

SPECIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS EDITION

July 2015

Voice of the South African Communist Party

Umsebenzi



**FORWARD TO THE
SPECIAL NATIONAL
CONGRESS!**

SPECIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS

Consolidating a second, more radical phase of the NDR!

Delegates gather in Soweto on 7 July to debate our position on the NDR, on the challenges facing the unions and to review the Party's post-2012 performance

More than 800 delegates representing 213 551 members will converge at the Soweto Campus of the University of Johannesburg for the SACP's Special National Congress (SNC), 7-11 July. About 80 guests from the Alliance structures and international organisations will also attend.

The key issues to be considered by the Congress include the second more radical phase of the national democratic transition, the challenges facing the trade union movement, the organisational review and renewal of the Party, a review of its performance since the July 2012 Congress and progress on the Medium Term Vision. The Congress will serve as a mid-term review of the Party Programme, *The South African Road to Socialism*.

The SACP has distributed two documents already *Going to the Root: A Second Radical Phase of the National Democratic Revolution: Its Context, Content and our Strategic Tasks and Towards an Organisational Review and Renewal Process*. Provincial Councils are being held to discuss the documents and prepare in other ways for the SNC.

SACP General Secretary Cde Blade Nzimande, said: "The Special National Congress must, very importantly, give further content to the second, more radical phase of the transition as the key strategic and programmatic perspective that unites the Alliance on the challenges col-



Cde Blade Nzimande: SNC must give content to the NDR second phase

We must celebrate Cosatu's 30th anniversary in December not as an event but as part of a process of uniting, revitalising and renewing Cosatu

lectively confronting us at the moment. We also need to look closely at the challenges confronting our ally, Cosatu. Never since its formation 30 years ago has Cosatu faced problems such as this – and they have come in such a sharp form.

"But we must remain focused. We need to pull together as the Alliance partners and contribute to strengthening Cosatu again. We must celebrate Cosatu's 30th anniversary in December not as an



UJ's Soweto campus (above), venue of the SNC where delegates will decide how to contribute to a decisive ANC-led victory in the 2016 local elections

event but as part of a process of uniting, revitalizing and renewing Cosatu. This means also coming to terms with the broader economic and political context of Cosatu's challenges, and not exaggerating personality and other conflicts within the union movement. The draft SACP discussion document to be considered at the Special National Congress, on the challenges of the trade union movement, raises these broader issues, and we hope it can contribute to addressing some of the challenges."

2nd Deputy General Secretary Cde

The SNC must give further content to the 2nd, more radical, phase of the transition as the key strategic and programmatic perspective that unites the Alliance

Solly Mapaila said: "The Congress will also assess progress and challenges in terms of governance, a key pillar of our National Democratic Revolution in the current phase. This is the context of the 60th Anniversary of the Freedom Charter, the 5th democratic general elections held in 2014, the 2011 and 2016 local government elections, and our liberation alliance's shared perspective of the second, more radical phase of our democratic transition."

SACP membership has grown dramatically since the 13th National Congress. The Party has stressed the need for both quantity and quality of membership; and political education has become more important than ever. Issues about the nature and character of the Party will be discussed at the SNC, including the "mass vanguard" character of the Party.

The Party will also consider how it can play an effective role in the 2016 local government elections to ensure a decisive ANC victory. There will also be discussions on the "Services for All" campaign for access to essential services like water and electricity; the "Know Your Neighbourhood Campaign"; and the need for Alliance structures – not other organisations and individuals – to lead community protest campaigns.

The Congress promises to be lively, exciting and stimulating. ●

SPECIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS

Massive increase in SACP membership

As our membership continues to climb, the proportion of women in our ranks is growing: more than 48% of SACP members are women

As the SACP goes into the Special National Congress (SNC), its membership has shot up to 225 000 from about 155 000 at the July 2012 Congress - an increase of about 70 000!

At the last Central committee meeting in May, SACP 2nd Deputy General Secretary Cde Solly Mapaila reported that the SACP has 213 551 audited members, with 11 707 membership forms still to be processed. These figures were presented on 29 May and may change slightly by the time of the SNC.

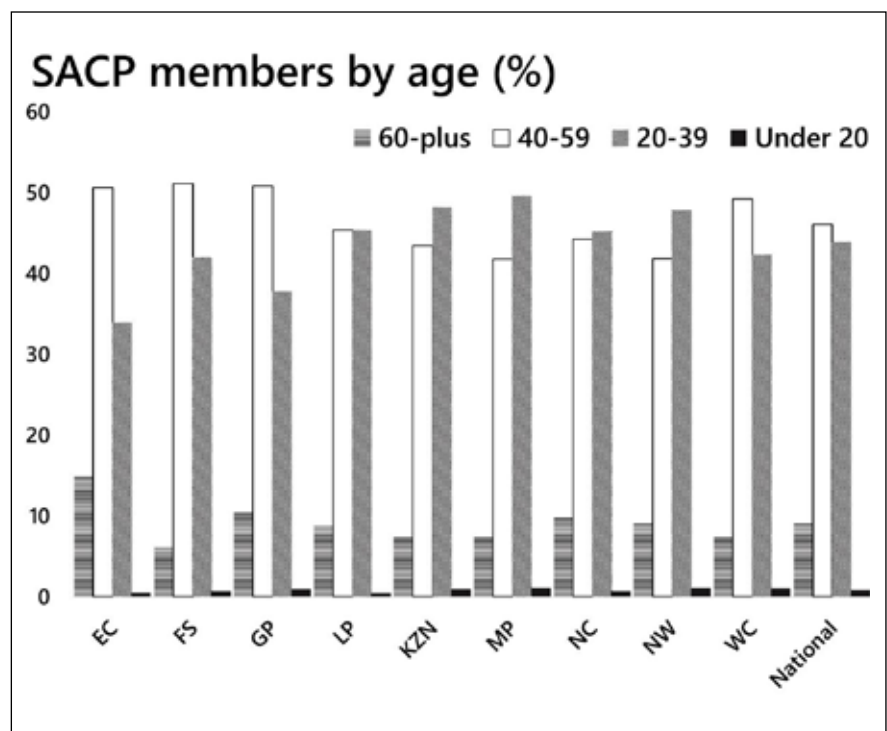
He provided a profile of the current SACP membership (see tables with this story). He said that students made up only 2% of the SACP's membership. He noted that "the March CC took a decision that we should embark on an intensive programme to establish SACP campus-based branches and if that is implemented we will see an increase in student membership".

The report he submitted noted that "there is a growing balance between men and women in the membership with only a 3,2% fraction of a difference, about 6000 members in numbers." The Party needs to examine this growth of female members.

Provinces that were lagging behind in membership numbers, particularly Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Western Cape have experienced a significant growth in recent months.

However, the majority of workers joining the SACP are unemployed. The Party needs to do more to increase membership among unionised workers.

The report noted that 37 872 of SACP members who are employed pay their membership fees in cash. While most of these are workers, they also include professionals. There is a need to put as many of these members as possible on the debit-or-



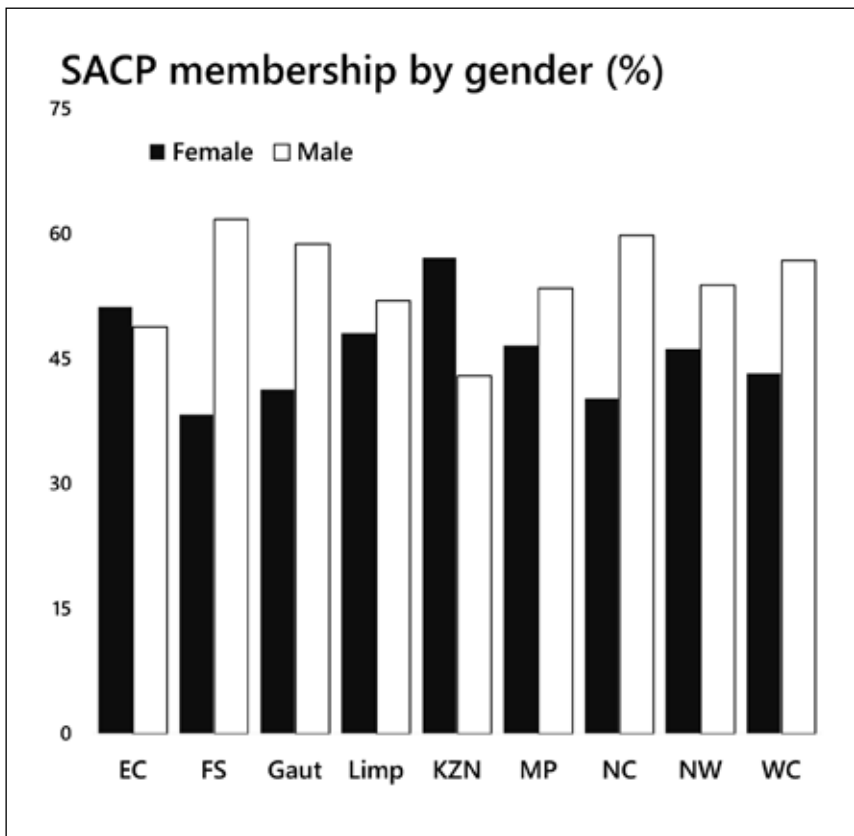
der system. There are also 147 949 students and pensioners who pay their membership fees in cash. Some of these members can also be put on the debit order system. The SACP Head Office will explore the possibilities of this.

The report identified the following as

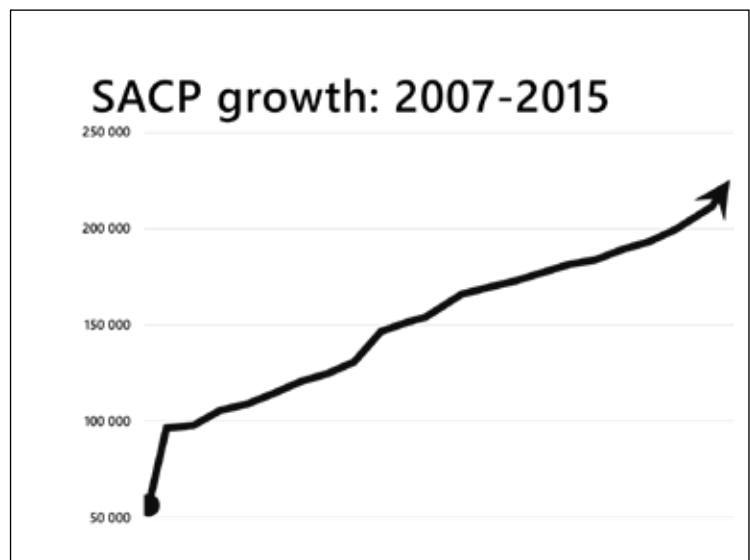
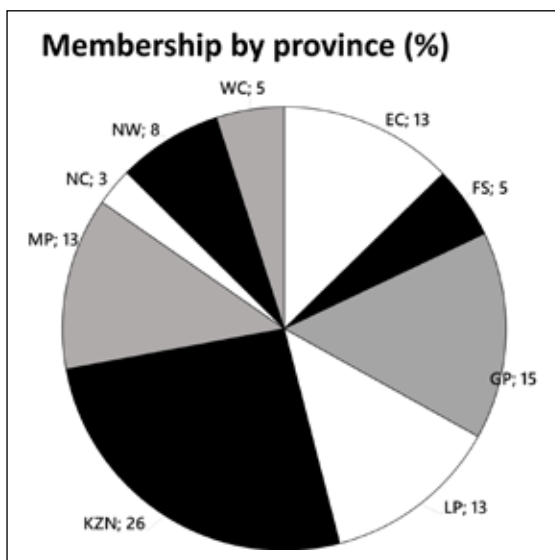
The Central Committee decided in March to embark on an intensive programme to establish SACP campus-based branches for students

among the challenges that the SACP has to address as it moves towards the 2017 14th National Congress:

- Intensify political education and ideological development of our members giving more priority to the youth, women and workers;
- Induction programme for new members, branches, districts, YCLSA structures and the provinces;
- Intensify our political and organisational campaigns to advance our programmes, taking into consideration the massive onslaught directed at communists and the Congress Movement generally;
- Revive our sectoral work on focused groups like professionals/academ-



We must revive our sectoral focus on professionals, academics, youth, cooperatives, informal traders, stokvels, burial societies & taxi operators



ics, youth, women, small entrepreneurs, cooperatives, informal traders, stokvels, burial societies, taxi operators etc. This would imply that we should consider the way our commissions are structured and the reporting mechanisms;

- Transform and diversify the Financial Sector Campaign – resuscitate the financial sector campaign, including by intensifying the call for the second Financial Sector Summit;

- Focus on the land and agrarian reform campaign, linking it to our work on

rural development;

- Emphasise the Public Transport Campaign for an affordable, safe and reliable public transport system, including our call for re-investment in the public transport system and public transport infrastructure network;

- Champion universal access to health and defending the NHI;

- Focus on the “Services for All” campaign for access to essential services like water and electricity; the “Know Your Neighbourhood Campaign”; and the need

for Alliance structures to lead protest community campaigns, not others;

- Focus on membership renewal, debit order enlistment and the Financial Self-sufficiency Campaign.

The SACP has much to do from the Special National Congress (SNC) to the 2017 14th National Congress. Members are encouraged not only actively to participate in discussions at the SNC, but also actively carry out the decisions taken at the Congress. ●

Towards organisational review and renewal

The SNC will discuss the draft paper 'Towards an organisational review and renewal process'. Cde Sheila Barsel summarises the paper and sets out questions she feels the SNC might usefully consider



The Organisational Review Paper is situated in the context of Marxism's teaching that there is a continuous process of change in the three fundamental aspects

of nature, society and thought.

Another context is the South African Road to Socialism (SARS). Further, the Paper notes that the form, content and structure of the Party have been framed by conditions of a Communist Party serving in government and in alliance with a militant trade union and a multi-class movement in power in a predominantly capitalist society.

This debate must not be seen in isolation from the key task of the Medium Term Vision (MTV) of building working class hegemony in all key sites of power with the ultimate goal of state power for the working class.

The 12th SACP Congress acknowledged that South Africa is a contested state under capitalist production. The SACP decided to participate actively in the state to contest all its trajectories in favour of the working class. Hence its most active cadres would be deployed to the State. However, mechanisms would be established to ensure the accountability of these comrades. This decision reaffirmed the NDR as a direct route to socialism, hence the slogan "Socialism is the future build it now!"

The SACP July 2012 Congress decided on the following organisational changes:

- Branches based on voting districts;
- Expanding the secretariat to national and provincial levels requiring one member of the Secretariat to be fulltime;

- Recognizing the coordinating functions of zones, given large districts;

- Affirming party building as a critical political task through, among others, adding a full chapter in SARS on party building;

- Strengthening party headquarters.

The organisational review is guided politically and ideologically to conform to basic party principles. This includes the accountability of members, democratic centralism, collective leadership, discipline and loyalty to the people and the liberation movement.

The organisational review takes place in four phases comprising the preparation, redesigning/drafting, implementation and monitoring & evaluation.

The preparation phase involves mobilising forces at all levels in party, setting up structures, adopting a work plan with concrete outcomes and strict timeframes and securing resources, as well as a launch and media briefing.

The redesigning/drafting phase involves soliciting inputs from branches, districts and provinces, and a campaign under the slogan Going back to listening - hear the voice of the Party member in relation to the structures of the Party.

This will be translated into the new Party organisational model to be used as the basis for engagement with alliance partners and fraternal structures.

The key responsibility of the task team is to develop a standard questionnaire to collect data on challenges and organisational problems that relate to Party work of branches and require attention. The questionnaire will also solicit proposed solutions to identified problems.

The task team will benchmark with

Communist Parties currently in power or in alliances or coalitions with governing parties, or which are not in power.

The implementation phase involves:

- Adoption of a draft model by the SNC;

- Preparation by Party structures for 14th National Congress based on new proposed model, including preparing for Party congresses, while being sensitive to constitutional implications (examples are earlier submission of draft resolutions and having smaller delegations to national congresses).

The Monitoring and Evaluation Phase will take place on two levels:

- CC, PECs and DECAs will monitor and evaluate task teams at different levels;

- Future congresses will assess impact of new Party model once fully implemented.

The Paper also proposes:

- Similar structures to the CC task team must be duplicated at provincial level;

- A strategic role of districts with immediate links to branches must be recognised as the impact on branches will be profound because changes will be implemented at that level;

- Provincial teams report to CC task team;

- Provincial teams coordinate input and activities of districts to consolidate provincial report;

- The CC task team will be the central coordinating structure to drive and lead processes.

The CC task team may consider commissioning further work on aspects including international benchmarking, constitutional implications and human



Organisational review and renewal – keeping the Red Flag flying high, with Cde Siphon Madonsela

resources. It will need to take account of political structures such as the CC, its commissions and how they function. And its outputs must strike a balance between ensuring an unstifled democratic process, without undermining democratic centralism and Party unity.

An activity plan must be adopted defining objectives, outputs to be delivered, time-lines and responsible persons. Key activities could include establishing organisational review task teams in each province to create process discipline from the outset, and convening district and provincial workshops to get input from branches.

The document emphasises that formal consultation and consistent engagements with Alliance and fraternal structures are very important.

Political risks of the organisational review process are listed as: lack of discipline by members, rushing the process to meet deadlines without organic engagement, and maintaining interest and participation as we move forward.

The Paper then provides a framework of party building in a continuously changing environment. It is stressed that in undertaking the organisational renewal, the Party must take a long-range view of at least 20 years ahead with clearly defined targets and milestones. The Party must be built in a popular and simple way – attractive to workers, youth, women and other sectors of our society.

The first task in party building is clearly articulated principles, policies and general guidelines – although ideological training may be a critical requirement in

fulfilling the task. To do this we need to elevate the value of the Party constitution and espouse the prime values of the Party, and its ideology, which must be the central point of orientation of Party members.

The second primary task in party building is to implement the notion of democratic centralism as a central pillar of Party-building to deepen Party democracy, and the coordination and guidance of members in running our programmes.

It may also be useful to consider an additional, third, primary task in party building there not also be a third primary task in party building? This could be addressing the current circumstances in which the shortage of Marxist-Leninist theoreticians and writers in the Party is arguably one of its major weaknesses. Related to this is the weakness of our media work, and the fact that the content of our publications is relatively stale.

The main pillars of party building are identified as:

- Following correct practice of democratic centralism (the individual subordinated to the collective, the minority to the majority, lower level structures to higher level structures, and the CC to the entire organisational constitution);

- Developing and maintaining the working class ideology of Party members;
- Unity of purpose and collective leadership; and
- Organisational discipline and individual discipline.

The Party-building tasks are listed as:

- First task and priority is to selflessly serve the community;

- Recruitment of new members to the Party and community work;

- Training of new members for a minimum of two years;

- Institutionalisation of political education – how do we integrate the communist university into the daily life of the SACP?

- Communication of party decisions; and

- How to resource the party.

Once we have agreed on the tasks, the following questions need to be answered:

- Does the current structure of units, branches, provinces and the interrelationships between them serve the Party as it implements the SACP Programmes of “Know and Act in your Neighbourhood” and “Financial Sector” campaigns?

- Does the structure and function of the commissions in the provinces assist the PEC in carrying out its tasks and programmes?

- Do these commissions exist in the districts? Is their functioning effective in stimulating branch involvement in outcomes of commission discussions – taking forward local ward-based and branch-based programmes within basic education, sport and health sectors?

The Paper then focuses on how these party building tasks relate to the MTV central theme of building working class hegemony in all sites of struggle.

Additional questions raised in the organisational review document are:

- What is the role of the party as an independent organisation in the context of consolidating, deepening and advancing the NDR?

- How does the Party express its own voice in parliament, legislatures and councils within the framework of the alliance?

- How do we redefine the role of Party members working in the state as full time revolutionaries – serving people with humility and selflessness?

- Do the current relationships in the Alliance serve the interests of the working class?

- What are the implications of the changing social composition of South African society, in particular the significant growth of the middle strata?

- How should the Party relate to this growing middle strata?

- How do we link the intensification of political education with the development of writing skills? ●

Cde Barsel is a veteran SACP Politburo and Central Committee member

SPECIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS

Meeting the huge challenges facing the union movement

Cde Sheila Barsel's summarises the 'Meeting the Challenges Facing the Trade Union Movement' draft discussion document to be considered at by the SNC

This paper is a response to the challenges confronting Cosatu and the broader trade union movement. It deals with the complex underlying factors that have led to the current difficulties and turmoil to provoke a deeper collective discussion among progressive forces, particularly those within the trade union movement.

Cosatu has correctly re-dedicated itself to actively serving members on the shop floor, internal worker democracy, and the accountability of full time officials under the slogan "Back to basics".

It is also a correct concern expressed by those within and outside of Cosatu that the revival of the UDF/MDM era of union-community-social movement cooperation and mobilisation be resuscitated.

However, in both instances, it is important that we learn from the past without slavishly following traditions. By learning from history, let us explore the impact of the capitalist-led offensive against the working class and its organised formations.

Internationally, through much of the first half of the 20th century, the major mass labour movements in the advanced capitalist countries were typically rooted in a male blue-collar, industrial working class.

World War II brought changes:

- Women entered the industrial working class during the war;
- Many war-torn European societies



The 2012-13 De Doorns striking farm workers demand a living wages on farms that harvest for export to Europe

created conditions for inter-class national reconstruction and development social pacts to rebuild the economy, train and skill men returning from war, and provide an increased social wage (public housing, public transport, national health services and so on);

- The feminisation of the working class after 1945 shifted the many reproductive functions out of unpaid household work by women into publicly provided welfare services. This in turn saw a significant expansion of public sector employment and of services in which women were often the majority.

After 1945, in developed capitalist

economies, the profile of the working class changed from a largely male-dominated blue collar workforce concentrated in classical industries such as mining and large factories. Within 30 years this change led to an emergence of a new more individualistic, consumerist middle class.

The lack of adequate response to these changes by many trade unions and left parties was exploited by the neo-liberal onslaught.

The 1970s crisis of profitability in advanced capitalist countries was the driving force behind the next major wave of imperialist global expansion. This "globalisation" has lasted from the 1980s to



Striking public sector workers: by 2012 they made up 39% of Cosatu's membership

the present.

Before this globalisation period, labour markets had about 1-billion workers and work seekers. By 2000, this labour force had increased to 1.5-billion. China's liberal reforms and the collapse of the Soviet Union added a further 1.5-billion. In his book *The Precariat – the New Dangerous Class Guy Standing* reflects that the labour supply trebled. The newcomers had little capital and very low wages, altering the capital-labour ratio and weakening the bargaining position of workers.

South Africa was initially insulated from these global developments by the isolation resulting from economic and financial sanctions. Monopoly capital benefited from the expanding local market.

There was massive Africanisation and urbanisation of the semi-skilled factory-based industrial working class to preserve CST (Colonialism of a special type) racial capital by reproducing cheap black labour.

The 1994 democratic breakthrough brought real gains for the trade union movement in the form of progressive labour laws. However, the lifting of apartheid era economic sanctions and the ANC-led government liberalisation in the mid-1990s allowed South Africa's mo-

nopoly capital to join the globalisation free-way. There was massive disinvestment, foreign stock exchange listings, transfer pricing, tax evasion, de-industrialisation and formal sector job losses, eroding workers' legislative gains.

Since 1994, employment growth in the private sector has been confined to non-industrial sectors – financial and business services. These are not clerical jobs but are overwhelmingly poorly paid, mainly through casualisation and the use of labour brokers.

Migration & segmentation

Structural adjustment programmes imposed on third world societies, and the accelerated penetration of transnational agri-business into peasant economies in the South have created massive floods of migration from the countryside to informal settlements in Third World cities,

and from the Third World into the advanced economies.

This is not confined to South Africa – it also occurs on the border between Mexico and the United States, and from Africa across the Mediterranean ocean to Europe.

In South Africa, migration has resulted in hundreds of thousands of super-exploited, non-unionised workers in agriculture, mining, security and hospitality services as well as in the informal sector, impacting on the bargaining strength of the labour movement.

Public sector workers have been the major beneficiaries as the percentage of unionised workers in the private sector declined. At Cosatu's 2012 congress, 39% of the federation's members were public servants, compared to 7% in 1991.

Union numbers declined in manufacturing, construction, finance and agriculture, although they continued to grow in the mining sector.

There is undoubtedly still anti-trade union propaganda in South Africa. This means that we must develop a more effective counter-ideological campaign as we re-build the trade union movement in South Africa.

Among the key proactive counter-measures the paper proposes are:

There is still anti-trade union propaganda in South Africa – we must develop a more effective counter-ideological campaign

- Dealing decisively with corruption;
- Reducing the excessive life-style social distance between leadership and the mass base;
- Ensuring that public sector unions and their members prioritise service to the public, and do not indulge in industrial action that plays directly into the hands of the anti-union propaganda offensives (through insensitivity to working class communities in front-line offices, learners not being taught, and hospital patients not receiving treatment);
- Avoiding or dealing decisively with the use of violence against other workers – or the sabotage of public facilities (burning trains is a graphic example) during strike action; and
- Importantly, the better organised sectors of the working class must ensure that they do not widen the segmentation of the proletariat by narrowly focussing only on their own issues.

Cosatu

As an active opponent of neo-liberalism since 1994, the federation has fought battles over the past 20 years, typically in alliance with the SACP. These defeated the major privatisation strategy from the ANC-led government in the early 2000s; and applied pressure on it to introduce early state-led industrial policy initiatives - now consolidated into the government's inclusive growth strategies.

However, there have also been some internal union weaknesses:

The significant institutional advances have brought real dangers of bureaucratisation often resulting in distances between an office-bound leadership and the factory floor membership;

With the restructuring of the working class, unions predominantly active in the private industrial sectors have increasingly become focused on the more formal and better paid worker strata;

In several public sector unions, there is confusion between union functions and public sector managerial responsibilities - union leadership is abused to advance personal careers within the public service rather than the active servicing of grass roots members; and

The multi-billion rand retirement funds have not been used within a solidarity economy (investing in public transport or public housing), but rather have become entry points through which the capitalist class has inserted itself into the head office of many unions.

Unions have two major domains of potential labour power leverage - struc-

tural power and associational power.

Structural Power

in the labour market:

- Major unions, particularly Solidarity, wield power on the basis of scarce skills because of the legacy of the colour bar;
- Measures which lower unemployment can, in principle, increase the labour market bargaining position of workers;
- The ability to withdraw from the capitalist labour market.

This is strengthened by the ability of workers to “go back home” to rural homesteads and to household sustainability due to the continued existence of communal land rights, the expansion of the social wage through the more comprehensive social security system, the expansion and unionisation of public sector work, and public employment programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme and Community Works Programme.

Within capitalist production and circulation:

- There is progressive legislation (Labour Relations Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act and Health and Safety legislation) notwithstanding capital's counter-offensive to dilute and reverse advances (labour-brokering, increasing capital intensity, dispersed work-places – such as domestic work, agriculture, security sector, and most of the informal sector); and
- Capitalist production is organised along geographically dispersed “value chains” so that components of a product can be manufactured in several localities creating points of vulnerability that can be strategically exploited by labour – an example of which is the farm-workers strike in De Doorns in 2012-13 which occurred at the critical harvesting time for the grapes to be exported to European markets.

Associational power

This refers to potential power through alliances, social movements, union-community mobilisation, social pacts, networks, international affiliations etc.

Positive examples include Cosatu itself – from its 1985 launch it was a “Charterist” formation, aligned the new federation not only with the UDF but also with the banned ANC and SACP – and the strong working relationship built between Cosatu and the Party during the difficult times of the 1996 class project,

and the victories this partnership won.

These victories curbed the runaway privatisation project and reversed Aids denialism. Crucially they also provided an alternative perspective to the rising tide of disaffection within the ANC itself, culminating in the Polokwane conference outcome. But this was achieved with a “marriage of convenience” which subsequently had unintended negative impacts within Cosatu, and in the relationship between Cosatu and the SACP.

However, with the ongoing township service delivery protests, invariably with their roots in real socio-economic problems and real frustrations with government at all levels, rather than maintaining the traditions of providing strategic leadership and coherence as an Alliance through leading in grassroots campaigns, Alliance campaigns are largely focussed on elections.

What is to be done?

With the changing nature of the working class, the “Back to Basics” campaigns must be re-assessed.

The interplay between work place and residential struggles cannot be ignored. It is critical to organise around issues which unite the broader working class, such as the crisis of chronic indebtedness, decent, affordable and reliable transport, and problems of crime and drug abuse and basic safety.

The post-1994 democratic state must be actively contested by progressive anti-capitalist forces from within and outside. The state is deeply contested and characterised by bureaucratic silos, policy contradictions and inconsistency.

As we rebuild and unify Cosatu together, we must remember:

- Worker democracy and servicing workers is vital;
- The changing nature of the working class requires innovation;
- The importance of rebuilding solidarity between workplace and community struggles; and

It does not assist for unions to be timid and uncritical or to display regime-change and anti-state oppositionism.

The SACP is convinced that the great majority of Cosatu unionists, the tens of thousands of shop stewards and the millions of organised workers in the federation's ranks will, once more, not fail the revolution. ●

Cde Barsel is a veteran SACP Politburo and Central Committee Member

THE CUBAN FIVE

South Africa prepares to welcome the Cuban Five!

The release of the five, after more than a decade in US prisons, marked the start of easing relations between the US and Cuba – after a 50-year, global US embargo of the tiny socialist state

Three of the Cuban Five will be guests of the ANC and Alliance in South Africa from 21 June to 3 July. The other two will be represented by family members. They will be accompanied by a member of the Cuban Communist Party.

Their programme is still being finalized but at this stage the aim is for them to visit Gauteng, Limpopo, Western Cape, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Free State.

They will meet Focus (Friends of Cuba in South Africa). They will also visit Parliament and Robben Island. They will take part in the 60th celebration of the Freedom Charter in Kliptown on 26 June, and address a seminar at Wits University on 2 July. It is also proposed that a march takes place to the United States embassy while they are here.

The Cuban Five are Cdes Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Schwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez and Fernando González Llort. Three were born in Cuba and two in the United States. Three fought in Angola in support of its national liberation, including against the apartheid regime.

They were arrested in Miami in September 1998 because they were monitoring the activities of Cuban exiles opposed to the Cuban regime. In 2001 Cde Hernandez received a double life sentence and Cdes Guerrero and Labañino received life sentences. Cdes Fernando and René Gonzalez received 19 and 15 years respectively.

A massive international campaign was launched for their release, which



The Cuban Five: Cdes Rene González Schwerert, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Fernando González Llort and Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez

included the participation of the SACP and the entire Alliance.

Cde René González was released in 2011 and Cde Fernando González in February 2014. The remaining comrades were released on 17 December 2014, in a prisoner swap with Cuba for an American intelligence officer, as part of the opening up of relations between the United States and Cuba.

The Cuban comrades' release was enthusiastically welcomed by the SACP and the Alliance. On their release the SACP said: "The SACP celebrates with the families, friends and comrades of these great heroes of the Cuban revolution and people as a whole, and shares with all of them the sheer joy of their release from the jaws of imperialism in the US. The release of the Cuban Five

represents a symbolic victory over imperialism which is in the state of multiple crises and is unable to rule in the old way.

"The SACP further wishes to thank all South Africans who tirelessly took part in this struggle through our own Party organisation and, but by no means exclusively, the Friends of Cuba Society South Africa. The SACP also congratulates our government for active solidarity with the people of Cuba on this and various fronts. Our government has been vocal in this struggle, and has consistently voted at the United Nations for the lifting of the US's illegal economic embargo on Cuba."

Their visit to South Africa will cement the long and enduring ties between our two countries. ●

INTERVIEW

We need stronger communists!

Umsebenzi interviewed Cde Eric Mtshali (83), on his memories of SACP General Secretary Cde Moses Kotane and Chairperson Cde JB Marks

You knew them well, of course, personally. What were they like, their personalities, their characters?

Well, Kotane was a bit short tempered. But JB (Marks) was the opposite. He was quite calm. Kotane could be very outspoken. He was a bit distant. JB was very friendly, easy to approach. He was a great old man. Very polite. They were great pals. Also with (Yusuf) Dadoo. Kotane and JB shared small rooms in the ANC office. (Moses) Mabhida was also there. They lived there. They had a very small dining room.

When did you first meet them?

JB and I met in 1961. I went to Jo'burg for a political school, I was there for a Winter School – it took three weeks. I can't remember when exactly I met Kotane, but it was soon thereafter. I also met JB and Kotane at the 1962 SACP Congress underground. It was a well-attended congress given the underground circumstances and the difficulties in travelling. It's the first time I met Hani. We were both young and beautiful then (laughs), but Chris was younger. Then I met Kotane and Duma Nokwe in Dar es Salaam in 1963. I left South Africa in 1962, among the first groups to leave.

So what are some of your main memories of Cdes Kotane and Marks during the exile years?

Well, one that I think of now is the Morogoro Conference. That was the brainchild of MK. It was MK that forced it to happen. Mainly young Communists. We had stayed in Tanzania for too long. We demanded to go home. Conditions in the camps were bad. The conditions improved when Kotane, Marks and Nokwe helped us – they went to the so-



Cde Mtshali (83) with CC member Cde Ben Dikobe Martins

If the current generation knew Kotane and JB (Marks), the ANC would not be in decline like now – it's the fault of both the ANC and the SACP that the young don't know them

cialist countries and got help and living conditions changed drastically. Even the countries in which we trained were now changed – we went to socialist countries. Kotane and Marks supported the call for the Morogoro Conference.

We also had tensions in the camps – between those supporting the Soviet Union and those with China. Leaders like Tambo, Kotane, (Moses) Mabhida, Nokwe, Marks – they came to the camps to say that the Sino-Soviet split should not divide us. Kotane first addressed us. He said this is an ANC camp, there are no Communists here. So there can't be these



Cde Mtshali meets "London Recruit" and British Communist Party member Cde Bob Allen during a CC meeting

divisions. Tambo agreed with him. But JB said it's true you are in an ANC camp, but you're not going to change, you remain Communists. There was loud applause. But, anyway, after they left those tensions subsided. JB and Mabhida used to come much more to the camps, and they were more acceptable to the comrades than Kotane. If it wasn't for JB and Mabhida, the camp would have split.

What do you think this experience says about Cde Kotane?

No, no, he was very influential, very respected. He was a great leader. He was also a confidant of (Inkosi Albert) Luthuli. During MK's formation, Kotane went to speak to Luthuli. Luthuli would not take any serious decisions without consulting Kotane. Luthuli would always ask 'have you consulted Kotane?' every time we spoke about serious things. Kotane was the greatest General Secretary. He was very fair when it came to the Party. He had no favourites. No one can point a finger and say here's a favourite. Kotane was also outspoken, yet he was highly respected in the ANC.

A bit more about Cde Marks?

I remember going to Moscow in the

late 1960s in a delegation led by JB. We met Soviet theoreticians and military officers. We stayed in the same house, Stalin's Guest House. We also had a SACP meeting there. JB didn't treat me as his junior, you'd think I'm his brother or his equal. Same goes for Dadoo – modest old man. I was encouraged by their attitude.

Other memories?

I met Kotane in hospital in Moscow. He asked me if I was on holiday in Moscow. I said no. 'But it's holiday season now. You came all this way to see me?' I said I was in Cuba for a World Federation of Trade Unions Congress, and they paid for me to go to Moscow to see him. He said, 'But you must take holidays. See what happened to me now. I always defied. Comrades from home say it's time to go on holiday. Yusuf (Dadoo), (Michael) Harmel go on holiday. I refused. Lazy people always think of holidays, I used to think. But that's wrong, now see, I'm useless.'

I also remember I was transporting military hardware from Tanzania. I stopped at the ANC office. Kotane was the Treasurer General. Tambo asked me 'what do you have in the trunk?' Kotane said, 'How can you ask this guy, he's a military man, he won't tell you.' Tambo replied 'Yes, you're right. He'll tell me what he needs me to know.'

All these comrades had a great influence on my life. Mostly, also JB, Dadoo and Stephen Dlamini.



Cde Moses Kotane – the Party's "greatest General Secretary"

I first met (Chris) Hani at the 1962 SACP Congress underground. We were both young and beautiful then (laughs), but Chris was younger

Things have moved on substantially from the times of Cde Kotane and Marks. So what do you think is their relevance today?

They both kept the integrity of the SACP and ANC. The ANC was respected to an extent because of them. And the ANC also had to respect the SACP. They made a big contribution to keeping the Alliance alive and intact.

The current generation don't know them, but they need to. They need to be introduced to Kotane and JB. If they knew these leaders, the ANC would not be in decline like now. It's the fault of both the ANC and the SACP that the young don't know JB and Kotane.

These comrades remain relevant as capitalism is still strong and we need to have a strong SACP. To make the SACP strong we need to go back to the basics, we need proper recruitment, we can't open the floodgates and let everybody in, we can't let in the tenderpreneurs. We need more political education. We need stronger Communists! ●

HARRY GWALA

Saluting the 'Lion of the Midlands'

A fiery orator who did not mince his words – and the loss of the use of his arms did not slow him down

June 20 was the 20th anniversary of the death of the “Lion of the Midlands” – SACP leader, Harry Gwala.

Cde Gwala was born in Swayimane in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands on 30 July 1920.

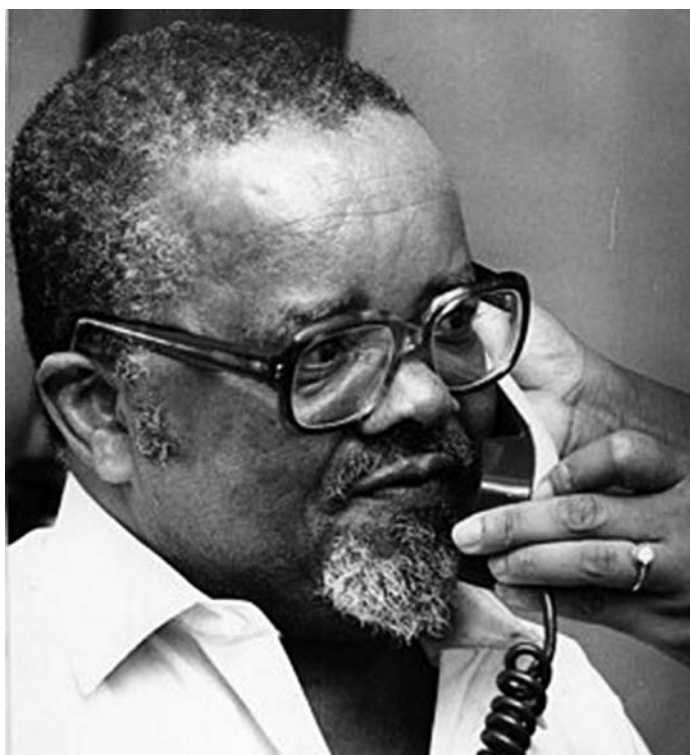
He became a teacher. Among his students was Cde Moses Mabhida, who later became SACP General Secretary. Cde Gwala joined the SACP in 1942 and the ANC Youth League two years later. He organised workers in the chemical and building industries and established the Rubber and Cable Workers Union in Howick, Pietermaritzburg.

He had a two-year banning order slapped on him in 1952 and was dismissed from Edendale Hospital for recruiting hospital workers into the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu). After the ANC's banning in 1960, Cde Gwala joined MK and was arrested in 1964. He was sentenced eight years on Robben Island. He was released in 1972, but was restricted to Pietermaritzburg.

He was detained again in 1975 and in 1976 Cde Gwala and other ANC stalwarts were arrested for organising a strike. In 1977 he was sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. In the 1980s motor neuron disease robbed him of the use of his arms, leading to his release from prison in November 1988.

This disability did not deter him from continuing to be active in the struggle.

He was released into the midst of a



Cde Gwala on the phone – with a comrade holding it for him

civil war - his home town, Pietermaritzburg, was becoming the epicentre of a bloody conflict that was to rage through the Midlands.

“Every weekend”, he later told the ANC leadership “we are burying comrades. You people in Johannesburg head offices and at the World Trade Centre don't understand what is really happening down there on the ground.”

It was this direct, on-the-ground experience that led to Cde Gwala's deep scepticism about the negotiated transition process that began in 1990.

Cde Gwala was elected the first Chairperson of the ANC in the KwaZulu-Natal

Midlands after the ANC's 1990 unbanning and in 1991 was elected to the ANC National Executive. He was also elected to the SACP Central Committee.

In 1994 Cde Gwala was elected to the KwaZulu-Natal legislature and was appointed as Chief ANC Whip.

In 1992 Cde Gwala was awarded the Isitwalandwe, the highest honour bestowed by the ANC. President Nelson Mandela said in his address at Gwala's funeral that it was “precisely because of the recognition of Mphephethwa's tenacity that the ANC awarded him this honour”.

SACP General Secretary, Cde Blade Nzimande, said: “The 20th anniversary of Cde Gwala's death is a timely reminder of the contribution of this great leader not just to the SACP, but also the ANC, MK and

the trade union movement. Interestingly, Cde Gwala joined the SACP before he joined the ANC. He was a fiery, dynamic, rousing orator who was not one to mince his words. He was quite a theoretician and very good in political education classes. The younger generation of SACP members who are mainly in the YCLSA need to study his role in the struggle both for national liberation and socialism.”

Structures of the Alliance including at national level are planning to focus attention on the role of Cde Gwala in the struggle. ●

JUDY MULQUEENY

A simple person doing simple things

Hundreds of comrades, acquaintances and friends, leaders of the Alliance and members of Cde Judy Mulqueeny's family gathered in Durban to pay tribute to the uncompromising communist and SACP CC member. The impact SACP Central Committee member, ANC councillor and grassroots activist Cde Judy Mulqueeny made on others was reflected in the large number of people who attended her funeral at the eThekweni City Hall on 14 June and the tributes Alliance leaders, family and friends paid to her.

Most of the speakers stressed the same characteristics about Cde Judy: principled, hardworking and persistent. Everyone referred to her orientation to the grassroots, not just in politics, but in her personal life. Her relative, Delarise Mulqueeny, said: "She rejected all the trappings of capitalism. She refused to buy a car, own any property, or use private hospitals. She was a simple person doing simple things for ordinary people..."

Her fellow Cde Lungi Lingishe said, "Although she could afford it, she refused to join the council's medical aid. When I asked her why, she said 'what about other people?' She practised what she preached..."

Cde Wille Leslie from Lesotho who worked with her when she was in exile said: "Cde Judy was distant, aloof and not easy to reach. But she was very committed, honest and decent. We have lost a quiet tiger."

Her very close comrade and friend, SACP Politburo member Cde Sheila Barsel in a written tribute read at the funeral said: "Cde Judy, you loved the SACP with every fibre of your being. You would never give up on the Party, even when the Party gave up on you, because comrades couldn't understand your brand of love and the commitment to the organisation.

"Why else would you have survived those long periods of earning almost nothing - and sometimes nothing - but finding ways to be able to do the research you were driven to do when you hardly had food to eat?"

SACP Provincial Chair and eThekweni Mayor, James Nxumalo praised Cde Judy for the role she played in the Council and for her commitment to community participation.

ANC Deputy Provincial Chairperson, Cde Willies Mchunu, said: "She served the ANC with clarity, dedication and discipline. This did not mean she was not critical of ANC positions and she raised them without fear. But she did so within the structures and did not run to the media or



Deputy Chairperson Cde Thulas Nxesi addresses mourners at Cde Judy Mulqueeny's funeral in the Durban City Hall

use social media."

YCLSA National Secretary, Cde Mluleki Dlelanga, described her as an "uncompromising Communist, A Communist par excellence. A fighting soldier of Communism till the very last."

SACP National Treasury, Cde Joyce Moloi-Moropa said she was "a Marxist to the core. She was always prepared to take less for herself so that others could have more. She was honest and spoke her mind without fear or favour."

Cosatu President, Cde Sidumo Dlamini said she was "unassuming, shy. In meetings, she made her point, without wasting words. Cosatu in this province benefitted from her political education work, especially on cooperatives and gender issues."

SACP Deputy Chairperson, Cde Thulas Nxesi, said that: "A life well lived is never a waste. As the German communist poet, Bertolt Brecht, wrote: 'Do not fear death so much, but rather fear the inadequate life.' There was nothing inadequate about the life of our dear departed Comrade Judy.

"You must look at Cde Judy's 'A Brief Early History of Co-operatives and Socialism' published in *The African Communist* in May 2008, in which she outlines the still-contested development of the co-operative movement from its utopian socialist origins nearly 200 years ago.

"We still need leaders like Cde Judy Mulqueeny today - a committed, disciplined leader of integrity who worked tirelessly to organise people against exploitation and oppression."

Hamba Kahle, Cde Judy!



ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES

The Alliance must build on its strengths

In this extract from a recent speech, Cde Thulas Nxesi argues that the ANC, the SACP and Cosatu must reassert the tactics that made them strong – mass mobilisation & campaigning

To analyse the challenges facing the ANC and the Alliance at present, a useful document is the Limpopo ANC's 2014 Organisational Renewal – Vision 2018.

Among the ANC's "competitive strengths" identified are:

- Its strategic visionary outlook anchored in dynamic policies, progressive values and principles, a vibrant organic alliance and our mass-based approach to organisation;

- The overwhelming majority of our people have in successive elections demonstrated their confidence in us. However in the recent elections, the significant drop in voter turnout is a concern. The internal strife in the organisation has defocused our energies, thus denting our revolutionary zeal and sight of the strategic objective; and

- Our extensive organisational machinery which reaches the length and breadth of our country – far flung rural villages, townships and suburbs – remains unmatched. We have witnessed a dramatic growth in membership, though much still needs to be done in political education.

- We have a rich progressive historical heritage, which should serve as a source of pride and inspiration.

- The Limpopo document identifies the following "fatal organisational weaknesses":

- Social distance of the party from the mass base;

- State bureaucratisation and demobilisation of the masses;

- Corruption and patronage;

- Factionalism, ill-discipline and disunity fuelled by battles over state power and resources;

- Using state institutions to settle internal party differences;

- Neglecting cadre development; and



Alliance leaders should never be too busy – or too 'important' – to be on the forefront of mass campaigns

- Lack of capacity to implement policies.

The 53rd National Conference of the ANC in Mangaung articulated similar challenges.

This analysis applies to the ANC. But many of the same problems exist throughout the Alliance, most seriously within Cosatu, but even the SACP is not immune.

We have to tackle our organisational

challenges. Some ways of doing so:

- As the Alliance, we have to be the first to expose and condemn corruption – in all its forms. One of the causes of the divisions in the labour movement is 'business unionism' – union leaders fighting over business opportunities and perks. If you hold political office, you have no business being in business, especially where there is conflict of interest;

especially where there is conflict of interest;

- As leadership we must be in the forefront of mass work and political education. You can never be too busy – or too important – to undertake these tasks. We have to reassert the tactics and strategy of mass mobilisation and campaigns – tactics which made our organisations strong in the past;

- We need to interrogate how we behave towards other comrades. When we have differences, we should deal with them through the tradition of open and robust political debate. But when as a movement we take a decision, then we work together as one to implement that decision or

programme. This, put simply, is the meaning of democratic centralism; and

- We have to defend the unity of our organisations and the broader Alliance. It remains the only vehicle capable of defending the gains of the National Democratic Revolution and taking us forward into a second more radical phase of transition. ●

Cde Nxesi is the SACP Deputy Chair and Minister of Public Works