before we begin to grapple with the present reality and discuss our contemporary tasks, especially those pertaining to this province, let us first appreciate who Cde Joe Slovo was and pay tribute to his outstanding contribution and sacrifice.

Comrade JS was born in the village of Obelai, Lithuania, on 23 May 1926 to Ann and Woolf Slovo. His family emigrated to South Africa when he was eight. His father worked as a truck driver in Johannesburg. JS left school after Standard 6 (the equivalent to Grade 8) in 1941, to work as a dispatch clerk at a company called SA Druggists. Thereupon, the young JS joined the National Union of Distributive Workers, becoming the chief shop steward and highly involved in organising a strike. He joined the SACP in 1942. In *Slovo: The Unfinished Autobiography* he recalls these early years: “But the main focus of my party activities was at my workplace where I recruited a number of members (mainly black but also a few whites including Mannie Brown), and we formed a factory group ...The factory group helped create the Black Chemical Workers’ Union and sometime later, one of the recruits, Nkosi, became its general secretary.”

During the Second World War, inspired by the heroics of the Soviet’s Red Army in its resistance to Hitler’s fascist occupation, JS volunteered to join the war on the side of the allied forces. Be-

tween 1946 and 1950 he completed a BA and LLB at Wits University, where he was a politically active student. Comrade JS was a founder member of the Congress of Democrats, which he represented on the national consultative committee of the Congress Alliance during the process that led to the drawing up of the Freedom Charter.

Like many of his contemporary comrades, Comrade JS suffered harassment and imprisonment from the regime. He was arrested and detained for two months during the Treason Trial of 1956, but charges against him were dropped in 1958. He was later arrested and held for six months during the state of emergency declared after Sharpeville in 1960. In 1961, Cde JS emerged as one of the leaders of Umkhonto weSizwe. In 1963 he went into exile on instructions from the SACP and ANC. He spent his exile years in the UK, Angola, Mozambique and Zambia. In 1966 he did his LLM at the London School of Economics. Cde JS was based in Mozambique until 1984, when he was elected General Secretary of the party. At this point he was also MK’s chief of staff and a member of the NEC Working Committee.

Cde JS made his return to South Africa in 1990 as part of the early phase of negotiations with the apartheid regime, the so-called “talks about talks”. It was during this period that Cde JS began to take ill; hence he could no longer lead the SACP as the General Secretary. In December 1991 he was elected as the Chairperson at the 8th Congress in Soweto, with the late Chris Hani elected as the General Secretary. But true to his enduring commitment and sacrifice, at the time of his death on 6 January 1995, Cde JS was still in the front ranks of the leadership of our movement. He was:

- A member of Central Committee and Politburo of the SACP
- A member of the ANC's National Executive Committee and its National Working Committee, and
- Minister of Housing in the Government of National Unity

### **The NDR and second phase of the transition**

In 1988, as the apartheid regime and the white ruling class were showing strains of strategic disarray on the back of the insurrectionary upsurge of the mid-1980s and when it seems as if the struggle was passing into a new phase, Cde JS took up the challenge of further elaborating the SACP's strategic perspective in his iconic paper, *The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution*. In the overall, this paper deals with class struggle and national struggle, the question of stages of struggle, inter-class alliances, and the role of our working class in the liberation front. All the cadres of the Party, especially our young militant corps, would do well to study this work, in which Cde JS instructively had this to say on the question of the stages of struggle: "We reiterate that when we talk of stages we are talking simultaneously about distinct phases and a continuous journey. At the same time revolutionary practice demands that within each distinct stage there should be a selective concentration on those objectives which are most pertinent to its completion. This is no way detracts from the need to plant, within its womb, the seeds which will ensure a continuity towards the next stage."

It is within this theoretical framework that the working class in the ANC and Alliance must conceptualise the whole topical question of the second phase of our transition, which itself would take

place within the context of the NDR. We are fresh from the 53<sup>rd</sup> National Conference of the ANC in Mangaung, and the historic rally of the 8 January Message in eThekweni, marking the first step into the second century of the ANC and indeed the second phase of our transition. The ANC has declared **2013** *The year of unity in action towards socio-economic freedom* and the next 10 years The decade of the cadre. Furthermore, the 8 January Message declares: "The ANC as the leader of the Alliance has the responsibility of providing revolutionary support to the Alliance components" and that "the SACP and Cosatu in turn have a responsibility to strengthen and defend the ANC." In its declaration, the Mangaung conference itself stated: "we are boldly entering the second phase of the transition from apartheid colonialism to a national democratic society. This phase will be characterised by decisive action to effect economic transformation and democratic consolidation, critical both to improve the quality of life of all South Africans and to promote nation-building and social cohesion."

These momentous commitments by the ANC echo the outcomes of the successful 13<sup>th</sup> Congress of the SACP and 11<sup>th</sup> congress of Cosatu, and from these developments and pronouncements three key points emerge:

Firstly, that the 1994 democratic-breakthrough marked a new phase in the continuous NDR. As Cde JS would have said, in the course of this period the class content within the principal contradiction of the national struggle has increasingly assumed a predominant feature of the NDR as the direction of the transition became sharply contested in the midst of the realignment of political and class forces over the past 18 years, both within

and outside our movement. The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* captures this principle of the universality of class struggle as the locomotive in any particular context, stage and terrain of struggle in the following manner: “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.”

Mangaung marks the consolidation of the advances that the working class has made within the ANC on the back of the Polokwane watershed, a fight back by the working class following that moment of the “strategic rupture” that occurred in our movement in the wake of the emergence of the ’96 Class Project at the beginning of our transition.

As it begins its second century, the ANC is now almost two decades in power, a stage at which many national liberation movements in Africa, Asia, Central America and the Caribbean that have successfully led their democratic revolutions and independence struggles began to falter and flounder. This generally occurred either through defeat by imperialism and internal counter-revolutionary forces or through the successful hijacking of the movement by the emerging petty-bourgeois stratum and bourgeoisie within the movement itself – ultimately in favour of the interests of the comprador bourgeoisie and imperialism.

This last point relating to the fact that the ANC is approaching its fifth general election in 2014 while being an incum-

bent party for two decades underscores the historical importance of the devastating blows struck by the working class and its allied forces on both the ’96 Class Project in Polokwane and the populist-demagogy and its tenderpreneurs in Mangaung. We can expect the ideological and political contradictions and struggle to continue within the ANC in one form or another despite Mangaung. But the determination on the part of the ANC to undertake a systematic process of organisational renewal clearly confirms that our revolution has a better chance to proceed, uninterrupted though painstakingly, in the context of the current balance of forces. All of these advances are no accidents of history. They are outcomes of a class conscious corps of a proletarian cadre within the Alliance and ANC and this is what the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress of the SACP means when it speaks of taking responsibility for the revolution and building working class hegemony in all sites of power. After all, Cde JS taught that “a speedy advance towards socialism will depend, primarily, on the place which the working class has won for itself as a leader of society.” This ascendant hegemony of the working class is now underscored in the Mangaung’s *Preface to the 2007 Strategy and Tactics*: “Strategy and Tactics 2007 affirms the strategic goal of the NDR as the resolution of the three basic and inter-related contradictions of Colonialism of a Special Type in South Africa: racial oppression, class super-exploitation and patriarchal relations of power. These antagonisms found expression in national oppression based on race; class super-exploitation directed against black workers; and the triple oppression of the mass of women based on their race, their class and their gender. The main content of the National Democratic Revolution

therefore remains the liberation of Africans in particular and blacks in general from political and socioeconomic bondage.”

### **The context of the second phase of the transition**

The shared perspective among ANC-led Alliance formations around the need for a radical phase of our transition is not a subjective posture merely reflecting an increasingly anxiety-stricken movement at the head of a restless constituency. It relates to the fluid underlying objective socio-political context in the country on the one hand, while on the other hand it relates to the changing international context. This shifting international context is characterised by the three principal features:

Firstly, there is an overall shift of the political centre to the Left in Latin America, across the continent. In both central America and the southern cone of the continent, the Left forces are enjoying an unprecedented democratic hegemony as highlighted in strategic countries such as Brazil and Argentina, while in some countries that may be regarded as the weakest links in the chain of America's imperialism in the hemisphere, such as Venezuela and Bolivia, the balance of class forces allows the Left to make far-reaching socialist advances.

Secondly, the global crisis of capitalism which is chiefly engulfing the imperialist triad of North America, Europe and Japan has simultaneously unleashed militant mass mobilisation among sections of the working class and youth in the global-north generally. This militancy was also inspired by the popular Arab Uprisings. Importantly, this crisis has at least intellectually and among growing swathes of the working class, discred-

ited neoliberalism and finance monopoly capital or the “banksters”.

Lastly, the decline of a unipolar world order that emerged from the ruins of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the intensified globalisation of neoliberalism. Thus, this overall shift in the international balance of power is characterised by the emergence of the China-led BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia and India) with each carrying immense productive forces and that have since been joined by South Africa (to form Brics). This is an important emerging counter-hegemonic pole that is grappling with alternatives to neoliberalism and resisting western imperialist hegemony.

And what of the national context? Our strategic perspective remains one of the NDR as the most direct route to socialism. Cde JS conceptualised this revolutionary process as characterised by distinct but interrelated stages in a continuous class struggle. Thus, we have always argued that in our context of colonialism of a special type (CST), there is a class content in a national struggle and a national content in the class struggle. Hence, we have already observed that over the years since the democratic breakthrough, the class content of our NDR has increasingly assumed a primary feature in the political landscape, and we can account for this on the following basis:

Firstly, the “strategic rupture” that occurred in the wake of the '96 Class Project and the subsequent emergence of the “new tendency”, a by-product of the former ('96 Class Project) through its policies of the tenderisation of the state and its repression of the revolutionary content of the NDR.

Secondly, since the Polokwane watershed, with the defeat of the '96 Class Project, we have seen the realignment of

class forces not only in terms of the formation of the “Congress of the People” (Cope), but primarily the emergence of a network of the anti-majoritarian offensive led by the Democratic Alliance (DA).

Using the superficial banner of our Constitution, the strategic opponent of the NDR – white monopoly capital which includes bourgeois monopoly media houses and its global imperialist connections – is increasingly setting itself on a political collision course with the ANC as part of this wider anti-majoritarian offensive. The open political posture of FNB and the aggressive attacks on the economy and working class by Amplats and Gold Fields as they siphon their super-profits off-shore as part of putting the ANC on the back foot – partially in response to the discussions on minerals and mines – are but a few of many open and hidden forms in which the class struggle is intensifying as we seek to deepen the NDR in the second phase of our transition.

In part, this growing confidence of the anti-majoritarian offensive is aided by the recent years of internal destabilisation of the ANC as a result of the emergence of new tendencies but also by the creeping disarray in the strategic outlook of our federation, Cosatu. With regard to the latter, in keeping with the Slovo’s implacable forthrightness and honesty, we can make an observation that there appears to be a re-emergence of the twin currents of workerism that have always been embedded in the evolution of our federation, as discussed by the SACP in its 1986 pamphlet *Errors of Workerism*. One of these currents is “workerism as economism”. Its re-emergence has only become clear over the past few years since the 5th Central Committee of Co-

satu in tandem with the emergence of a few “progressive civil society” organisations that are actually ideologically and politically at the service of the strategic opponents of the NDR.

Thus, from proudly congratulating the federation at the 10th Congress for steadfastly remaining within the Alliance rather than staging a walk out in the face of constant provocations by the ’96 Class Project, suddenly at the 11th Congress we are told that the federation has been too involved in the politics of the ANC. Because of the alleged growing “illegitimacy” of the ANC government, the future of Cosatu is at risk as it may also disappear in the impending implosion of the ANC, we are told. Therefore, the federation is exhorted to “go back to the basics”, by which it is meant something other than the perspective of the 2015 Plan which calls for the intensification of both our workplace struggles and the political programme as mutually reinforcing aspects of our strategic orientation. In reality, this current of workerism does not seek to withdraw the federation from the political terrain, but to recast the politics of the federation and its strategic outlook along similar lines to the so-called “progressive civil society”. In this regard, Cosatu’s primary vocation – in addition to waging the traditional trade union struggles – will be to “talk truth to power” (*a la* Mampela Ramphele), but power redefined along the narrow lines of the anti-majoritarian offensive, meaning the state or the ANC government rather than power as embedded in the social relations of the CST.

The other coexisting current is “workerism as syndicalism”, which is, ideologically, a different political tendency which the SACP characterised thus: “This syndicalist brand of workerism does not deny the need for workers to get involved

in wider political issues. But it sees the trade union as the main, or even as the only organisational base for this political involvement.”

It goes without saying that over the past few years both these currents of workerism have been hostile to the SACP as a vanguard party of the South African working class and indeed to our political strategy of the NDR, but for diametrically opposed reasons. And this confuses many in the ranks of the federation and Alliance who tend to assume that this is one and the same tendency, when in fact one current represents a rightwing version of workerism which is also reflected by its posture with regard to the debates within the federation on the international trade union movement. The revelations about its flirtation with the DA leader obviously shocked many within the federation. The other represents an ultra-left current of workerism – which carries delusions about a trade union movement leading a socialist revolution. Again, Cde JS counsels that “the trade union movement would be doomed if it attempted to act like a Communist Party”.

### **Challenges, tasks and our responsibilities**

As brief as it is possible in the constraints of this occasion the foregoing attempted to delve into the overall character and key features of the present reality. But of course the hallmark of our Party and the example of its outstanding leaders such as Slovo is to always ask the question: what is to be done? We pride ourselves on always seeking to heed this maxim of praxis, summarised by Dialego: “Revolutionaries regard themselves first and foremost as practical people dedicated to changing the world.”

The outbreak of the wild-cat strikes

in mining and agriculture, two economic sectors that constituted the foundations of the CST – against the backdrop of the 100th anniversary of the Land Act of 1913 – bitterly epitomise both the failures of the development path since 1994 and the major weaknesses of our organised working class formations. Mining and agriculture are critical sectors in our economy.

For a moment, let us consider the meaning of the Lonmin-Marikana tragedy, which continues to cast its shadow across the country and in particular in this province<sup>2</sup>, as we await the outcomes of the commission of inquiry, though we are clear on what has been happening before and after this unfortunate incident. In brief, we can draw the following conclusions on developments around this over the past few years:

The mining sector, platinum mining in particular, has seen a decade of massive super-profits on the basis of rising commodity prices in international markets and super-exploitation of workers. This has now come to an end as a result of the global capitalist crisis. Hence, we have seen bosses engineering divisions among workers to weaken the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), and using the current situation to restructure the sector on far more favourable terms through massive retrenchments. The recent announcements by Gold Fields and Amplats validate this point.

The anger and militancy in mining is not peculiar but has been seething in many strikes of Cosatu affiliates and community protests. It is therefore not separable from the impact of the economic crisis, in which growing inequalities pose a major challenge. This underscores the need to fight for a radical second phase of our transition, in which a living wage and

decent jobs must be at the centre.

For a militant trade union movement such as Cosatu and its affiliates building the union in the workplace through recruitment and launching branches is important organisational work on which resources and personnel capacity must be concentrated, but this is not an end in itself. It is a means of strengthening the unions to fight for the improvement of the working conditions of workers and using these struggles to build working class consciousness. Without class consciousness workers are vulnerable to all kinds of opportunism, including the ultra-left variant that we have seen emerging around this tragedy.

The Alliance correctly characterises what happened on 16 August 2012 as a tragedy. But we know that this was not accidental and that it began before that fateful day with the killing of many NUM shop stewards, and in the intervening weeks. Therefore, we have to turn this tragedy into an opportunity. When we discuss this matter within our ranks, even before we can apportion blame that is justifiably attributable to the *agent provocateurs* of the Association of Mining and Construction Union (Amcu) the bosses and other political forces, our starting point must be to look at ourselves in the mirror. Lonmin-Marikana has brought the issue of the internal weaknesses of our trade union movement in workplaces to the fore. Cosatu and all affiliates must draw lessons from the experiences of NUM so they can stick to the long-held traditions of worker control, class consciousness and placing service to members at the centre of their overall programmes. This must include a concerted fight against any creeping of bureaucratism, labour aristocracy, business unionism and indeed all currents of

workerism.

Beyond the fight to win the wage demands of workers who have suffered years of super-exploitation, with the land question now being placed high on the agenda in terms of the 8 January Message, the SACP together with Cosatu, NUM and Fawu (Food and Allied Workers' Union) must play a key role in spearheading the review of the black economic empowerment (BEE) charters and locating them within the broader context of the question of colonial land dispossession.

Organisationally, it is clear that the phenomenon of Amcu cannot anymore be treated as a narrow concern of the NUM alone, if ever it was. If anything, Amcu's emergence and the subsequent mushrooming of some ultra-left political outfit on the back of the Lonmin-Marikana tragedy reflects the fact we have not rooted the SACP among these workers. Therefore, in the course of this year – the year of the districts – a primary task of the Party in this province ought to be the reestablishment of the SACP among the mine workers, not only in terms of strengthening and expanding our branches but also by establishing the party units in their workplaces. This is one way to emulate the endeavours of the young Slovo, who helped to establish “factory groups” of the Party in the workplaces. Cosatu and all its affiliates must concentrate on strengthening the shop stewards' movement of our Locals, which is the natural pool from which to build the SACP.

Between Polokwane and Mangaung the ANC in the province has grown by 27 792 members (37%). This indicates a high potential for the SACP to grow further. This province was the third best performing province of the ANC in the 2009 elections after Limpopo and Mpu-

malanga. However, we are facing major challenges in the “strategic centre of power” in this province. According to the Organisational Report to the ANC’s 53<sup>rd</sup> Conference: “The North West was among the first ... to hold (a) provincial conference after the 52<sup>nd</sup> National Conference. It is in this provincial conference that the culture of physical fights in ANC meetings was ushered in and then spread to other structures of the movement, with the Sun City Provincial Conference broadcast as a war zone.”

This suggests a vacuum may have developed without the active presence of an advanced corps of SACP cadre within the ANC, building working class hegemony. Otherwise, it would be an indictment on our Party if our own cadreship is actively involved in the many parallel structures, rather than strengthening the ANC, especially in the Ngaka Modiri Molema region, which is now under the Regional Task Team.

Similarly, let’s also heed the concerns expressed by the Organisational Report to the ANC’s 53<sup>rd</sup> Conference: “Local governance is in disarray in this province, with mayors being removed at will. The most extreme case was not just following the trend in removing the mayors, but donating an important municipality to the DA. This is the same municipality where seven councillors were not registered during the 2011 local government elections. About 90% of the municipalities had not submitted financial reports by the time the Auditor General released the audit report for local government.”

In this year of the district your tasks are clearly cut out in this province both as the SACP in intervening at the level of local government but also as a revolutionary class within the ANC, the strate-

gic centre of power. This malaise cannot be allowed to continue.

### **Conclusion**

Cde Joe Slovo, one of our finest Isithwalandwe-Seaparankoe, would have been 87 years old this year; he died when he was 69. The whole idea of memorial lectures is to draw inspiration from these distinguished martyrs and forbearers of our movement, to learn from their particular history, and the SACP is especially proud of Joe Slovo’s. He was an embodiment of our movement as a whole, both theoretically and practically, having cut his political teeth in the elementary stage of the development of our trade union movement, as a militant democrat within the ANC and as one of the most consummate Marxist-Leninist that the SACP has produced! We owe it to him and many others to ensure that our NDR deepens uninterruptedly towards socialism.

*Cde Majola serves on the SACP Central Committee and Politburo, and the ANC’s National Executive Committee, and is General Secretary of the National Health and Allied Workers’ Union.*

### **(Endnotes)**

1 “Dialego”, *Philosophy and Class Struggle*, 1975. The booklet was originally published as a series of four articles in *The African Communist* under the pen-name “Dialego”, and subsequently as a single, consolidated booklet. “Dialego” is John Hoffman, a philosophy lecturer at Leicester University in England. The booklet is available at <http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/dialego/philosophy/index.htm>.

2 The North West

## REMEMBERING JOE SLOVO

# Belling the cat

To remain true to Cde JS's heritage, we need more liberation politics, not less, argues Jeremy Cronin

*This is an edited version of a statement issued by Cde Cronin on behalf of the SACP Central Committee on 6 January this year, the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cde Joe Slovo's death*

**M**y last relatively extended personal interaction with Cde Joe Slovo was 18 years ago over supper. It was mid-December 1994. It was in Bloemfontein at the ANC's 49th National Conference. Cde Joe was not well, the illness from which he was to die a few weeks later was taking its toll – one arm was supported in a sling, his voice reduced to a soft rasp. Physically he was exhausted, but intellectually he was as sharp as ever. And now we are just a few weeks beyond another ANC National Conference, which, coincidentally, was also held in Bloemfontein/Mangaung.

What would Cde JS make of our current ANC, SACP and Alliance? What would he have to say about our present government, or the prevailing South African and international reality? There is always the temptation to claim Cde JS's authority for whatever views we might personally now hold – but, let's concede

it, none of us can say with any certainty what he would have to say about our present.

What we **do** know, however, is the **manner** in which he would attempt to approach an understanding of our present situation. That approach would be at once passionately critical and responsibly measured. It would be critical because Slovo had a knack of intervening decisively at critical moments, of (to use one of his favourite turns of phrase) "belling the cat" – grabbing hold of a vexatious challenge that others were avoiding or deferring<sup>1</sup>. He would do so with intellectual rigour, as a Marxist-Leninist.

But the approach would also be responsible. Joe's interventions were never merely academic; however brilliant, they were never displays of individualism. They were certainly never about seeking favour in liberal quarters by parading a personal independence from the collectives of which he was part. If his interventions were critical, they were collectively self-critical – they assumed personal and collective responsibility for the organisations of which he was an active member, the SACP, the ANC, MK. They were also always about drawing lessons. It was not

criticism for criticism's sake, but collective self-criticism to answer, programmatically, the abiding Leninist question: "What is to be done?"

You will find this approach in all of his key interventions. In *No Middle Road*, published in 1975, for instance, Slovo is breaking the spell of ANC exile demoralisation and defeatism – which were often disguised behind a denialism that asserted that "things are fine", "the revolution is on track". In *No Middle Road* Slovo is saying quite bluntly that, by the late-1960s, the ANC-led liberation movement had, indeed, suffered a major strategic defeat. Things were not fine. The armed struggle launched in December 1961 was, in many respects, strategically confused. We grossly over-estimated our own capacity, we badly under-estimated the strength and vicious counter-offensive intent of the apartheid regime and its international backers.

This was "belling the cat", saying boldly what others in our movement whispered, at best, but dared not say out loud. But that wasn't where it ended for Slovo. In a characteristic dialectical switch, he then went on to argue that whatever the blunders, however unfavourable the conditions for armed struggle in December 1961 – untimely action was by far preferable to inaction. And he then proceeded to unpack how the many features of an internal colonialism (that made a classical Third World armed struggle so much more difficult in the South African reality) could, with a sustained popular insurrectionary uprising, turn into positives for the liberation movement. This was to prove prophetic (written, remember, in 1975): *No Middle Road* anticipated the 1976 uprisings that were to roll on through the decade of the 1980s and into the early 1990s.

You will find the same approach at work in other critical Slovo interventions. *Has Socialism Failed?* is an obvious example. He worked on it largely in Lusaka in 1989 and it was published in 1990 in the midst of the deepening crisis and subsequent collapse of the Soviet bloc system. Once again he is taking on denialism:

On the one hand, the denialism of those in the SACP and ANC, and those internationally who continued to believe that nothing had gone seriously wrong in the Soviet Union, or that it was all simply a belated betrayal by a single personality – Gorbachev; and

On the other hand, the denialism of those who quickly disowned any personal or collective association with communism – there were the Yeltsins in Russia, but there were also many local equivalents within our own movement. As far as they were concerned, Marxism, communism, the Party, even the critique of imperialism had become "yesterday's fashions".

In analysing the Soviet experience, Cde Joe was assuming both a personal and collective responsibility for this important if ultimately gravely flawed legacy – he was not taking the easy route out. He was not disowning it. But, even more important, he was intervening **as a communist**, as a Marxist – for him the critique of the Soviet legacy was in the end a defence of socialism, of a democratic socialism, for socialism could only be democratic, or it would not be socialism, he argued.

So, in commemorating the living example of Cde JS in the present, how do we take forward the fundamentals of his approach? What "cats" require "belling"? Obviously, there isn't the space and time here to do anything comprehensive – but let's try to put down some markers on

two related issues, two “cats”: the end of the post-1994 South African honeymoon, and the related corrosive challenges of corruption. What are we to make of these undeniable realities?

### **End of the post-1994 South African honeymoon**

Nearly two decades beyond the 1994 democratic breakthrough, it is clear that we continue to confront persisting problems – notably unemployment of crisis proportions, mass poverty, and extraordinary levels of inequality. Why? Who or what is to blame?

In much of the commercial media and amongst the predominant commentariat the answer tends to be reduced, quite simply, to the weaknesses, “cultural backwardness”, ineptitude and general venality of personalities related to the ANC, the Alliance, and the ANC-led government. “I went to Mangaung and what I saw made me not only sad and despondent, I literally shed a tear for the ANC, and for my country”, writes Mogomotsi Mogodiri in the *Sunday Times*. “The installation of the new top six officials of the ANC is a tragedy of gargantuan proportions – a disaster not even Shakespeare could have dreamt up.” (“Mangaung dooms ANC to a slow death”, December 30, 2012).

This middle class lamentation is relatively typical, although, admittedly, Mogodiri does take the hyperbole to new depths of melodrama. Dr Mamphela Ramphele is a more thoughtful representative of basically the same school of thought. For her, too, the South African democratic breakthrough has been betrayed by the ANC-led liberation movement. “The reality is that there is not a single post-liberation movement in Africa, perhaps in the rest of the world, that has made a successful transition to de-

mocracy,” she said in a September lecture at the University of Basel, Switzerland (“Defend your constitution”, *The New Age*, September 27 2012). “For Africa to successfully claim its rightful place in the globally interconnected and interdependent world [that’s how an unjust, imperialist-dominated world is conceptualised in these quarters] it will have to make a fundamental shift from liberation struggle politics to democratic politics ... The key reason for the failure to make the transition from liberation politics to democratic politics lies in the radical difference in the values framework. Liberation movements tend to simplify socio-economic and political conflicts as simply black and white. No ambiguity is tolerated.”

Now it would be wrong for us to simply dismiss all of this out of hand. Many post-independence liberation movements have not done well. Our own movement is facing serious challenges. Mistakes have been made. Yes, a brave MK fighter doesn’t necessarily make an effective director general (although some of our best DGs have had a struggle background). Clearly there is a potential “mismatch” (to quote Ramphele) “between the skills set required for governance and that of freedom fighters”.

But notice how Ramphele is guilty of the very thing she accuses liberation politics of – notice how she establishes a simple, unambiguous, black-and-white contrast between “liberation politics” on the one hand and “democratic politics” on the other. Indeed, she goes on to suggest, no doubt to the amusement of her Swiss audience, that having been an activist in the liberation struggle “may well be the basis for the disqualification” of individuals from the “governance process”!!

What is Ramphele’s answer to the

challenges we are confronting? It is, essentially, an appeal for “active citizenship”, for “citizens, the corporate sector, civil society organisations” to stand up and defend democracy and the Constitution – supposedly under threat from the ANC, the Alliance, and the ANC-led government. Yes, of course, we need an “active citizenry”, but the appeal to all of us simply as individual, atomised “citizens” in a nebulous “civil society” masks the huge differences in class interest and class power among us. Participation in a school governing body or a neighbourhood watch is, in principle, a good thing. But an SGB or neighbourhood watch in a wealthy suburb is more than likely to end up **defending** existing powers, privileges and gated property values **against** the egalitarian transformation of our society.

This is why, as Cde JS surely would have insisted, we need always to apply a class analysis to our situation. And this is why we need to integrate the values and aspirations of our liberation struggle into the new challenges of governance, rather than abandon them – for unless we achieve a radically egalitarian society, democracy will be formalistic and insubstantial, and constantly under threat.

Which brings me to the second and related “cat” that we need to consider “belling”.

### **The scourge of corruption**

It is (or it should be) common cause that we are confronting a serious challenge of corruption which has acquired many endemic features. What are its causes? What is to be done?

Again, in most of the media and among most of the political commentariat, ANC politicians are the ones to be blamed. Greed, moral venality, arrogant displays of new wealth, and the abuse of

office are constantly paraded in the headlines – and rightly so. These things need to be exposed and condemned. Those guilty of corruption, regardless of their historic track record, or current status, should be dealt with, without fear or favour.

But if we leave it simply there then we will never get to the bottom of the corruption challenge – we will constantly be preaching the need for “more political education”, for “moral regeneration”, for another reading of *Through the Eye of the Needle*. Again, without denying the importance of any of these things, I believe that we need to go beyond the purely subjective, beyond individual bad behaviour to where Cde Joe would (surely?) have taken us – to a more systemic, that is to say, Marxist analysis.

In the first place we need to understand the vulnerabilities of, say, a squatter camp ANC Youth Leaguer within the context of a society of extreme inequality, in which becoming an ANC regional chairperson (or perhaps supporting someone else for the post) might offer you a one-in-a-million, rags-to-riches chance of lifting yourself out of poverty – and in which, contrariwise, losing such a position can plunge you back into poverty, riches-to-rags. We are trying to consolidate democracy in a country characterised by high levels of desperation. It is a society in which 36 000 candidates will risk their lives (six dying, a seventh committing suicide when failing the cut-off) to secure one of 90 trainee traffic officer posts. We cannot resolve the problems of corruption without understanding and addressing the desperation and the often corrosive impact that radical inequality has upon politics and upon everything else within our society.

We also need to remember the flipside of the same issue. For over a cen-

ture, monopoly capital in South Africa resisted majority democratic rule. The mining houses and the major financial institutions sheltered behind minority rule and were in the forefront of resisting one-person, one-vote democracy in our country. In the face of mass struggle and global solidarity, by the mid-1980s, white minority rule in South Africa had become unviable, which is to say unprofitable. For monopoly capital, the risk of a negotiated settlement towards some kind of democratic dispensation had to be undertaken. For its own profitable reproduction, monopoly capital in South Africa had to embark upon the hazardous path of loosening its cosy ties with a white minority political elite for an uncertain future under a new political dispensation.

To understand what was at stake, let's switch to another country. The US political system is, of course, not corruption free – but the US generally has a far superior ranking to South Africa in supposed corruption free politics. In the 2012 Transparency International World Corruption Index, for instance, the US was ranked the 19th least corrupt nation out of 174 – up five places. South Africa was ranked a relatively lowly 69th – down five places on the previous year. The US political system is, presumably, one that those like Ramphele would consider a “mature democracy”. So what goes on in a “mature democracy”?

Writing in the November issue of *Monthly Review*, Robert W McChesney notes: “A generation ago Mississippi Senator John Stennis thought it would be inappropriate to accept donations from firms that were affected by the work of the committee he chaired; today that is arguably the whole point of getting a committee chair. A significant portion of

the work of being a member of Congress is about fundraising ... That and setting oneself up for a lucrative high six- or seven-figure annual income as a K Street [Washington] lobbyist once one's stint in Congress is done. In the 1970s, three percent of retiring members became lobbyists; by 2012 the figure is in the 50 percent range.”

In 2009, at the height of banks being bailed out, no fewer than 70 former members of Congress were actively employed by the financial sector alone as lobbyists on their behalf in Washington. One serving Senator had the honesty to note: “The banks – hard to believe in a time when we're facing a banking crisis that many of the banks created – are still the most powerful lobby on Capitol Hill ... they frankly own the place.”

Now little or none of this features in the Transparency International Corruption Index. We are, after all, dealing here with a “mature” democracy, in which the cruder forms of brown envelopes and tender-preneuring are no longer needed. As McChesney writes: “the corruption in Congress and across the government today is only rarely of the traditional bribery variety. It is instead a far more structured dependence upon corporate money built into the DNA of the political system – traditional payoffs are not necessary.”

That is a “mature” capitalist democracy at work, free of any “liberation politics”. (Please understand that I am citing US examples not in order to excuse corruption here in South Africa – I am trying to understand the corrosive interface between capitalism and democratic dispensations in different concrete circumstances.)

I suppose South Africa can be considered an “immature” (or “young”) democracy in which, however, there is a mature and well-established capitalist

class. We cannot understand the scourge of corruption in our society without understanding corruption as part and parcel of this old capitalist class seeking to recover its footing, to transplant its DNA into the new reality.

But that is only part of the story. The other part of the story does indeed lie at the doorstep of the ANC-led movement, or at least at the doorstep of a significant faction within it, and a particular strategic policy choice taken in the mid-1990s. This strategic policy choice was to use state power to create a new black capitalist stratum. The policy, of course, went under the deceptive (and mendacious) title of “black economic empowerment” (BEE). Interestingly, and notwithstanding Ramphela’s claims, you will not find the advocacy of BEE in any pre-1994 ANC liberation politics policy perspective.

From the point of view of some within the ANC and government, the creation of this stratum served the useful purpose not just of personal enrichment, but of providing a counter-weight within the movement to the SACP and Cosatu. Established capital played along with this agenda – accommodating a buffer stratum with political connections gave it a foothold within the post-1994 reality.

The trouble, of course, with this agenda, was that those in this emergent new stratum were aspirant capitalists but without capital. The primitive accumulation process required to launch them could only be at once compradorial (i.e. dependent) upon established capital and parasitic on state resources – regardless of the subjective patriotism or erstwhile struggle credentials of those involved.

But this is not, Cde Slovo would remind us, an academic or purely theoretical discussion. To address the scourge of corruption in South Africa we require a series of practical interventions. If vigorously applied, some can have an immediate impact, including tough anti-corruption measures that use the full might of the state to uncover and crack down on wrong-doers; popular campaigns that encourage whistle-blowing and that mobilise community-based organisations and social movements to play an active role in undercutting corruption; the strengthening of the declaration of interests regulations applying to public representatives and senior public servants; the outlawing of public servant involvement in private businesses; and the tightening up of state procurement processes.

However, we need simultaneously to address the more systemic underlying factors behind the scourge of corruption – by placing our economy on to a different, more egalitarian developmental path; and by critically and thoroughly reviewing BEE policies.

If we follow all of these we will be recovering and reaffirming (not abandoning) our liberation politics to which Cde Joe Slovo made such an outstanding contribution.

*Jeremy Cronin is SACP 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy General Secretary and Deputy Minister of Public Works*

#### **(Endnotes)**

1 Bell the cat: To perform a very dangerous or very difficult task – TheFree Dictionary

## THE BATTLE OF IDEAS

# Behind the DA's 'equal opportunity society'

The DA's *equal opportunity society* and post-race mantra attempt to fuel a false consciousness in South Africa's working class, argues **Jarred Martin**

**A**t a public debate between Ferial Haffajee (Editor of the *City Press*) and Lindiwe Mazibuko (Parliamentary leader of the Democratic Alliance), and hosted by Ian Ollis (DA MP), Ms Mazibuko was given the opportunity to showcase her party's *raison d'être*.

At the heart of the DA's political mantra, as expressed by Ms Mazibuko at the event, is the consolidation of a *post-race* party political discourse which in the eyes of the DA takes South Africa "beyond" political and civil debates which are circumscribed by racialised identity politics. Both Ms Mazibuko and the party she represents assert that such a *post-race* conversation is the catalysing, if not defining, element of an "equal opportunity society" – one of the DA's core political values espoused in their political media and spin.

According to the DA website: "In an opportunity society, your path is not determined by the circumstances of your birth, including both your material and demographic circumstances, but rather by your talents and by your efforts"<sup>1</sup>. Through a Marxist analytical lens, communists can observe that the DA's bourgeois political ideology attempts to

mask the real set of historical-material relations which stratify South Africans. A Marxist critique exposes the DA's *post-race* conversation as a discursive smokescreen which occupies the position of both *product* and *producer* of capitalist false consciousness and ideology. The capitalist ideology which the DA espouses fundamentally attempts to manoeuvre towards the structural, and concomitant psychological, alienation of South African workers' experiences of their identity and reality as dislocated from the actual material relations and conditions of people.

More pointedly, Ms Mazibuko and the DA continue to obfuscate the legacy of racialised capitalism and oppression in South Africa and in so doing adopt a posture tantamount to denial of the effect the injustices of apartheid had on all, but primarily black, South Africans. Communists should be wary of the DA's party political line for an "equal opportunity society", which in theory sounds rosy but practically is nebulous and immeasurable; and aimed at distracting the working class and dispossessed from existing class/race-based inequalities.

With specific reference to its delib-

erate assertion of “your talents and by your efforts”, the DA’s political narrative implies the working classes and poor, through the assertion of intra-personal (almost Calvinist) factors, such as flaws in character or personality, laziness, or a pseudo-Montessorian notion of a lack of talent, are the impediments to their upward socioeconomic mobility. Traces of this ideology can also be found in arguments forwarded by the DA which attempt to legitimate abusive labour practices by proposing that the proletariat still benefit from a system where the levers of power are held by people other than themselves – for example, that the uncertainty and exploitation that workers often suffer at the hands of labour brokers is better than workers having no work at all. Marxist scholar Louis Althusser’s analysis of the role of language in forming social positions in which individuals are rendered ideological subjects is of particular use in understanding the **function** of the DA’s party line. In this regard communists engaged in a critique of the DA’s *post-race* discourse should not only examine the content of their argument but also its action-orientation. The DA’s *post-race* discourse is not simply the articulation of forlorn capitalist tropes strung together; it is also an active attempt to interpolate both the bourgeois and the working classes into a particular mode of being and capitalist (exploitative) configuration. Radical Marxist analysis of this interpellation in many ways represents the heart of the “Battle of ideas” for communists in South Africa.

As communists we are aware that the advent and advance of racialised capitalism in South Africa forms the stratifying bedrock between South Africans. The division of labour along

racial lines since colonialism, through apartheid, and under the contemporary spectres of neo-colonialism, entrenched the material conditions which ensured a psychological and structural hegemonising of white controlled capitalism underpinning the servitude of the black majority.

This fundamental stratification is classically based on the (non-)ownership of the means of production. However in the post-modern era it also extends to hegemonic knowledge claims exhibited in populist demagoguery and anti-majoritarianism. The determining fracture of racialised capitalism, regardless of the political relations between people prior to colonialism, dichotomised South African society in a manner that would become inherently irresolvable through natural societal development. Thus the struggle for freedom and equality was realised and the Party, as well as the Alliance, radically agitated for liberation against the oppressive forces of white minority hegemony.

However, The DA’s *post-race* party political narrative adopts a fundamentally counter-revolutionary thesis as it continues to propound a false consciousness at the heart of the ideological and structural systems that cultivate a non-consciousness of the capitalist order. In this regard a critical understanding of the dialectical-material underpinnings of Italian neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s writings on ideological hegemony is essential to a scientific analysis of the DA’s politicking. According to Gramsci, “hegemony” describes the means through which social consensus of the dominant power relations are established in a given context. In this sense, hegemonic forces flow

from the capitalist superstructure of social organisation. In the South African context this is most evident in the explicit and implicit anti-communist position of the liberal mass media which is “seemingly” imbued with the power to determine (or silence) the national conversation. Importantly capitalist hegemonic ideology as represented in the DA’s *post-race* rhetoric is deliberately deployed so as to stabilise the production of meaning in society and thereby cultivate a naturalised status quo in favour of the capitalist class. Within our South African milieu the beneficiaries and owners of the means of production, manage the proletariat, via oppression; and in so doing proletarian dissent (both psychological and physical) is silenced.

Inexorably at the core of the capitalist mode of production, and the cog which turns the wheel of continued working class and poor marginalisation, is monetary profit. More specifically it is the surplus value that accrues from the labour of the working class which underpins the real and material relationship between people, that is, exploitation and alienation; accepted as natural by those within the psychostructural and ideological boundaries of a capitalist society.

### **The SACP’s revolutionary imperative in the battle of ideas**

A Marxist critique of the DA’s line is therefore a revolutionary and communist imperative. Marxist analysis implores us as communists, who are committed to genuine and meaningful transformation, to question the normative and accepted socioeconomic hierarchy. Moreover we are aware that once this false consciousness is deconstruct-

ed, the holding pattern which suspends the poor and marginalised will be ended. Only then will the historically marginalised masses truly enjoy the real possibility of a new form of social structure where there is no stratification and humanist values are the currency we deal in – not profit.

Thus the agenda for South African communists is clear – the development and consolidation of radical discourses which deconstruct the existing order and raise true class consciousness. In the Party’s *South African Road to Socialism* the “Battle of ideas” has been highlighted as an essential domain of the class struggle in South Africa. In this context the *post-race* discourse can be seen as a further philosophical mutation of liberal anti-majoritarianism; specifically because it is underlined by the liberal position that individual agency has “broken free” from the structural axis of class and race in late modernity. Marx would more poignantly posit that our national democratic revolution (NDR) should continue to mobilise the historically marginalised and dispossessed as a class-in-itself to become a class-for-itself. The DA’s *post-race* political narrative skirts over existing racialised inequality and elides class stratification. Their archetypally liberal fixation on a “race-free” future fails to pause and grasp the very racialised structural inequalities embedded in South African dialectics. In this line of reasoning the DA argues for an “equal opportunity society” in which race is discarded as a means of assessing transformation. However what such demagoguery fails to conceptualise at a pragmatic level is that, given our history of racial capitalism, race is the most appropriate measure of evaluating mean-

ingful measures to address marginalisation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Communists should continue to frame their radical discourses with a narrative that advocates the dissolution of psychosocial and politico-economic structures as we know them. In true Marxist tradition this should be encouraged by all communists in all the Party's units, branches, and districts. Communist political schooling, writing, and activism as directed by the vanguard should therefore form the foundation of radical engagement with the racialised and class-based inequali-

ties to which historically marginalised, working class, and dispossessed South Africans are subjected. We should not be avoiding the intersections of race, class, and identity, but tackling them directly in the spirit of the NDR.

***Cde Martin** is a SACP and YCL member of the Jack Simons Branch in the Western Cape*

**(Endnotes)**

1 Quoted from the DA website, [www.da.org.za](http://www.da.org.za).

## THE STATE OF THE STATE

# The capitalist nature of the post-1994 South African state

This response to Jeremy Cronin's *Open Letter to Irvin Jim* was prepared by **David Masondo** for presentation to the Marxist Study Circle in Polokwane

Since 2005 there have been lively and intense discussions within the SACP on the post-1994 state, which were sometimes narrowly framed as a mere question of the relationship between the SACP and the state. At the heart of these discussions is whether the South African state is capitalist or not, and what to do about it. The open letter from SACP Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Cronin letter to National Union of Metalworkers' of South Africa (Numsa) General Secretary Irvin Jim<sup>1</sup> has re-ignited this debate, unfortunately in a manner that sheds less light on the debate, but adds more superficial labels to the South African political lexicon. Be that as it may, Cronin correctly re-affirms the principle of open and robust discussions in analysing concrete reality and how to change it. I would add that we should do so without reducing the discussions into petty labelling and counter-labelling, which sometimes obscures what is really at stake in the debate. It is in this spirit that I join this debate.

This article is organised around three questions. The first is whether the South African state is capitalist or not. Here I do not address its colonial character.

The second is whether the state can undertake reforms that are against specific capitalists, and under what conditions can it do that. The third is whether the entry of the SACP leaders into the state has had any significant impact in changing the post-2009 state's neo-liberal economic policies.

In this paper, I argue that the South African state is inherently capitalist, notwithstanding the fact that it is contested and relatively autonomous. That is to say the state in a capitalist society is bound to reproduce capitalism as a mode of production regardless of who is in it; therefore it is inherently capitalist in that sense. The state form and the extent to which it can undertake reforms that are favourable to the working class depend on its limited degree of freedom from capitalists. Here the state can undertake progressive reforms that are in the interest of the working class and against the will of capitalists, albeit without transcending the capitalist system. The paper will show the conditions under which the capitalist state can be relatively autonomous, and how it should be contested to increase its relative autonomy from capitalist classes within the limits of capitalism. Further-

more, the paper will also show how the state since 2009 has continued with neo-liberalism despite the entry into it of many senior SACP leaders. Here we argue that the entry of the SACP leadership into the state has not increased the relative autonomy of the state from capital, partly because of our SACP's tactical choices, which include abandoning mass struggles from below in engaging with the capitalist state.

### **Cronin's erroneous understanding of the South African state**

Cronin seems to suggest that the South African state is not inherently capitalist because the state political leadership and top bureaucrats are from the Left liberation movement composed of working class organisations committed to socialism, including through the immediate implementation of free education and national health insurance. Therefore, characterising the South African state as inherently capitalist is to suggest that the political and administrative leadership of the state is capitalist and cannot undertake reforms that would militate against certain capitalists, Cronin would argue.

Cronin further argues that because the South African state is contested, it is not inherently capitalist. Therefore in Cronin's conception of the state, there is nothing inherently capitalist about the state, but its class character depends on who wins the contest within the state. The state's class character depends on who is in it. Currently the bourgeoisie has won the state contest; hence the South African state has been hegemonised by the bourgeoisie, but it is not inherently capitalist, Cronin would argue. Ostensibly, mechanisms by which the bourgeoisie has hegemonised the

state include, but are not reducible to, capitalist lobbying including in elitist golf-clubs; the presence of bourgeoisie-oriented political leaders and senior bureaucrats; the institutional configuration of the state, which includes centralised power in the presidency, particularly during the Mbeki administration era; and the dominance of National Treasury over socio-economic policy issues, Cronin would point out. All these make the state susceptible to the bourgeoisie's dominance and influence, Cronin would further argue.

Implicit in Cronin's limited understanding of the state is the political practice that the Left should simply remove capitalist-oriented politicians and bureaucrats and replace them with those with a working class orientation and change the institutional configuration of the state (super-state ministers responsible for cluster ministries) and hope that once that is done, they can simply foist the working class's agenda on society. In other words, the political task here would simply be to put in place the right politicians and bureaucrats and state institutional reforms without changing the underlying class relations. In Cronin's misleading and empiricist understanding of the state, it only becomes capitalist when capitalists directly capture the state or use their corrupt means and lobbying to influence the state.

No one doubts that capitalists use lobbying and supporting bourgeoisie-oriented politicians and bureaucrats, and business-friendly state institutional forms as mechanisms to secure their interests in the state and society. I would add though that capitalist political party funding is one of the obvious mechanisms to secure capitalist influence in the state, but it does not seem to

be dominant in the South African context. However, the factional battles in the ANC-led alliance seem to be largely funded by capitalist to enable capitalists of different sizes to capture the ANC, which in turn enables dominant factions to instrumentally capture the state for its economic interests using legal and illegal (including corrupt) means.

Furthermore, no one denies the importance of the progressive state's institutional reforms, including passing legislation on disclosure of party political funding and stemming corruption. The point however is that even in the absence of these overt mechanisms the state will remain capitalist as long as it operates within capitalism in which the means of production are in the hands of capitalists. To think that the transformation of the capitalist state's institutional forms without transforming capitalism is possible is not only reformist, but also idealist at best.

Cronin's failure to see the inherent capitalist nature of the state lies in his inability to recognise the inherent connection between the structural power of capitalists rooted in their ownership of the means of production and the state's ability to generate its own revenue necessary for carrying out its functions, including reproducing capital and the working class. The capitalists' private ownership of economic resources gives them power to determine where and when to invest their capital, which in turn determines the state's ability to generate its own revenue and employment. In other words, what is glaringly absent from Cronin's argument is his failure to acknowledge the underlying and less obvious structural mechanisms that make the state capitalist – which is that the state's dependence on capital-

ist investment, without which the state cannot perform its functions of reproducing not only the working class and capital, but also the state itself. In fact, the ability of capitalists to lobby, bribe and fund politicians and political parties is also enabled by their private ownership of the economic resources.

### **The South African state as inherently capitalist**

A capitalist state is not capitalist because of the bias of the state's elite – politicians and senior bureaucrats are capitalists by way of owning the means of production. Nor is it capitalist just because capitalists use obvious mechanisms such as bribes, lobbying and the “presidential centre” to influence the state, as Cronin seems to suggest.

States under capitalism are inherently capitalist because they depend on the decisions of capitalists to generate revenue to undertake their functions ranging from repression to providing material economic concessions such as social welfare to the working class, building economic infrastructure and laying out and administering the legal framework within which capitalists accumulate and compete. Free education and national health insurance also depend on the rate of capital accumulation without which the state cannot generate revenue to finance these. Therefore states are forced to set an environment conducive to capitalist investment. So, capitalists do not need to be in control of the state itself or lobby to make the state capitalist. They only need to own the economic resources that enable them to force the state to set an environment conducive to capital accumulation, which additionally enables the state to increase the growth of its tax revenue base. If the state elite

presides over a declining economy characterised by unemployment and low state revenue to finance social services, it will lose the confidence of the electorate, thus running the risk of losing electoral support. So, it is in the material interest of the state elites for capitalists to invest.

Capitalists make certain considerations before they invest, which include state policies, potential realisation of profits based on the size of the domestic market and the extent to which the working class is under control. This is also usually referred to as investor confidence. In the context of the massive workers strikes, which also includes what Numsa and Pallo Jordan have characterised as the “first post-democracy state massacre”<sup>2</sup> at Marikana, and the policy debate on nationalisation of the mines and land, the investor agencies began to underrate the South African economy. The state elite reassured global and national capital that their interests are still protected despite the debate on nationalisation and popular protests<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, when there are mass popular protests, both the state elites and the bourgeoisie tend to worry about the prospects of further investment in the economy, hence they are quick to quell the mass struggles from below, including through tactics such as the Marikana state massacre. To say this is not to ignore the alleged reactionary violence committed by non-NUM (National Union of Mineworkers) members, but it is to show the underlying structural conditions that generate antagonism between workers and the bourgeoisie, and the inherent state bias in favour of capitalists. To continually compare the state's violence against workers and the reactionary violence of some against other

workers, as Cronin does, is to continue to pit workers against each other, and is a failure to reveal the capitalist character of the state, and what is to be done about it.

### **The capitalist state and progressive reforms**

If the state is capitalist, how do we explain certain state policies and reforms that benefit the working class? Specific state action and policy outcomes are not inscribed in the structure of capitalism itself. Capitalist power, rooted in the private ownership of the means of production, does not inherently lead to pre-ordained specific outcomes. It is possible to have progressive policy state actions and reforms even within the limits of capitalism. But they do not fall from heaven or from the benevolence of capitalists, or capitalists with a “social conscience” as Cronin would sometimes want us to believe. Instead they are a product of class struggle, which increases the relative autonomy of the state. Class struggles from below have forced states to undertake welfare and redistributive policies, which have improved the socio-economic conditions of the working class. When the tempo of class struggle from below decreases, there is a tendency for the reversal of progressive state reforms.

The presence of communists in the state accompanied by working class struggles from below have the potential to increase the state's relative autonomy. The communist presence has the potential to ward off neo-liberalism and the capitalists' instrumentalist state capture for their own narrow economic interests through legal and illegal (including corrupt) means. Note that this is different from the proletarian take over

and transformation of the state because once this happens, the state ceases to be capitalist in that the proletariat would start dispossessing the capitalists of the means of production, thus reconstructing society along socialist lines.

The fact that the state is contestable and being contested should be self-evident. To say that the state is capitalist is not to say it is not contestable. It is often argued by Cronin that those who characterise the state as capitalist fail to “recognise the contested nature of the state”. This is far from the truth. This is just a straw man that Cronin draws on to justify his erroneous conception of the state. Therefore, Jim is correct to say that the state can be engaged and there is nothing inherently wrong with communist participation in a capitalist state. There is something wrong though to think that the state can be socialist under capitalism. The contestability of the state and the communist presence does not mean the state is not capitalist. Contrary to Cronin’s attempts to seek to project Numsa as theoretically and ideologically confused, there is no contradiction in saying that the state is capitalist, while arguing for communist participation in it. The question is how to contest it, and how to strike a balance between extra-parliamentary and intra-state struggles.

In fact, the question of communist participation in a capitalist state has been one of the perennial questions in the working class movement. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into this. Suffice to say the questions on how to contest the capitalist state have been around whether the struggle for socialism should be advanced within the existing politically democratic institutions or outside them, or both. The

reasons for participation have ranged from spreading socialist propaganda, including using the elections campaigns to raise and gauge the working class’ political consciousness, to using the democratic institutions to bring about socialism. The debates also involved questions on whether communists should be part of government executives. The results of communists’ participation in various capitalist states had contradictory results. In certain instances it led to progressive reforms in the interest of the working class. And in other instances it led to demobilisation and pacification of the workers and the bourgeoisification of communist leaders who tend to become spokespersons of the bourgeoisie and capitalist states at the expense of the working class.

Let us now turn to how our SACP has been contesting the state in the pre- and post-Polokwane periods.

### **Pre- and post-Polokwane and the SACP’s engagement with the state**

The capitalist economic power manifested itself in the post-1994 state in the continuation of the neo-liberal economic policy, initiated by the apartheid regime in the mid- to late 1980s. In 1996 business expressed its low levels of confidence in the South African government through low levels of investment and currency depreciation. In response to this the state adopted the Gear<sup>4</sup> policy, which was uncritically welcomed by the then SACP leadership as “path-breaking macro-economic strategy ... resisting free market dogmatism” and as the strategy, which “situates itself as a framework for the RDP” and “envisages a key economic role for the public sector, including in productive investment”<sup>5</sup>. After intense ideological battles

in the Party on Gear, the Party officially rejected the policy. Between 1998 and 2009, the SACP together with Cosatu fought the neo-liberalist policy through mass struggles from below.

Both Numsa and the SACP have rightly celebrated the ascendancy of the Left into state office since 2009, which provides the potential for increasing the relative autonomy of the state, thus enabling communists to undertake radical reforms. But has this potential been realised, has the Left successfully challenged neo-liberalism in the state? The answer is no. Of course, no-one expected neo-liberalism to disappear by the mere presence of communists in the state. This is a function of on-going struggles within and outside the state. Equally, it is incorrect for Cronin to argue that the New Growth Path signifies a shift from neo-liberal macro-economic policy.

Cronin's attempts to convince us that there is a shift in neo-liberal economic policy are clearly detailed in his paper titled *Let's consolidate support for a New Growth Path*<sup>6</sup>. To justify this imaginary shift from neo-liberalism, he suggests that the terms of the economic policy debate in the last 16 years have mainly been on whether South African economic strategy should exclusively focus on economic redistribution or also include discussion of a change of our colonial industrial structure. In Cronin's view, "the paradigm shift" in the NGP lies in its recognition of the need to transform the semi-colonial growth path. That is to say, what is new in the NGP is the goal of transforming our industrial structure in terms of diversification and job-absorption.

Contrary to Cronin's wrong framing of the debates on economic policy, in the last 16 years, the terms of the de-

bate over macro-economic policy within the ANC-Alliance were not about the need to change the South African semi-colonial growth path and its associated industrial structure. After all, the Gear policy recognised the need to diversify our economy. It called for the growth of non-minerals exports, as well as new industrial and infrastructural development as a necessary (even if insufficient) condition for economic redistribution and employment creation. But, in fact, and contrary to Cronin's claims, the bone of contention has been largely on the appropriate macro-economic policy instruments and forms of ownership appropriate to transform our semi-colonial growth path.

It is in the macro-economic policy instruments and their underlying analytical assumptions that Gear and the NGP share significant similarities. To argue against the macro-economic policy framework entailed in the NGP is not to oppose some of the micro-economic interventions such as investment in working class infrastructure, small farmer extension services and mineral beneficiation. But let's be aware here that these interventions will most likely be sacrificed on the altar of narrow inflation targeting imposed by neo-liberal macro-economic policy. Put differently, this macro-economic framework will undermine some of the non-objectionable micro-economic interventions. The danger of magnifying these micro-economic interventions, as Cronin's intervention does, is that we will miss the inappropriate macro-economic neo-liberal paradigm at play. To cut a long story short: the paradigm shift in the NGP is more in Cronin's imagination than real, and goes against many of the pre-Polokwane SACP economic resolutions, thus

putting into question the material difference between the pre-Polokwane and post-2009 government administrations' economic policies.

The pre-Polokwane SACP's strategic response to Gear has been that lack of growth *per se* is not the major problem, but rather the concentration of economic power in the hands of white monopoly capitalists, recently joined by an economically insignificant black capitalist class, which it uses to reproduce the colonial features of the economy. To shift this economic power, a developmental state (which is still capitalist) has to be built, which amongst other things, should deploy its capacity to discipline and force capital to invest in the productive economy, and thereby to transcend our industrial structure.

The SACP also argued that this should include state ownership and control of the strategic economic resources such as mining. It is in this context that the 2007 SACP Congress resolution called for the re-nationalisation of Sasol and ArcelorMittal steel. This call was borne out of the recognition that the private sector on its own cannot drive the process of industrial transformation. It is driven not by the "social conscience" Mr Bobby Godsell, former CEO of AngloGold, as Cronin implies, but by profit. Jobs, income distribution and diversification are not the aim of capital. They are an unintended consequence. Investment is not a goodwill act of capitalists with a "social conscience". Therefore a revolutionary state, which owns the nationalised property and rooted amongst the popular forces, should use its economic power to foster the process of industrialisation. It is a well known fact that the less the democratic movement's ownership and control of the economy,

the less it will be able to determine the patterns of investment towards changing the industrial colonial structure.

Note that this is radically different from the Gear and NGP policies, which argued that the problem is a lack of competition that requires more actors in the market to unbundle monopolies that block "perfect" competition. Embedded in our SACP resolution is the argument that in its search for profits, capitalist competition itself generates inefficiencies and misallocation of resources, which do not only lead to centralisation and concentration of economic power, but also plunge us into the periodic crises that Cronin refers to. In other words, it is competition that generates crises, not the lack of it. Therefore, Cronin's celebration of the defeat of strategic nationalisation is a celebration of the defeat of the 2007 SACP congress' economic resolutions, thus protecting capitalist, neo-colonial and imperialist ownership and control of the South African economy.

Whatever the well-meaning intentions of Cronin's defence of the NGP (even when not constrained by state and ANC parliamentary disciplinary protocols), he objectively provides ideological legitimisation and rationalisation of the overwhelmingly neo-liberal residuals in the post-2009 state macro-economic policy as well as defending neo-colonialism and imperialism in South Africa. Consequently Cronin weakens the Left within and outside the state.

#### **Political democracy: a socialist means and end**

It is incorrect for Numsa to uncritically use Lenin's phrase that "bourgeois democracy is nothing but the best political shell behind which the bourgeoisie hides

its dictatorship”<sup>7</sup>. Quoted in this fashion and without also showing Lenin’s critical celebration of political democracy under capitalism might generate an impression that political democracy is less important.

While we should be critical of political democracy under capitalism, we should also bear in mind that the struggle for political democracy, including universal suffrage, is a product of working class struggle. The bourgeoisie did not want universal suffrage. It supported qualified democracy in that only those with a certain amount of property and level of education could vote.

The bourgeoisie’s opposition to democracy is based on the fear that the working class will use political democracy to deal with social inequalities rooted in differential access to productive assets. The bourgeoisie’s opposition to democracy is based on the real fear that the working class would extend political democracy to other spheres of social life, particularly the economic sphere. It is beyond the scope of this article to venture into why the working class worldwide has not been successful in using political democracy to attain socialism. The point, however, is that Marxists cannot simply dismiss political democracy under capitalism as bourgeoisie. The conditions of political democracy enable the working class not only to wage their struggles from below to increase the state’s relative autonomy, but also extend democracy to the economic sphere. Political democracy enables the poor to strike and speak out against capitalists and bourgeoisie state elites.

It is actually this democracy that

enables us to conduct self-criticism as the Left, but also of the democratically elected representatives in our democratic government, including communists. Therefore the struggle for political democracy cannot be separated from the struggle for socialism. Without political democracy robust discussions will be absent in our own organisations and also within the capitalist state.

*Cde Masondo is a former Young Communist League Chairperson, SACP Central Committee and Politburo member. He is the MEC for Finance in Limpopo*

#### **(Endnotes)**

- 1 Cronin, J Open Letter to cde Irvin Jim in Umsebenzi online, Volume 12, No. 10, 14 March 2013
- 2 Jordan, P Bisho Martyrs Commemoration Lecture, 6 September 2012.
- 3 See “Beyond Marikana: the crisis – Massacre shows how fragile SA is”, City Press, 15 September 2012’, Bissek, C, “Impact of Marikana massacre on investment: Rob Davies on Marikana massacre”, Financial Mail, 18 September 2012 and Ensor, L “Davies to reassure investors in the wake of Marikana”, Business Day, 3 September 2012
- 4 Gear: the five-year macro-economic policy titled Growth, Employment and Redistribution introduced in 1996.
- 5 From the SACP media statement on “Growth, Employment and Redistribution Macro-economic policy”, 14 June 1996
- 6 Umsebenzi-online **Volume 10, No. 2, 19 January 2011**
- 7 Numsa Central Committee Press Statement, 2 September 2012

## YCLSA DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

# The SACP, the working class and state power

This is an edited version of a discussion paper, extracted from the Political Report tabled at the seventh plenary of the Young Communist League of South Africa's third National Committee

Recently, there have been discussions relating to the role of the South African state, its nature and character, and how the South African Communist Party (SACP) should relate to it in the context of a National Democratic Revolution (NDR) by way of advancing towards socialism.

There are various approaches to State Theory in general, and the characterisation of our state.

The adoption of the National Development Plan (NDP) by the African National Congress (ANC) in its 53<sup>rd</sup> National Conference held in Mangaung, December 2012, has also sparked some debates in our society (a separate document on this issue will be released in the build-up to the National Council of the YCLSA to be held in June 2013) in relation to what set of immediate, medium- and long-term interventions should be applied to deal with the challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality and to build a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society.

We move from the premise that the NDR, which is the shortest route towards socialism in the specific conditions of South Africa, remains relevant

and requires the unity of all motive forces under the leadership of the Alliance. The capture of certain levers of the state by the revolutionary liberation movement, led by the ANC with the working class as the main motive force in class terms, presented an opportunity to advance the ideals and build a society as expressed by our theory of a NDR.

This paper is in part an intervention in the debates on the state and transformation. In part it is also a contribution to the on-going debates within the SACP on the state and state power. The exchange between the SACP Deputy General Secretary and the General Secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa's (Numsa), despite visible weaknesses, plays an important role in reinvigorating this debate in the public arena. But most importantly, are previous and on-going discussions within the SACP inclusive of the YCLSA, which took the debate further at its third congress' seventh plenary session, from 19-21 April 2013.

### **Background**

In the build-up to the 1<sup>st</sup> Party Special Congress in Durban in 2005, there was an intense debate about the role of the

SACP and the electoral contest, particularly whether the SACP should contest elections in its own right. This debate was framed at the time as such, but it was more about the relationship of the SACP to the state and state power. The debate was postponed to the 12<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in Port Elizabeth, 2007. That congress, held before the ANC's Polokwane Conference, resolved that the "Party will contest elections as part of a reconfigured alliance", and that the Central Committee would set up a commission to look into this question and report at a National Policy Conference a year later, in 2008.

Indeed in 2008 the matter was dealt with in a National Policy Conference held in Randburg, Gauteng. This was followed by a 2<sup>nd</sup> Special National Congress which the Party held in Polokwane, 2009, where the matter was further discussed. The issue was raised again in some of the commissions at the 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in in KwaZulu-Natal in 2012. A lengthy plenary discussion at the 13<sup>th</sup> congress concluded that the Party reaffirmed its resolutions from the 12<sup>th</sup> congress, the 2008 National Policy Conference and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Special National Congress.

Since 2005, there have been developments in relation to the context in which the Party was to contest for elections. Firstly, relations in the Alliance, although not at their best, have improved. The anti-communist faction in the ANC, together with those who shared this ideological line but supported Comrade Zuma for political expedience, were finally defeated in Mangaung – at least at a national level. Secondly, the Party is as much a part of certain apparatuses of the state with all but two office bearers being part of the legislative and administra-

tive branches of the state at the national level. Thirdly, there are more members of the SACP in legislative, executive and administrative branches of the state at the lower spheres. There are significant numbers of SACP cadres serving in ANC structures (as well as in Cosatu's). The SACP is as much part of the state apparatuses as the ANC is (although only as a party of governance in alliance with the ANC and not necessarily as a governing party, which the ANC is).

The key question we are interested in at the moment, given this background, is what is the relationship between the SACP, the state and state power, and therefore, the working class, the state and state power, mindful of our use of the phrases "state power" and "state apparatus" as separate phrases and for discussion later?

### **Infusing daily struggles with socialist objectives**

What kind of society do we seek to achieve? Our guiding slogan as the YCLSA is *Socialism in our lifetime*, while the SACP's injunction is *Socialism is the future: build it now*.

It is important that we restate some of the obvious, but sometimes easily forgotten, aims and objectives of the SACP, our mother body, so we are able to inform our slogan Socialism in our lifetime. Cde Chris Hani said: "Socialism is not about **big concepts** and **heavy theory**. Socialism is about **decent shelter** for those who are homeless. It is about **water** for those who have no safe drinking water. It is about **health care**, it is about **a life of dignity** for the old. It is about **overcoming the huge divide** between urban and rural areas. It is about a decent education for all our people. Socialism is about rolling back the tyranny of

the market. As long as the economy is dominated by an unelected, privileged few, the case for socialism will exist.”

The SACP, and the working class, can only achieve all of these through smashing the capitalist state and creating a working class state and apparatuses that will guarantee these basic needs. However, this does not mean that the working class should await the proverbial fall of capitalist walls, or should merely struggle for the ultimate goals, which is the smashing of the capitalist state, without advocating revolutionary reforms and implementing immediate transformations of the colonial and apartheid state apparatuses.

Marx and Engels, 1848, correctly remarked in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, that “the communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present they also represent and take care of the future of that movement”.

The NDR and the Freedom Charter, which captures the basic aims of the NDR, represent, for the SACP, what Marx and Engels refer to as the “the immediate aims” and the “momentary interests” of the working class. Socialism, which is a transitional path towards a classless, communist society, represents together with communism what they refer to as the “the future”.

In the immediate, the NDR and our struggle for socialism are about using the space opened by the democratic dispensation to demand revolutionary reforms in education, health, water, housing and dignity for all our people, and linked with all these, a fight against the economic exploitation of labour by capital. This process of struggle is also about

ensuring that these are quality public goods provided for by the democratic state and not for private accumulation. It is also about challenging the logic of apartheid capital, exposing the continued “urban and rural divide” and laying bare the consequences of “the tyranny of the markets”.

The working class, with the Party in leadership, should be advocating an alternative and prosperous society that completely breaks away from the remnants of a colonial and apartheid society and state. It should use that space opened up by the democratic dispensation, and the captured levers of state power, to contest the hegemony of capitalism in all sites. This can only be attained through struggle. And thus the declaration of the Party programme: *Aluta Continua!* (the struggle continues).

### **Dynamic dialectics, not dogma**

The Party Programme, *The South African Road to Socialism*, identifies various key sites of struggle in our society to build working class hegemony and contest for power. This is not merely a Gramscian approach to wrestle for power in society, but also intended to build working class unity and contest the hegemony of capitalism in these sites of power.

The affirmation of the NDR – the building of a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society and the liberation of black people in general and Africans in particular from political and economic bondage – represents ideological consistency in the Party’s theory of the road to socialism in South Africa. Since the Party is only actively participating in those component parts of state, which are the legislative and executive apparatuses, and given that it is not entirely in control of these appa-

ratures but is part of those who are governing through its cadres in the context of ANC leadership of the NDR, it is important to distinguish between a Party in particular levers of state power and a Party that is as such participating in particular apparatuses of the state.

In the Numsa General Secretary's response to the 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy General Secretary of the SACP, there seems to be a confusion between what the state is (1), what are state apparatuses (2), who is the ruling class (3), what is the class character of our society and therefore, what is the nature of the South African state (4) and, how should the "working class (not the Party)" approach issues of state transformation and building blocks for socialism (5).

This confusion mainly lies in treating Marxism as static, as a dogma, in the form that appears no different from internet accessed quotations instead of a deeper immersion in its inner essence as a living theory and guide to action over a materially changing world. Worst of all, the confusion arises out of treating Marxism as if it were a religion. And, associated with this, proceeding from religious denominational leanings and activities if not sectarianism, rhetoric and derogatory labelling (and containing somewhat racial undertones) as a platform and approach to Marxism.

On the contrary, (our) Marxism, and in our case (our) Marxism-Leninism in the context of its further development and in its essence, (concrete analysis of concrete conditions) must be appreciated in its *evolutionary and dynamic nature* as well as its outlook of society in terms of *dialectical and historical materialism*.

There are scientific conclusions and theories on the state that Marx arrived

at mainly on the basis of his analysis of the Paris Commune, which did not last long, and have lessons for the working class the world over. But these have over the years been redeveloped in Marxism-Leninism as captured by Lenin. Without being revisionists, the Party adopted its programme for socialism on the basis of its analysis of the concrete conditions prevailing in South Africa and the surrounding universal situation.

Instead of copying a theory that is developed in France based on French peculiarities at a given point in time in the past and pasting its application elsewhere, while forgetting that the conditions in which that theory is developed are left behind or forgetting those conditions in France (an approach Marx condemned) we believe our approach, in line with Marx and Marxism-Leninism in South Africa, is succinctly summed up by Moses Kotane in his famous Cradock letter of 23 February 1934. In short, our approach to Marxism-Leninism is rooted in the specific history and conditions of South Africa in its relationship to the world context.

The intervention by Numsa General Secretary fell short of calling for the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and that its abandonment (arguably) by the SACP is a sign of "abandoning the working class" (a very archaic approach, we would say).

The current socialist states, as Michael Lebowitz noted (e.g. Venezuela), are constantly criticised for not being "socialist enough" based on the fact that they do not follow the Soviet Union model of socialism. But even Marx, Engels and Lenin, warned against the tendency of wanting to adapt every word that they wrote into practice even in conditions where their observations and

conclusions may not fit at a given point in time. They referred to this as dogmatism.

Let us take each point in turn, with the hope of developing clarity on what needs to be done. We have no interest in childish tendencies or hurling insults, so we put those aside. The same applies to a factional *modus operandi* which has made visible attempts to project this or that leader as a victim and then affixing itself to that victim so as to claim victim status too, while declaring a defence against this fictitious victimisation among others partly by way of seeking to generate sympathy from the naïve.

### **The multi-class character of the state**

The state is a “system of apparatuses... is a type of formal organisation. It is distinguished by its specific functions: coercive defence (army, police etc.), political governance (by supreme rule-making), administrative management (by rule-application), and judicial regulation of a given social formation”, writes Goran Therbon in *What does the Ruling Class do When it Rules*. His position aligns with Engels in the *Origins of the family, private property and the state* and Lenin in *The state and revolution*.

To see the state as a solid unit in the South African context, whose entire machinery is rooted in **advancing the interests of only of the capitalist class** is being ideologically static. Of course, each contending class force in society seeks to dominate society through economic, social and political force. And thus, until such time each of these contending class forces has subordinated society into its power, the struggle degenerates into two contending contemporary class forces: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

The colonial and apartheid capitalist

state used all its apparatuses to defend the interests of the minority by advancing national oppression, gender domination and the super-exploitation of the entire society in economic, social and political participation. This character of the apartheid state was challenged post-1994 with a majority ascending in rule-making and rule-application. This contest and contradiction within the state represented a challenge to the hegemony of the ruling “apartheid capitalist” class and an opportunity for transition in other levers of the state.

Through wrestling against the agents of apartheid and in building a new society in the territory of the old, much has been done to move forward towards a national, democratic and prosperous society relative to colonialism and apartheid. This is important and requires unity of the working class and the poor, but also a change in the social and material conditions of the agents of change, for the struggle not to be won in favour of apartheid forces.

It is not only the voices of those elected to **rule-making** (the legislature) or those appointed to **rule application** (the executive) which will bring about change, but the collective voice and unity of the working class as the main motive forces of the NDR. The fundamental failure of black economic empowerment in altering the logic of capital lies in the fact that the agents of change were building within the logic the old (which in part was as a result of submission to neoliberalism and in part as a result of the 1994 breakthrough in its characteristic features as a compromise). The same applies, for instance, in the failure to build co-operatives as a means to get the unemployed and the poor to actively participate in the economy due to the

historical foundation and logic of accumulation by the previous apartheid regime, and the attempt to build this new form of economic foundations within that logic.

Let us return once more to Therbon, who writes: “the state is the **concentrated expression of a highly complex set of class relations**, which are refracted in a wide range of disjuncture of varying profundity between the different apparatuses. Within limits imposed by the general nature of the state, it is especially probable that the class character of its diverse apparatuses will vary with the link between the tasks of the apparatuses and the concern of classes rooted in the mode of production”. This is a further elaboration of the non-unitary nature of the distribution of state power and a call to strengthen the concerns of classes rooted in the mode of production in relation with the respective tasks of the apparatuses of the state. We would not have had, for instance, Khutsong remaining in Gauteng, or the workers in De Doorns getting more than double increase in their wages – or many other interventions by the state – had it not been of the “concern of classes rooted in (the) mode of production”.

This is exactly what the SACP programme instructs us to do, ensure the unity of the working class in confrontation and struggle with the various apparatuses of the state in order to complete the wrestle for state power and create the building blocks for socialism. We also have to concede that not all the state actors, irrespective of their race, have appreciated the urgent need for change since this has to do with them foregoing the benefits they derived from the old institution.

Also, to assume that the ANC-led Alliance is a class-unitary movement will be to short circuit the struggle for a national democratic society and for socialism. It is also important to make a distinction between the state and the government, which are often wrongly interchangeably used, on the one hand, and the Party and the working class on other. We must not use the terms interchangeably as is the tendency by some comrades in our movement when engaging on the relationship between the SACP and state power.

### **The democratic developmental state**

We have already dealt with the definition of both the state and state apparatuses. But it may be important to restate some theoretical issues to ensure that we are all on board. The ANC-led Alliance (at least the SACP, which was defined in the ANC’s Organisational Report in Mangaung as a reliable ally) has the majority in rule-making, which is parliament, and has used this platform to ensure that the main apartheid laws are changed in order to facilitate the transformation of the state and the creation of a society that the NDR seeks to achieve. This is a part of our programme to smash the old state, at least for those who bother to appreciate what it means to smash it.

By attacking the doctrine and structures (having ascended to rule-making levers through the 1994 breakthrough, we immediately started changing the structures and composition of parliament and government and we are registering progress with regard to the judiciary) of the old state (the state in South Africa is by far older than the democratic government) we are partly both trans-

forming that state, smashing it, building in its stead a new state, what the SACP in its 1962 The South African Road to Freedom programme called “the state of national democracy”, which we have since declared must become developmental on a non-racial and non-sexist basis. Thus by the new state we are referring to a **democratic developmental state** as a transitional state that we are building between, on the one hand, the end of apartheid colonialism and, by the time of the logical completion of the NDR, a **socialist state** on the other.

Through the majority in parliament, theoretically, the ANC can exercise control over the executive (administration), the judiciary (by way of a new legal doctrine) and the army and therefore create a new society. But this has been less than true in practice, particularly if it is to be assumed to be completely the case in isolation from the power of a hostile ruling class, and thus to presuppose that this is far from class struggle and therefore a class balance of forces, and that the state is a unitary capitalist state on the basis of defeats suffered at whatever level, be it policy development or application, would result in throwing the baby out with the bath water.

There is more confusion, self-contradiction and absolute dogmatic misunderstanding of Marxism-Leninism, along the lines of a tendency identified by Lenin as an infantile disorder. The South African state is condemned as nothing else but a capitalist class state (ie machine) exercising no other purpose than brutalising the working class. The very state, without any class alteration, without any alteration of its class foundations whatsoever, is then called upon to wield itself and serve the working class.

The confusion is much more than that. One cadre is condemned for serving in the state (for example, Blade Nzimande or Jeremy Cronin) because he or she comes from the leadership ranks of the Communist Party while another (say Zanoxolo Wayile) is being defended for serving in the state and protected against removal from a leading position of “managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeois”, if the dogmatism was to be turned head-on against its own logic. To use the argument that the former are criminalised for participating in the state due to constitutional iterations and the latter not, is infantile and weighs against the argument that this has weakened the Party and its capacity to wage a class struggle. Inasmuch as the latter is expected to advance the class struggle in institutions of the state, we will expect the same from former at the levels in which they serve. To also blame some of the policies which were adopted by government on, say, Jeremy Cronin, is completely illogical and fatally factional.

Lebowitz emphasises that the working class must in the first place wrestle state power from the capitalist class if it is to ensure the development of society towards socialism. This is in line with Marx and Engels, 1848, in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. They point out that the working class must win the battle of democracy. This is both a condition of building a working class state; that is the working class organised as the state, and of raising the working class to the position as the ruling class.

To win there must be contest. And the contest, as the struggle, in line with Lenin, and Joe Slovo’s seminal intervention the *South African Working class and the NDR*, will go nowhere if it were to

take place or be limited as a single battle in a single front, i.e. it has to be fought in all fronts, the state included.

The fact that we are still struggling to legitimise some of the progressive pieces of legislation (and also revolutionary positions relative to colonialism and apartheid) in front of the judiciary, or we had to rely on the judiciary to force the government (under 1996 class project) to provide anti-retroviral drugs, is of significance in the debate on the non-unitary, capitalist nature of the state.

Some of the struggles waged by the working class and the poor would have to be waged even under a state in transition to socialism. The South African capitalist class and imperialist capital operating in South Africa (or having interests in or are eyeing South Africa) understand that it has to wage struggles against trade unions, the Communist Party and even the government for them to realise their private capital accumulation interests. What is important is how we strengthen struggles against the capitalist class in production relations and challenge the “varying tasks of the state apparatuses” to enforce working class change rather than be an oppositionist tendency that elevates the ANC-led government as the primary class enemy. After all, it was Cde Hani who said that the “struggle continues, whether one is a key minister or not”, and thus we should not be complaining.

### **Identifying the ruling class**

What the South African ruling class has succeeded in doing is to convince the working class and the poor that the ANC or the government that it leads, by appearance (parliament, executive, judiciary and the army), is the ruling class

and therefore whatever their fortunes or miseries, the ANC as the governing party is to blame. By extension the Communist Party is also to blame (this explains sectarian attacks against the Party and factional opposition against its leadership serving in government, as its role as a Party of governance develops).

Such a misleading interpretation lies in a liberal notion that a party in the leadership of government as a result of winning elections is a ruling party – then confusing this with a ruling class, while concealing the fact that there is a distinct ruling class. The truth is, in South Africa, an unelected ruling class which retains a strategic advantage owing to its economic power, is hostile to the Alliance as led by the ANC, which is a governing party and which has its support base constituting, and is therefore elected overwhelmingly by, the working class.

This is partly based on the historical role that the state played in our society, and the different relations various classes had to that state. It is also partly the result of maintaining leverage, “a political innocence” of some sort, just so that it is the political representatives who are at the receiving end of a revolt rather than the ruling class, the bourgeoisie. The liberal notions that we identified above account, albeit partly, for pitting the people against a political party they hold a revolutionary duty to defend, build and strengthen for the success of the NDR.

This does not exonerate the ANC as a governing party and by extension the SACP as a party of governance in alliance with the ANC. Neither does it exonerate the entire Alliance inclusive of Cosatu which mobilises support for the ANC-led Alliance and has its preferred de-

ployees serving in branches of the state such as the parliament and government, from some of the social, economic and political problems that our society is facing (such as corruption, lack of capacity to intervene in production relations, maladministration, poor enforcement of legislation etc).

The suggestion by Cosatu's General Secretary that it will be difficult to "sell the ANC" to the working class "if the NDP is adopted" smacks of opportunism and political blackmail, especially given the fact that Cosatu was extensively consulted and it has preferred employees forming part of the commissioners who developed the plan. In the first place: does the ANC need to be "sold to the working class"? Unless the reference is sectarian – it must be borne in mind that the ANC's overwhelming membership and electorate is made up by the working class.

In the period when the worst economic policy, Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear), was adopted, Cosatu never even threatened to "leave" the Alliance (as it is our conclusion from the statement by Vavi), but worked internally within both the ANC and the Alliance to ensure that we end the Gear period. More so, even by admission of the NPC and the ANC Mangaung Conference, the NDP is a living document that should be continually *engaged*. In fact, the Mangaung resolution on the NDP states categorically that policies such as the Industry Policy Action Plan, infrastructure expansion etc will continue to inform government's approach to development.

With ascendancy in certain levers of state power, far more could have been done in advancing and deepening the creation of a national democratic socie-

ty. Instead, momentary ideological lapses led to an authoritarian introduction of a macro-economic policy that created the conditions for further accumulation of capitalist capital. The dominance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in the policies of 1996 were all undertaken within the logic that "there is no alternative".

Proceeding with the question who is the ruling class; if we look at the aggregate cause of the crises of unemployment, poverty and inequality, the capitalist class (those who own and control the means of production and exploit labour to transform this into commodities) should take the major blame. In the aftermath of Marikana, for instance, the YCLSA noted that the killing of workers (police and members of NUM included) and the impending state inquiry would not look into the role of Lonmin, or the loan-sharks who pushed workers into massive debt. Instead, the inquiry would be reduced narrowly to the shooting and killing of workers on a supposed "bargaining issue" and seek to pin the entire blame on the police. Yes, if there was improper conduct on the part of the police, they must take responsibility and be held to account. However, Marikana, just like other countless issues such as retrenchments, poverty wages, price-fixing, corruption, nepotism, meat-labelling, rent-seeking and inflated prices for consumer goods should be put on the doorstep of the capitalists.

It is lazy Marxism to conflate the ruling class with the governing party in the South African context, and "childish innocence to present one's own impatience as a theoretically convincing argument", as Engels points out.

Yes, there may be "agents", willingly or unwillingly, of the ruling global and

local capitalist class whose mandate they see as merely that of the “de-racialisation of the economy”, thus failing to challenge the logic of colonial and apartheid capitalism. The apartheid capitalist state has neither been smashed and reduced to fetters, nor has it “withered away”. Thus, the debate about the historical origins of poverty, unemployment and inequality is important not merely for party political gain, but also to explain the root-causes and therefore the elixir required to resolve these problems. As Marxists, we cannot view the current state as though it fell from the sky, devoid of historical and materialist origins. This will be a messianic view of the state (supposedly released together with Nelson Mandela from Robben Island).

But does the fact that we are yet to smash the apartheid capitalist state completely mean that we should be reductionists, and narrow the entire state apparatuses of post-apartheid democracy to a mass (mess) of capitalism? The role of the working class, and its allied class forces (as we will show in the next section) is to smash the colonial and apartheid capitalist state machinery in its entirety in order to prevent another Marikana, another food labelling scandal, another price-fixing scandal or another collusion with the administration for purposes of corruption. But this cannot be achieved as an event. It is a process.

### **Manifestations of class struggle within the state**

This brings us to the question of the class character of our society and therefore, the nature of the South African state. The South African society is a capitalist society: primarily, a society in which

wealth appears as an immense collection of commodities, as Marx points out in Capital.

At the 11<sup>th</sup> Party Congress an extensive analysis was made on post-1994 class reconfigurations including the restructuring of the working class given the nature of South African and global capitalism and its impact in our society. This was not the first time a working class party in the world made an analysis of the class forces in society, and in particular, the working class. Marx and Engels used the introduction of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* to delve into this class analysis of society.

From the Party’s analysis (which largely remains relevant today) the working class was stratified in the process of commodity production broadly into core, peripheral and informalised and casualised. The Party programme went on to say that “in addition South Africa’s working class is still stratified along racial lines, with the small white working class stratum still predominantly occupying the more permanent and skilled jobs, and the existence of a hierarchy within the black working class itself”.

The Party programme asserted that the middle class is also stratified (although growing and highly indebted) with the white middle class still occupying the highly skilled and managerial positions. The other class section the Party programme identifies is the petty bourgeoisie, which the programme asserts is squeezed from both top and bottom by the bourgeoisie.

All of these class forces wage a struggle amongst and between themselves (intra-class struggle) and with the bourgeoisie for survival. At the centre (not that it is neutral) are various state appa-

ratues playing their roles of force, legislation, judicial and administrative. How the state responds to each of these contestations, intra- and inter-class struggles is very critical.

The unleashing of police forces to quell the Marikana crisis (note this class reality, not just between Lonmin, the capitalist class, and the workers, the working class, but also between the workers themselves), is one form of reaction against the collective of the working class (the issue of interest, and in whose interest this intervention was made, is debatable); or the deployment of soldiers to Central Africa Republic; or the legislation in favour of tolling of roads and many other interventions which some regard as anti-working class behaviour.

Important in this regard, is the unity of the working class in the first instance, and the unity of its allied class forces in the advancement of the NDR and socialism. To further fragment working class organisations, as was the case with Amcu (the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union) in Lonmin can only serve the interests of the capitalist class. Likewise to assume that, as we are made to think wrongly, there are no problems between Cosatu affiliates Numsa and NUM (as recently witnessed in public exchanges and Marikana included), can only be to the peril not only of Cosatu but also of the workers. It would be to apply a mask of difficulties that must be resolved, and to ignore the task of uniting and building a strong Cosatu (which is facing serious intra-class challenges which could even lead, if unchecked, in the extreme to a split).

Are we arguing that the state is Bonapartist? No. We are arguing that the state is an **active role player in society** and

that its various strands and apparatuses intervene dependent on the **interests of the class forces and their strengths in a given mode of production** at a given point in time. Against pressures from the ideological representatives of capital in parliament, the state (as measured in the role of government) has significantly intervened in the economy, which is against the backdrop of the Polokwane resolutions.

What is being wrestled about is the nature, character and class content of that intervention (note that this is not independent or free from the fundamental and prevailing class balance of forces) and the extent to which this advances our society away from the logic of apartheid capital. Take for instance the issue of national planning. This is not necessarily the fortress of capitalist social relations. In fact, neo-liberalism dictates that the state should stay away from the market and allow market forces to determine the production, distribution and consumption of goods and wealth; and for them this represents democracy.

The state should, in their view, only intervene when there is **market failure**. They also see the role of the state as merely being that of “creating the conditions within which business can prosper”. However, since we have won the debate on the need for central planning, the issue is, then, how must we influence this as part of the struggle and process to achieve conditions within which we can fight against poverty, unemployment and class inequalities. This is the ideological contestation, a political (and therefore class) struggle in which the working class and its unity must be galvanised by the SACP in particular and Cosatu.

### Uniting the working class

How should the working class (which must not be confused for the Party) approach issues of state transformation and the building blocks for socialism?

We always have to make the distinction between the Party as an institution, the vehicle for socialism, and the working class as the motive force, the agent for socialism. The working class builds the Party as its vanguard to collectively advance its struggle, to maintain discipline within working class forces, to create ideological fusion and, more importantly, to lead the working class in the struggle for socialism.

One of the mistakes committed in the Soviet Union was to substitute the Party for the class, and thus, convert the Party into a bureaucratic machinery that supervises the conduct of each worker in building socialism. This is why, when the Party collapsed, and Party leaders such as Mikhail Gorbachev announced *Perestroika*, the working class disintegrated and could not collectively hold the Party accountable and therefore halt the imminent transition to capitalism, let alone to defend the revolution.

Thus, the working class should at all times be central to the vision, strategy and tactics of the Party and the direction that it takes. It must be the lifeblood of the Party. But grandstanding and howling at the Party are no solutions. As one writer recently cautions in a Party online journal, “shouting from the rooftop at one’s own liberation movement, and by extension one’s political party as well, like a jackal barks the whole night at the moon, is counterrevolutionary.”

Once you engage in such behaviour you must be worried that there is something wrong with you or missing in your political activity. It would be advisable

to engage instead in a self-introspection first, and the starting point could be, an assessment of your absence if not lack of your influence in “your own” liberation movement and political party. It is actually cowardice to decline to participate in either the Party or the ANC leaderships (note that to be nominated does not mean to be elected, contrary to some who have tended to try and seek popularity from “declining” as if they would be elected were they to stand) so they can hide behind the *oppositionism* of either a trade union federation or some of its affiliates on social, political and economic issues.

In the words of Harry Gwala, inasmuch as the Party “must take the masses along”, conversely, the working class must lead the Party, and therefore by extension its own liberation movement (in the same way as Chris Hani made himself available when he was elected for ANC leadership and when he was nominated for the position of its Deputy President) – instead of acting cowardly and suggesting abstinence or thinking that in collaboration with the liberal media one can exercise outside influence without active participation in the leadership as well as in the rank-and-file in practical activities.

The tasks of the working class in the current conjecture is to strengthen its organisations, advance its own independent means and modes of production, and develop its capacity to wage constant struggle with the bourgeoisie and various apparatuses of the state. From this, we have seen through SACP, Cosatu, civil society and YCLSA campaigns, that there are bound to be results through working class struggles.

Through collective struggles either for wage increases (note that social-

ism is ultimately about the abolition of the wages system, not its deepening), against high energy costs (not just as a problem for the bourgeois as an input into production and by consequence to the workers, but as a problem to the working class), lack of service delivery, are important. It is in these struggles that the working class must discard the practices of individualism and competition as imbued under the capitalist society and begin to cooperate. As Marx and Engels state in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, “competition between the workers themselves [competition within the working class]” can only continually upset the unity of the proletariat.

The Party programme insists that it can only be through defending, deepening and taking responsibility for the NDR and “building socialism” that we can involve workers in their own liberation, and therefore, begin the building of a new man (i.e. by this is referred to a new woman as well – as articulated by Che in his pamphlet, *Man and Socialism*).

### **Conclusion**

By way of conclusion, the Polokwane (and Mangaung) developments represent important questions that the YCLSA (and consequently the SACP) should interrogate.

The state and its apparatuses represent a state in transition (back to barbarism or into a true democratic society, and ultimately socialism), and a state under the domination and control of capitalism but in which there is on-going class contest. In the course of these contradictions and struggles within the state (the main contradiction and struggle), there are also contradictions and struggles within the ANC and the Alli-

ance (the secondary contradictions).

Contrary to a seemingly malicious and divisive analogy represented in the media (see “The meteoric rise and the compromises of the SACP”, Carol Paton, *Business Day*, 16 April 2013) and in certain quarters of society, the SACP has to wrestle for power and hegemony within the Alliance, in society and within the state. The same applies to the YCLSA. The fact that we are playing a leading role in youth development, for example, does not mean that this will be without contradictions and struggle. This should also mean that we have to be tactical in how we deal with the outcomes of some of the setbacks suffered within these struggles and the contradictions.

Without succumbing to opportunistic pressures of whether or not the SACP should contest elections (an issue settled at the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress – it has in any case been contesting within the Alliance since 1994), and without behaving in an oppositionist fashion as displayed by some of the comrades in our trade union movement, we must theorise (and put into practice the outcomes) on how the SACP should deal with the challenges of governance. How long the SACP will contest elections as part of the Alliance is a question which both the Party itself and the working class will have to constantly engage and determine from time to time.

How should we, for instance, respond to the scandalous bureaucratic mess of the President’s residence; to the crises of textbooks in schools ; to the crises at the Department of Communications; or those areas in the National Development Plan that stand opposed to our perspectives? Our answers must be sensitive both to our character as an independent formation and the fact that

we are involved in an Alliance with a revolutionary movement which is made up by the working class and the poor as its overwhelming majority, a movement of our own in the context of our membership.

What then must our immediate tasks be as the Party (inclusive of the YCLSA) following the Seventh Plenary Session of our re-establishment National Committee and in the context of our forthcoming Second National Council in the (intra- and inter) class struggle, and in intra- and inter-class alliances, as part and parcel of our duty towards the working class? And how do we undertake those tasks without abandoning the responsibility and role that we are playing and must play in the state?

We have to ask ourselves what tasks we face in building a united nation, deepening democracy, fighting patriarchy and building socialism in our lifetime. These are the critical questions for a young communist league, and for a Communist Party.

There will always be criticism of the ANC-led government, and by extension, of the Party (as part of the ruling alliance). This criticism will sometimes be objective, and at times be subjective and accompanied by what seems to be a dialogue between some of our cadres and the media: unfounded allegations such as the SACP has sold out or that specific individuals in the SACP, by agreeing to participate in government, have sold

out. It is critical that in this criticism we distinguish between what is genuine concern for the role and independence of the Party and what is subjective criticism by the Party's enemies and detractors and renegades.

We now have a five-year account of what it means to have so many Party cadres in the ANC and in government. This should be the basis of debates, based on practice, for the Party to decide whether it wants to revisit its resolutions of the deployment of Party cadres or not. However, to want to "create an imaginary Communist Party whose role is political education and being the moral compass of a ruling ANC" (flattering as this may be) without the Party dirtying its hands in governance, in practice, will be foolhardy. We must accept that sometimes what people disagree with is not whether the Party participates in elections and in state power, sometimes people disagree with the form of participation and with the actual involvement of a Communist Party and even its existence.

The often distorted injunction by Chris Hani, who believed in democratic centralism and subordinated his personal views to those of the movement and the Party, is more timeless: "What is important is the continuation of the struggle – and we must accept that the struggle is always continuing – under different conditions, whether within parliament or outside ..."

IN MEMORIAM

# Farewell Auntie Phyllis – a true, all-round comrade

**Jeff Radebe** pays tribute to Cde Phyllis Naidoo – a heroine, a soldier, a teacher, a writer, a mother, a lawyer, a fighter for human rights

*This speech was given at the Cape Town memorial service for Comrade Phyllis Naidoo*

It was with sadness that I learnt about the passing away of Auntie Phyllis, as she was fondly known by many comrades who went through her guiding hands and enjoyed her motherly love. I first came into contact with Comrade Phyllis Naidoo when I had just finished my law degree.

I served my articles, together with Sangri Pather, in the firm of AJ Gumede and Phyllis Naidoo. It was not by coincidence that the two established a firm, one of the few black firms in the country at the time. Both the late Cde Archie Gumede and Cde Phyllis Naidoo were comrades and committed activists of the movement. Both had been involved in a plethora of grassroots-based organisations that had challenged the might of the state. Both were, literally and figuratively, married to the struggle.

The late Cde Archie Gumede, the son of our fourth President Josiah Tshangana Gumede, went on to become the first president of the United Democratic Front when it was formed in Mitchell's Plain, here in Cape Town, in 1983.

Cde Phyllis married Cde MD Naidoo, a dedicated member of the South African Communist Party, in 1958. Three years later, Cde Phyllis herself joined the Party and began to do underground work alongside other leaders of the struggle, such as Auntie Dorothy Nyembe, Mam Florence Mkhize, Moses Kotane and Govan Mbeki, assisting comrades flee to exile.

It was therefore no wonder that though I had articulated under them to learn the finer tricks of court arguments, legal strategies and the etiquette of court, I came out politically wiser. For me this was a beginning of a long journey which I hope to write about one day. The point I am making is that it was all fuelled, among others, by my association with Aunt Phyllis.

Cde Phyllis Naidoo was a committed comrade who had entered the struggle not for personal gain and enrichment, but to ensure that all South Africans enjoy a fulfilled life. She strove for a life which would be enjoyed by all under the conditions of a free, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa.

Among many others, the law firm represented both the late Cdes Harry Gwala and Mathews Meyiwa when they

faced treason charges at the Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court. In the course of the law firm's work, I got to interact with other committed members of the movement, such as Judson Khuzwayo and Shadrack Maphumulo, and many others. I felt I was one of the senior partners rather than the greenhorn I still was.

It was also during my stint as a candidate attorney under Cdes Gumede and Naidoo that I got introduced to Cde Sonny Singh who trained me to operate underground, sending and collecting messages and parcels, and preventing them from detection by the Security Branch.

The late Cde Phyllis visited families of those who were detained, carrying food parcels and giving all the assistance that they needed. It was assistance that she could afford herself or could marshal on the families' behalf. I remember vividly that one such family was that of Joseph "Mkhuthuzi" Mdluli, who died at the hands of the police.

It was Auntie Phyllis who distributed the gory photographs of Cde Mdluli's brutal death at the hands of the police to the press houses and news wires of the world. Forced to concede after denial and indifference, the then Minister of Justice announced the trial of four policemen who were responsible for Mdluli's death.

The trial was a comedy of errors and showed collusion between the courts, the state, and pathologists in a massive cover-up of a corrupt justice system. But by distributing the photos, Auntie Phyllis had beaten the system which had denied its involvement in Mdluli's death, and wanted to prevent the world from knowing about it.

Her home was always a beehive of activities aimed at supporting and sustaining the struggle for the emancipation of

all our people. It was in her home that the seminal Albert Luthuli's Nobel Prize acceptance speech was drafted by Cdes Phyllis, Govan Mbeki, Moses Kotane and Duma Nokwe. In a replay of history, Auntie Phyllis received the Luthuli Medal of Honour and breathed her last breath at the Chief Albert Luthuli Memorial hospital.

Her practice in Grey Street (now Dr Yusuf Dadoo Street) became something of an employment bureau for comrades who had been released from prison and who, because of their records, were avoided by prospective employers. Some were temporarily employed as "messengers" at the firm while others could be placed with sympathetic companies and individuals.

Cde Phyllis Naidoo had a never-say-die spirit and could turn adversity into opportunity. When she was house arrested, she studied for law for which she qualified in 1973. She was, however, not allowed to practice, an opportunity which she got only in 1976 when her banning order was lifted. The following year, she escaped to Lesotho when she formally joined the African National Congress.

She continued with her work for the movement, accepting and accommodating comrades who escaped to Lesotho. On the other hand, she was assisting the Lesotho Government as Chief Legal Aid Counsel. Although she survived, albeit with heavy injuries, a parcel bomb which had been sent to her colleague, Father John Osmers, she did not get despondent.

The Maseru Massacre took place while she was there and this became a personal trauma that lived with her long after December 1982. In remembrance of this unprovoked tragedy against un-

armed civilians by the apartheid state, she organised the 10-year commemoration of the massacre in Durban, where the late Cde Chris Hani was a guest of honour. Among a string of her literary works, she wrote an account of what happened on the day of the massacre.

On the orders of the leadership of the ANC, she escaped Lesotho on 9 September 1983 and arrived in Zimbabwe where she took up teaching law at the University of Zimbabwe, while also continuing with her work for the African National Congress.

On her return from exile in 1990, she continued where she had left off, visiting the prisoners on death row before the ANC government repealed capital punishment, and those who were still on Robben Island. She personally witnessed the loss of hope and the mental torture heaped on those who were awaiting execution.

She has had her own fair share of personal tragedies, such as the loss of her own children, Sahdan and Shahrad, and the disconnection by distance from Nersén. But she soldiered on regardless. She grieved like we all do. But her dedication to the struggle was such that she did not want to be wasted in grief: her calling was for the greater good of the people of this country rather than herself. Such comrades come in short supply, and when they depart there are rarely equal replacements.

Although her dedication could have been utilised in the first democratic Parliament in 1994, she declined to serve as an MP. Auntie Phyllis understood that there were other terrains of governance where comrades could make their contributions.

Every struggle has its matriarchs and she was one of those matriarchs of our

struggle. Every struggle produces its own heroes and heroines. Those are the ones who would easily say: Given the same circumstances, I would do it again. Cde Phyllis was such a heroine. She gave so much of herself, and never expected anything in return.

As we raise our voices and show anger at the abuse of women and children, we shall miss her voice. Hers would have been louder, and her counsel would have led us to be wiser. As we battle against the tendencies of crass materialism and opportunism, she would have counselled us to continue with the principles and values of the movement.

Auntie Phyllis could have been a citizen of any of the countries where she was exiled because she made her invaluable contribution there. She could have walked into any university vice-rector's office and demanded to teach. She could have been a citizen of the world. She however, chose to live a modest life, on a modest stipend, in her unassuming Umbilo flat.

When we are in grief, the temptation is strong to mourn that she is no more. Instead we should celebrate that she was once among us, and became one of us. When we lose our loved ones we shed tears of despair, and forget that when they came to this earth there were tears of joy.

While every death is painful, it should bring some comfort to family and friends that she lived long enough to witness the fruits of her untiring labour and dedication. We are not pretending that the future we sought for ourselves is perfect, but we are comforted by the fact that reshaping it is in our hands. For this ability to be able to reshape our future and that of our children, we should be eternally grateful to stalwarts such as

the late Cde Phyllis Naidoo.

As we remember the life and times of our dear comrade, Phyllis Naidoo, we should all be together silently considering the words of an anonymous mourner:

*“Our joys will be greater;  
Our love will be deeper;  
Our lives will be fuller;  
Because we shared your moment.”*

To the members of the family by whom she is survived, we understand that grief, as Shakespeare attests, “makes one hour look like ten”. We know that you shed tears, but, as French philosopher Voltaire tells us: “tears are the silent language of grief.” You have not shed them alone, but with the whole movement and the whole nation.

For me personally, I have also lost a mother, a mentor and a comrade. I have lost the real vehicle which made me able to talk today. The narrative of the suc-

cess struggle story for South Africa will never be complete without mention of the name of Auntie Phyllis. It shall be so because it will be a narrative told by the many whose lives were forged through the foundry of her hands.

We dip our revolutionary banner to a struggle heroine, a soldier, a teacher, a writer, a mother, a lawyer, a fighter for human rights. We fly our revolutionary flag at half-mast to a struggle well executed. The African National Congress has lost. The South African Communist Party has lost. The progressive academia has lost. Daring intellectuals have lost one of theirs. The women’s movement has lost.

Hamba Kahle, Cde Phyllis Naidoo.

**Cde Radebe** is a SACP Central Committee and ANC National Executive Committee and National Working Committee member, and the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development.



# Where to contact the SACP

## HEAD OFFICE:

4th Floor Cosatu House  
110 Jorissen Street  
BRAAMFONTEIN 2017  
JOHANNESBURG 2000  
Tel: ( 011) 339-3621/2  
Website: [www.sacp.org.za](http://www.sacp.org.za)  
Org: Steven Mtsweni 082 930 2624  
Admin: Nomvula 079 989 1563

## EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE

Block A Unit1  
Bisho Business Village  
Siwani Avenue  
BISHO 5605  
Tel:/Fax; (040) 635-0463  
Secretary: Xolile Nqatha  
073 034 7923  
Admin: Noncedo 084 028 4313  
Telefax (053)832 4328  
email: [ecape@sacp.org.za](mailto:ecape@sacp.org.za)

## FREE STATE PROVINCE

1st Fl Moses Kotane Bldg  
44 Fichardt Street  
BLOEMFONTEIN 9300  
Fax: (051) 430 7571/4480303  
email: [freestate@sacp.org.za](mailto:freestate@sacp.org.za)  
Secretary: Soke 082 455 2713  
Secretary: Gilbert Kganyago:  
072 586 7340  
Admin: Dorothy 078 618 8871

## GAUTENG PROVINCE

4A Floor Samwu House  
Cnr. Frederick & Von Brandis Str  
JOHANNESBURG 2000  
Tel: (011) 333 9177  
Fax: (011) 331 3017  
email: [gauteng@sacp.org.za](mailto:gauteng@sacp.org.za)  
Secretary: J. Mamabolo 0828841868  
Org: Tebello Radebe 076 918 8670  
Admin: Phindi: 078 944 1230

## KWAZULU NATAL PROVINCE

321 Antom Lembede Street  
7th Floor Satwu House  
DURBAN  
Tel: (031) 301 3806/301 3763  
Fax: (031) 301 5470  
email: [kzn@sacp.org.za](mailto:kzn@sacp.org.za)  
Secretary: Themba 083 303 6988  
Org: Msizi Nhlapho 076 488 4421  
Admin: Nokulunga 072 010 2602

## MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

NUM Offices, Smart Park Building  
WITBANK  
(013) 656 – 2045/73  
Fax: (013) 690 1286  
email: [mpumalanga@sacp.org.za](mailto:mpumalanga@sacp.org.za)  
Secretary: Bonakele Majuba:  
082 885 5940

## NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

17 Graham Street  
KIMBERLEY 8300  
Secretary: Norman Shushu  
082 376 8331  
Org: Tsepho 073 094 6027  
Admin: Nobantu: 074 766-2549

## LIMPOPO PROVINCE

1st Floor Mimosa Bldg, Room 22  
58 Market Str, PIETERSBURG  
Tel: (015) 291 3672  
Fax: 086 653 7631  
email: [limpopo@sacp.org.za](mailto:limpopo@sacp.org.za)  
Admin: Frans Monyeapao  
082 842 6618



# Where to contact the SACP

## **NORTH WEST PROVINCE**

4th Floor; Room 406  
Vannel Building, cnr:or Tambo & Boom  
Street  
KLERKSDORP 2570

Tel.; (018) 462 5675/8230  
Fax; (018) 462 5675/4322  
email: [northwest@sacp.org.za](mailto:northwest@sacp.org.za)  
Secretary: M. Sambatha  
082 800 5336  
Patrick Masiu 073 181 8763  
Admin: Mosa Sello 073 093 2427

## **WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE**

No.5 Heerengracht Street  
4Th Floor Fountain Place Building  
CAPE TOWN

Tel: 021 762 9719/9748  
Fax: (021) 421 4170 / 424 4667  
Org: Bara : 076 093 0997  
email: [wcape@sacp.org.za](mailto:wcape@sacp.org.za)  
Secretary: Khaya Magaxa  
083 721 0221  
Admin: Kholeka Mahlumba  
073 343 4280  
Org : Mvuyisi Bara 076 093 0997





## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

**Blade Nzimande** (Editor-in-Chief)

**Jeremy Cronin** (Deputy Editor-in-Chief)

**Yunus Carrim** (Editor)

**Joyce Moloi-Moropa**

**Solly Mapaila**

**Buti Manamela**

**Chris Matlhako**

**Malesela Maleka**

**Fiona Tregenna**

**David Niddrie** (Sub-editor)