

READY TO LEAD!

YCL launches its war on illiteracy



June 2015

Voice of the South African Communist Party

Unsebenzi

YOUTH MONTH

Celebrating the '76 generation

+ **THE JOBS FOR YOUTH CAMPAIGN**



YOUTH MONTH

Intensify the struggle for jobs, education and skills

We must build on the massive achievements in youth development made since 1994 by boosting literacy and the Jobs for Youth Campaign, writes YCLSA National Secretary Mluleki Dlelanga



This year we celebrate 39 years since the youth uprisings in 1976, and 60 years since the signing of the Freedom Charter.

Much progress has been made since the fall of the apartheid regime and the advent of democracy. While we have made great strides in youth development, much more work needs to be done to ensure that young people are educated, employed and empowered. This year the YCLSA will celebrate Youth Month by declaring war on illiteracy and intensifying our Jobs for Youth Campaign. The youth movement must focus on the triple objectives of jobs, education and skills for all.

The generation of 1976 changed the course of our history by standing up and leading the struggle for equal education. More than 20 000 students marched against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction on that dark day of 16 June 1976. Hundreds lost their lives and thousands more were injured. One of the first to be shot by the brutal apartheid regime was 13-year-old Hector Pietersen. We must use this month of June to salute our fallen heroes who bravely took to the streets and made the ultimate sacrifice for all that we have today. We must share this rich and proud history of youth struggles and sacrifices that led to the ultimate defeat of the apartheid regime. We salute the generation of 1976 and all other generations of youth leaders who successfully mobilized against the white minority apartheid regime. The history books that young learners receive



Graffiti of Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu, in Soweto. Mahlangu was executed in 1979. He joined Umkhonto weSize in September 1976, returned to South Africa a year later, and was captured after a gun battle in Johannesburg.

in schools must be filled with the great stories of Tsietshi Mashinini and Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu. This is the history of our country that must be taught to all.

Youth Month 2015 should also provide an opportunity to shape a brighter future by identifying and addressing the issues facing young people today. We must remain relevant as the progressive youth movement by formulating solutions to the everyday challenges confronting young people. As the YCLSA, our concern

must be the issues facing poor, working class youth. The sons and daughters of the working class are confronted with the triple objectives of obtaining quality education and skills and getting a decent job. Hence our clarion call: Jobs, education and skills for all!

The generation of 2015 must lead the struggle to achieve free, quality and relevant education in our lifetime. We must ensure that education becomes a common good available to all youth and not a private luxury. We must intensify our campaign for free, quality, relevant education and declare war on illiteracy. Young people must be able to read and write proficiently. We cannot accept a situation where 25% of youth on the continent cannot read and write. Young people must Read to Lead. We must end illiteracy amongst the youth.

Millions of young people attend no-fee schools and millions more have access to higher education because of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (Nsfas), which assisted more than 400 000 youth with R8,7-billion in the last financial year. R9,2-billion has been allocated for this financial year. This is a great achievement but much more needs to be done to ensure that higher education becomes accessible to all. We must see to it that Nsfas becomes a more effective and efficient vehicle for the realising free, quality, relevant higher education, which is a cornerstone of the struggle for socialism in our lifetime.

Youth development became a priority for our country only when the apartheid government was defeated in 1994. It was only then that the National



Above: Secondary school girls declare their protest is peaceful as they march through Soweto



Left: This image of a defiant protester, and the cover-picture of smiling students before apartheid police started shooting on 16 June 1976, was taken by renowned South African photographer Peter Magubane

Youth Commission was established, in 1996, the Umsobomvu Youth Fund, in 2001 and the eventual merger of these two institutions into the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), in 2009. Since then more than 26-million young people have been assisted by these state entities. The NYDA itself has assisted almost 6-million youth with some kind of product or service to better their lives. However, many young people lack access to basic needs and many more are hopeless and jobless. Much more needs to be done to ensure that youth development is mainstreamed into society. It is against this backdrop that we must

call for more resources to be invested in youth development.

Youth development must be an apex priority of a developmental state. The New National Youth Policy 2020 must be welcomed and the NYDA must be better resourced for more meaningful and sustainable youth development.

Youth unemployment remains the most pressing matter facing young people today. Young South Africans need jobs more than any other necessity. Yet about 3.2 million youth are unemployed. We must address the current value system that seeks to produce job seekers and transform it into a system that pro-

duces job creators. We must encourage young people to start cooperatives and employ other young people. We must ensure that we intensify our Jobs for Youth Campaign to involve all stakeholders in developing a multi-sectoral approach to addressing the challenge of youth unemployment.

June is dedicated to the youth of South Africa. It is a time for reflection, celebration and action. Let us reflect on our dark past, celebrate our achievements and put hope into action. ●

Cde Dlelanga is the YCLSA National Secretary

YOUTH MONTH

Let's make reading and writing fashionable

YCLSA's War on Illiteracy programme will empower our communities by making every space a learning space, writes Mluleki Dlelanga

At the opening plenary session of the 4th National Congress National Committee, we declared ourselves as a committee of "leaders and readers".

Our declaration focused mainly on an analysis of the reading and writing levels of South Africans and Africans generally, especially the youth.

On 25 May 2015, we launched our Read to Lead mass literacy campaign in the Thuto Pele Secondary School in Kagiso, Gauteng. The main aim of this campaign is to improve the levels of reading and writing among the youth, and to encourage South Africans and Africans to make reading and writing fashionable.

One of the most overlooked yet persistent challenges in so-called Third World countries is illiteracy. Illiteracy makes it impossible for communities to institutionalise their memories, and the realities of their lived experiences and thus increase their capacity to use the available resources to empower themselves.

In the Department of Basic Education's National Assessment of literacy among school children, only 45% of grade three and 35% of grade six children could read and write. The 2011 UN Development Programme Report ranked South Africa at 123 of 187 countries with worrying literacy rates. It was surpassed by Botswana (118), Namibia (113), and Gabon (106) to mention but a few of the countries that performed better – all former colonies.

The 2012 General Household Survey (GHS) conducted by Statistics South Africa defines literacy as the ability to read and write short sentences.



Despite compulsory basic education, South African literacy levels rank 123 out of 187 countries – well below Botswana, Namibia and Gabon

Despite debates and differences and contradictory definitions around the notion of literacy, a common denominator is that literacy has to do with a certain "ability of an individual to read and write".

The other problem of the debates on literacy concerns the values of the capitalist establishment, where literacy is not seen as a tool of liberation. If it were, it would cease to be treated as "the pursuit of the technical or intellectual know-how so as to be integrated in the market economy", but rather as a social and political necessity that is geared towards the empowerment of the working class.

The young communists' war on Illiteracy is an ideological intervention. It

seeks to break away from the capitalistic or bourgeois "bean counting" approach that is so dominant in the discussion of education and literacy/ illiteracy. The bourgeoisie often link the capacity to read and write with market economy imperatives – whether people have the basic ability to sustain the profit-making machine, and thus productivity (meaning their contribution to capitalist productivity).

The War on Illiteracy programme is a campaigning and ideological expression of the role of the YCLSA in society. It is an attempt to stem the tide of illiteracy, as part of combating the ills of capitalism, and the legacies of colonialism and apartheid.

Our programme is less about "bean counting" and "statistics spewing" than building revolutionary consciousness through the basic things that we may overlook but which greatly affect the working class in particular.

As such, the success of the programme will be based not on nailing our colours to the mast of the dominant "bourgeois

Without literacy there can be no politics, there can only be rumors, gossip and prejudice

– Valdimir Illyich
Lenin, 1919



The YCL drive is to make reading and writing fashionable, not a tedious chore in an overcrowded classroom

literacy” talk but on challenging the very conventions of learning, that is why as the YCL we declare “make every space a learning space”.

Learning does not only have to occur in formal institutions such as schools but every space where people come together can be a learning space.

The mainstream literacy debate often overlooks this reality, and that many working class families especially in rural areas cannot access education. When non-access is talked about it often focuses on how to bring people into the mainstream schooling system. For the capitalist establishment there can be no other learning spaces.

This is not to say that children must abandon school, and seek out new or alternative spaces of learning, but rather to emphasize the possible dialectic between formal and non-formal learning in pursuit of curbing the scourge of illiteracy. While our struggle to transform the curriculum in formal learning institutions is being pursued, alternative and complementary ways of learning and developing human resources must be explored.

By so doing we would be creating a favourable basis for a socialist society with its own institutions of learning, loving, working etc. War on illiteracy therefore is not a matter of you being able only to hold a pen and write on paper. It extends to linking the ability to read and write to social and economic freedom – to having the capacity to be responsible for the freedom you won as well as for the development of society.

War on illiteracy – tackling a colonial legacy

The disempowerment of the working class was multi-faceted and far-reaching. Over and above the social, economic, cultural and political oppression of black people by the white supremacist regime, the assault on the reading and writing capacity of the black working class was also ‘epistemic’ oppression.

At the core of epistemic racism was the fact that there is no need for black people to read and write, to study mathematics and sciences because they had to be “hewers of wood and drawers of water” in their own country. Intellectual and technical capacity was the preserve of the white community, and the rest, especially blacks, were not deserving of such.

They were to be appendages of the colonial capitalist machinery, without any sense of self and self-worth. The white mind would decide what the black working class must do, and therefore the task of the body was to “do” (physical/manual labour), while the white mind “thinks” about what had to be “done”.

The logic of this epistemic racism

It was at the Party night school ... I began to understand capitalist society, its class divisions, national oppression and exploitation

– Moses Kotane, SACP SG
1939-1978

therefore meant that the ability of a black person to write and read was not to be prioritised in the white supremacist state. The War on Illiteracy is therefore a war against colonial, bourgeois epistemic and intellectual racism. As part of this, the YCL will:

- Collect books and donate them to book clubs in communities;
- Work with like-minded stake-holders and establish mobile, responsive libraries;
- Work with and encourage communities to create resource centers locally;
- Push for the creation of study circles
- Identify, support and work with young authors.
- Identify patriots who can assist with reading and writing.
- Encourage parents to read to their children and their children to complement their parents.

- Encourage those who are able to read and write to continue reading and writing.

We are declaring war on illiteracy through our Read to Lead mass literacy campaign. It is our responsibility as the current generation of youth to abolish illiteracy. To us as the current generation of young communists, we know that a socialist society cannot be built in a country where there is illiteracy. We also know that it is not enough for us to issue orders. We must take up this work and set an example.

We call on the young and older people in our country and Africa more broadly to take up this work through teaching those who are unable to read and write. We further call all young women and men, including those who are and are not members of youth formations, in our country to take up this work.

To the entire youth of our country and our entire membership, we say that we shall unite and go to the rural areas, suburbs, districts, churches, streets, soccer fields, poetry sessions, schools, dancing practices, and every community to abolish illiteracy, so that there are no young people or any South African citizen that is unable to read and write.

Down with illiteracy!

Forward with the Read to Lead mass literacy campaign!

Let’s make reading and writing fashionable, let’s declare war on illiteracy. That’s the Bottom line – coz the YCLSA says so! ●

Cde Dlelanga is the YCLSA National Secretary

MAY CENTRAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT

SACP says no to Eskom privatisation!

Defending Eskom is part of the NDR and the country's right to democratic national sovereignty, the May 2015 meeting of the SACP CC declared

The SACP Central Committee met in Johannesburg over the weekend of 29-31 May.

The agenda included discussion of a secretariat political report that covered a number of topical issues; a discussion paper on contemporary challenges in the trade union movement; and a progress report on preparations for the SACP 7-11 July Special National Congress, to be held in Soweto. The CC also engaged with an input on the future of Eskom presented by the Minister of Public Enterprises, Cde Lynne Brown and Eskom Acting CEO, Brian Molefe.

Contrary to one press report, Cde Brown was not "summonsed" to appear before the Central Committee. It is a longstanding practice of the Central Committee to invite cabinet ministers to our meetings to engage with the CC on their areas of work. Cde Brown graciously accepted the invitation. The comprehensive briefings by Minister Brown and Acting CEO Molefe were warmly welcomed by the CC. These inputs underlined a far-reaching congruence on our strategic perspectives on Eskom and the required short- and medium-term interventions to address Eskom's immediate challenges. These shared perspectives are also in line with the resolutions taken by the ANC NEC lekgotla.

The key points in this regard are:

It will be a major strategic error to privatise Eskom either in full or in part. Separation of generation from transmission will compromise the ability to efficiently manage the network, particularly at a time when fine-tuning is required owing to the current tight margins of supply. No less important, the hiving off and

commercialisation of transmission will weaken the ability to direct energy to areas of greatest need.

Furthermore, apart from any ideological considerations, selling off parts of Eskom at this time when the global market value of energy producers is at rock bottom and when, in the case of Eskom, any private buyer would benefit both from a low price and the future fruits of the current massive Eskom infrastructure spend.

As numerous international examples demonstrate, including in developed parts of the world (like New York and California), privatisation and profit-maximisation can result in system collapse.

Above all, privatisation will result in significant increases in the cost of electricity for households and industry.

The current financial challenges confronting Eskom are not insuperable. The SACP supports an approach in which Eskom takes on bond debt – rather than selling off equity. The latter will compromise the strategic management of Eskom in the public interest.

The SACP calls on government, in line with the ANC's NEC lekgotla resolutions, to clearly reaffirm the central role of Eskom in any future energy build, including nuclear, as well as the importance of Eskom remaining active in the field of alter-

native energy sources.

Minister Brown and the CC agreed that none of the above perspectives detract from the imperative of getting Eskom's own house in order. The SACP calls on government to deal decisively with the plundering of Eskom resources by private sector suppliers of coal, diesel and much else with the connivance of some within Eskom itself.

Let us defend our democratic national sovereignty!

The defence of Eskom is an integral part of the ongoing National Democratic Revolution, and in particular the defence of our country's right to democratic national sovereignty. In the discussion on both the political report and the trade union discussion paper, the CC agreed that the neo-liberal offensive against the working class and popular forces in our country should be characterised as a multi-faceted assault on any attempt to chart an independent developmental path. It is an assault on democratic national sovereignty based on majority rule.

The neo-liberal offensive has economic, political and ideological dimensions. Alarmed by advances made in terms of re-industrialisation, job creation, a major state-led infrastructural build, localisation, beneficiation and other critical policies, the neo-liberal offensive has intensified. On the economic front, since 1994 monopoly capital has actively sought to reverse working class gains through the restructuring of the work place, through the segmentation of the working class, with the proliferation of labour brokering, casualisation, informalisation, mass retrenchments and the employment of

**Commercialisation
of power transmission
will weaken SA's ability
to direct energy to areas of
greatest need**



Eskom's Duvha power station, east of Witbank, Mpumalanga

vulnerable illegal immigrants. Above all, since 1994 there has been a massive capital flight through trans-nationalisation of former South African corporates, tax evasion, transfer pricing, and dual listings. In essence, this capital flight by the beneficiaries of apartheid and white minority is a flight from democracy.

Politically, the offensive seeks to dispare any alignments – with our partners in Brics, for instance – that provide democratic South Africa with a degree of policy and strategic manoeuvre within an otherwise hostile imperialist dominated world.

The Times Media Group (TMG), and particularly Business Day and the Financial Mail, has set itself up as the principal campaigner against any attempt at advancing a national sovereign developmental agenda. The state-led industrial policy programme, the R1-trillion public spend on infrastructure, the cancellation of usurious binational treaties that locked SA into financial serfdom are all targets of sustained hostile attack as are the progressive cabinet ministers who have been leading these processes. The SACP is heartened by the steadfastness of government in facing down these attacks.

Emulating the right-wing Republican Tea Party, our local neo-liberals seek to

portray government, or at least the executive, as inherently and incorrigibly bloated and corrupt. Social movements, many with progressive intent, wittingly or unwittingly, play into the same agenda, setting themselves up as “watch-dogs” and litigious agencies funded from abroad. Corruption in government is, quite correctly, campaigned against, but often with scant attention paid to corruption, corporate collusion and white-collar crime.

Parts of the judiciary, an important but in many respects a still largely untransformed pillar of our constitutional democracy, are applauded when they overreach into executive functions, but little is said about the persistence of a two-tier judicial system where wealth buys access to courts and legal defence. When a handful of MPs decide to indulge in hooliganism and seek to render parliament dysfunctional, sections of the media applaud and

the courts, which are correctly meticulous in defending dignity within their own spaces, appear to be indifferent about the challenge confronting parliamentary officials and the wilful undermining of the institution of parliament.

Root out corruption and tenderpreneurship in government and within the ranks of our movement

The CC was very clear that space is given to the neo-liberal attack on national sovereignty by weaknesses, tenderpreneurship and corporate capture of our own formations. The politics of money and the factional control of membership cards and attendance records has entrenched itself in many branch structures in our ally the ANC. This behaviour is, in effect, a betrayal of the National Democratic Revolution and of the values of our movement.

Back to basics in the trade union movement

The Central Committee reiterated its support to the efforts of Cosatu and its affiliates to rebuild worker unity on the basis of service to members, worker democracy, and collective leadership. Cults of personality and unprincipled attempts to use unions and union funds to launch

The Zionist apartheid state's refusal to allow our GS to visit Palestine is another reason to campaign to boycott the regime

personal political ambitions are not helpful to the cause of worker unity and union strength.

Nkandla

The CC notes the report tabled by the Minister of Police, Cde Nathi Nhleko. It is important to remember that this is a report that is responding to a request from a parliamentary committee and it must still be thoroughly debated in parliament. The CC does not wish, at this point, to enter into a debate on the merits or otherwise of security requirements and financial responsibilities.

However, we wish to reiterate the consistent position we have adopted throughout. The costs of the security upgrades to the President's private residence are unacceptable and there has clearly been gross inflation of both the scope of work and of the costs involved.

In part, this has been due to the failure of government to implement a 2003 cabinet decision to establish clear norms and standards for residential upgrades for sitting and former state presidents. This open-endedness has clearly been exploited by unscrupulous private contractors and by state officials manipulating supply chain processes. This failure must now be corrected as a matter of urgency – we cannot have a repeat of this embarrassment in the future.

The SACP welcomes moves undertaken by the Department of Public Works to discipline officials in that department and its call for criminal charges to be laid against some former officials and private contractors. The SACP calls on the security cluster in government to indicate whether there is any attempt from that side to investigate officials and former officials in the relevant departments.

Zionist Israel

The SACP CC expressed concern at the relatively weak response from government following the refusal of the Israeli government to allow Cde Blade Nzimande to travel to the occupied Palestinian territories via Jordan in his official capacity as a South African minister of state. No sovereign government with diplomatic relations with another state can allow the latter to determine which state ministers are acceptable and which are not. We call on government to rectify this matter urgently. The arrogance of the Zionist apartheid state in this matter is another reason to reinforce the all-round campaign to boycott the regime. ●

IN MEMORIAM

Hamba kahle Cde Judy Mulqueeny!

As Umsebenzi went to print, we learned of the sad passing away of SACP Central Committee member, Cde Judy Mulqueeny. The SACP issued this statement

The South African Communist Party (SACP) is deeply shocked and saddened at the sudden death of our Central Committee member, eThekweni councillor and long-time activist, Cde Judy Mulqueeny.

Cde Mulqueeny played various roles in the struggle, and joined the SACP in the 1980s while in Lesotho. She also worked underground in SACP structures in the eThekweni area, and has been consistently elected to the KZN Provincial Executive Committee of the SACP since 1991.

She served on the SACP Central Committee from 2002 to 2007 and again since 2102.

Trained as a teacher, she extended her activities to a variety of civil society organisations and worked for several NGOs. She had a huge passion for cooperatives, which she saw as crucial to deepening the transformation of our society.

Cde Judy was deeply committed to the emancipation and empowerment of women. She was a prolific contributor to debates on women and gender struggles, including in such areas as HIV-Aids, social development, economics and politics.

Cde Judy was also passionate



Cde Judy as we will remember her: committed, passionate and energetic

about the arts and culture. She often attended poetry readings, music concerts and other cultural events.

She was known to be a very down-to-earth, humble, unassuming comrade, with a strong orientation to the grassroots. She refused to buy a car and preferred to use public transport because “that’s how most people travel and I like to be with them”, she once told a friend. ●

KOTANE & MARKS

Interrogating the role of Cdes Kotane and Marks

Ukhahlamba interim District seminar on the contribution of major SACP leaders, and on putting theory into practice

Speaking at the Ukhahlamba interim District seminar on the significance of Cdes Moses Kotane and JB Marks, Cde Yunus Carrim, SACP Politburo and Central Committee member, said: “Individual leaders are important in making history, but they cannot be understood outside the structural, historical, political and cultural circumstances of their times. They cannot be understood outside of the mass struggles of the times.

“After all, Marx said: ‘Men make their own history, but they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but existing already, given and transmitted from the past.’”

Cde Carrim then dealt with the huge contribution made by Cdes Moses Kotane and JB Marks to both the national democratic and socialist struggles, and located this in the context of the circumstances they found themselves and the role of the working class and its allies in different periods of the struggle.

An enthusiastic discussion among the about 40 comrades followed. Among the issues raised were the following:

- Is the term “patriotic bourgeoisie” not contradictory? Does it have any use at all?
- Should we not be more like a “vanguard party”? What does this term really mean?
- Is the Freedom Charter socialist?
- What is the SACP doing to accelerate the second, more radical phase of the transition?
- What exactly is the SACP’s position on the NDP (New Development Plan)?
- What is being done about the social distance between SACP leaders from the masses?
- What is the character of the state? Should we be more welfarist or more



Participants in the Ukhahlamba seminar debating the significance of Cdes Moses Kotane and JB Marks

developmental?

- What is to be done with tensions between the SACP and the ANC? SACP comrades feel that when ANC leaders decide on deployment they do not take into account SACP members – what can be done about this?

- What are the advantages of SACP leaders serving in government?

- What can be done about “stomach comrades” and the corruption that goes with them?

- What is happening in Cosatu and what are the implications for the SACP?

The meeting recognised that most of these questions require workshops on their own and could form the basis of an ongoing education programme. It was decided that such a programme would be developed. In view of the quality of

the discussion among the comrades it was agreed that it was not necessary to always have inputs from provincial and national SACP leaders at the political education seminars.

These discussions should also be led by district and branch members. It was also agreed that political discussions were not enough and that comrades need to be far more involved on the ground, mobilising and organising the masses.

It was stressed that a crucial part of Marxism-Leninism is the dialectical relationship between theory and practise. Marx, it was pointed out, said “Practice without theory is blind. Theory without practice is sterile. Theory becomes a material force as soon as it is absorbed by the masses.” ●

BRAM FISCHER MEMORIAL LECTURE

Assessing Bram Fisher's relevance to us today

This is an edited and shortened version of Cde Thabo Manyoni's input for the Annual Bram Fischer Lecture. Cde Fischer was an SACP leader sentenced to life imprisonment by the apartheid regime in 1966. He was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize by the Soviet government in 1967



Since the inaugural Bram Fischer Memorial lecture by the former state President Nelson Mandela 20 years ago, in 1995, it has always been delivered by the very cream of the crop from the legal fraternity and prominent stalwarts of our revolutionary struggle invigorating the great significance of these lectures. All of those lecturers – I am not even worthy to gather up crumbs under their tables. My relationship with Cde Fischer – if we set politics aside – relates to residence. Together, we shared a common abode in the epicentre of South Africa (Bloemfontein).

Perhaps we should begin where we ended the 2014 Memorial Lecture, which mainly focused on the biography of Bram Fischer. I reckon all of us have one question: "Where is Bram Fischer's monument?"

It would be a damning omission if we cannot uncover what the apartheid regime did with the mortal remains of Bram Fischer. Of course, this was a matter of high secrecy during state repression, but the discovery of the ashes of Bram is now 21 years overdue. Though it may seem insurmountable to some of us, it cannot remain a mystical code to our country's security cluster in particular.

We call upon the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Adv Michael Masutha, to institute an inquiry into this. If we could locate the mortal remains of



"The glaring injustice is there for all to see who are not blinded by prejudice"

– Bram Fischer, letter to court from the underground, 1965

Cdes Moses Kotane and JB Marks over 12 000km away from home and repatriate them without major hassles, what excuse do we have to the offspring of Cde Fischer? I reckon that the foundations of the place where his ashes are concealed might have been shaken when his fellow

combatants, Cdes Kotane and Marks, landed at the OR Tambo International Airport. Until we locate his remains, his biography remains incomplete.

This lecture examines key lessons of his legacy for the current generation. Let us examine his life an embodiment of ubuntu and a confrontation with political apathy and indifference.

We celebrate his legacy in the post-apartheid South Africa, This year marking 50 years since his arrest in 1965 and 40 years since he died. Now, 21 years after democracy, we seek the resonance of his ideals in the general conduct of 'democratic society' today.

We seek this because as the lawyer behind the legal battles of our freedom icons, not only was he fighting for their release but to provide for the struggle to be led by the bravest amongst us. This set Bram on a collision course with the powers that be then, but set him apart as an activist that ensured that the struggle for freedom was strong.

On 26 March the University of Witwatersrand held a colloquium to honour Cde Bram Fischer. A panel including the likes of Cdes Ahmed Kathrada, Andrew Mlangeni and Denis Goldberg – hose in the Rivonia trial and their defence team like George Bizos and Lord Joel Joffe – conveyed the huge contribution Cde Fischer made to our struggle. It confirms what he once said: "I believe that the future may well say that I acted correctly."

Likewise, through this Abram Louis Fischer Annual Lecture series we too, re-



Cde Fischer addressing the CPSA (now SACP) Johannesburg District Committee – before the apartheid regime banned him, and our Party

affirm the sentiment, that indeed Bram has acted correctly by defying the unjust laws of apartheid.

I consider the significance of these lectures as creating an ideal platform for the correction and rectification of our rich political history as a nation.

I want to share my thinking about the Stellenbosch mayhem. For me, it is a matter intrinsically linked to how we orientate young people about our history. Inversely, it is not about freedom of choice as to who is an icon or not. While some may be correct to argue that Cde Bram was not a good custodian of the rule of law, the truth must be shamelessly told that Cde Bram violated the unjust law. It was for this reason the former State President Nelson Mandela described him as: "... a courageous man who followed the most difficult course any person could choose to follow. He challenged his own people because he felt that what they were doing was morally wrong. As an Afrikaner whose conscience forced him to reject his own heritage and be ostracised by his own people, he showed a level of courage and sacrifice that was in a class by itself."

If Cde Bram was really a public nuisance he would have conceded to the counsel of the other exiles not to return to South Africa after entreating a bail

"If in my fight I can encourage even some people to abandon the policies they now so blindly follow, I shall not regret any punishment I incur"

– Bram Fischer, letter to court from the underground, 1965

granted to allow him to finish a civil case in London. His conscience convinced him to come back to South Africa to face his trial. Metaphorically, he took the apartheid bull by its horns. His return from London after arguing his case before Privy Council took many by surprise.

It becomes an utterly meaningless exercise striving for a united South Africa while divisions remain intact. Such unity begins intra-organisationally. Cde Bram tried to transform the thinking of his family regarding racial discrimination. Stephen Clingman in his biography of Cde Bram mentions him chatting with his parents, quoting Moses Kotane: "... the alliance required to abolish oppres-

sion in this country is an alliance between Afrikaner and African."

We need to constantly look at the relevance of Cde Bram to today. For example, can a ruling party clouded by factionalism lead us to a promised land of a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous society?

Are these factions catalytic to the alleged moral decadence of the country's political elite? Are we genuine in our critique of the political elite at the helm of governance? Or are we just possessed by the spirit of factionalism?

Perhaps we have become too complacent in the habits of enjoying the sins of incumbency. But it's never too late to lose weight gained in this regard. This country needs leaders of Cde Bram's calibre, to lead the transformation agenda. As encapsulated in ANC's document *Through the Eye of a Needle*: "Those in leadership positions should unite and guide the movement to be at the head of the process of change. They should lead the movement in its mission to organise and inspire the masses to be their own liberators. They should lead the task of governance with diligence. And, together, they should reflect continuity of a revolutionary tradition and renewal which sustains the movement in the long-term".

It takes serious conviction for an in-

dividual to undergo divine surgery to remove a cancerous corruption. This is the call for leadership beyond reproach. In the same vein that the sea is never filled by all the streams of the world combined, the inter-generational quest for exceptional leadership will never cease. It is interminable. Consider the recent student revolts for the removal of statues

Before he was sentenced to life in prison Bram enquired of his prosecutors: "What is the position of the white man going to be in the period immediately following on the establishment of democracy - after the years of cruel discrimination and oppression and humiliation, which he has imposed on the non-white peoples of this country [?]"

Ironically, in the 1990s many academic institutions established transformation forums under the auspices of progressive forces comprised of academic staff, unions, student formations, etc. A critical question may be posed: "How did those forums pursue the terms of reference for transformation as predetermined by the parties?"

What was transformed? And who is to be blamed in case of lack of progress? Would Cde Bram be satisfied with what has been happening at our universities or country in general?

To those who pursue justice, Cde Bram remains a rock from which we are hewn. And, it only happens episodically when history produces iconic figures whom the coming generations seek to emulate. These rare species live far beyond their physical demise. Just like a ear of wheat, they produce many others after death. No wonder today their fierce antagonists emerge mysteriously as fellow combatants, quoting them again and again! This is because the ideals of freedom they stood for remain more significant than ever!

The Concept of 'ubuntu' and the legacy of Bram

To his generation, Cde Bram became a typical embodiment of the African culture of communal solidarity, ubuntu. Despite all his privileges he chose to do what was right – as proclaimed in his Statement from the Dock. He pledged his allegiance to what today we refer to as a rainbow-nation, united in its diversity.

Indeed he was a rare breed of a patriot. It cost him all – career and life, in moving from a mere academic catchphrase to the pragmatism of 'ubuntu'. His life reflected the spirit of ubuntu, selflessness and free will.



I believe that it is the duty of every true opponent of this government to oppose its monstrous policy with every means in his power

– Bram Fischer, letter to court from the underground, 1965

His exceptional quality of leadership enabled him to offer us a human face. This is the thrust of ubuntu. The actual meaning of the concept of ubuntu is embedded on the Zulu axiom that says: "Umuntu ungumuntu ngabanye abantu", meaning "A person is a person though other persons."

In the 1960s it appeared strongly that peace and democracy were only possible through the barrel of a gun. But, Bram offered the world and South Africa a human face. By this expression 'human face' I mean ubuntu - an individual can only survive through the help of others.

Stephen Clingman noted that Cde Bram: "... (he) came out of Afrikaner Nationalism; [and] died belonging to the whole South Africa. He never saw his as a betrayal of Afrikaner identity, but rather as its fulfilment, its extension towards the true meaning of the name African".

Political apathy/indifference

The nexus between an active civil soci-

ety and state is an enduring theme in any political transformation. For more than two decades now, the democratic government has been grappling with the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Perhaps one of the most deadly sins of incumbency is political apathy and/or indifference. We also recollect how Cde Bram confronted political apathy.

When we drafted the Constitution, we were guided by the Freedom Charter particularly that "(t)he People shall govern". The test of rationality, in this context, is whether the people are governing or not.

Cde Bram, though banned, went to Kliptown with his wife Molly to witness the proceedings of the Congress of the People. Their children, Ruth and Ilse, were in their company. In his letter to court after breaking bail and going underground, Bram argued that: "There [was] another and more compelling reason for my plea and why I persist in it. I accept the general rule that for the protection of a society laws should be obeyed. But when the laws themselves become immoral and require the citizens to take part in an organised system of oppression – if only by his silence or apathy – then I believe that a higher duty arises. This compels one to refuse to recognise such laws".

I believe active involvement of civil society in the reconstruction and development of this country will yield significant outcomes for our democracy.

We need to be mindful that all changes, reforms and transitions carry with them the seed of instability. However, I believe the more civil society becomes actively involved in governance, the more legitimate the sitting government becomes.

Now that we have attained our freedom, are today's anti-neoliberal forces enjoying the fruits of our democracy?

Cde Bram became a true embodiment of the freedoms espoused in the Freedom Charter. As Cde Bram said: "[t]he glaring injustice is there for all who are not blinded by prejudice to see". The seed of corruption is sprouting glaringly so that all who are not entangled by moral decay may fiercely denounce it.

Cde Bram died 40 years ago, but his legacy is increasingly guiding us all towards a better life for all. ●

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