

The SACP pays tribute to

- WINNIE MANDELA
- CHARLES SETSUBI
- FEZEKA LOLIWE



June 2018

Voice of the South African Communist Party

Umsebenzi

RECONFIGURING THE ALLIANCE

Light at the end
of the tunnel?



SACP CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Reconfigure the Alliance, support land reform and NHI!

The SACP Central Committee issued this statement after its June meeting

The SACP Central Committee met on the weekend of 1- 3 June. The political report delivered by General Secretary Cde Blade Nzimande focused on an evaluation of the main political trends within South Africa over the past months. On behalf of the Party secretariat, Cde Solly Mapaila presented a report on the historical background and evolution of the Alliance, and on the current challenges and the imperative of a reconfiguration of the Alliance to advance a second radical phase of the national democratic revolution. On 2 June President Cyril Ramaphosa engaged extensively with the CC.

These respective inputs and the ensuing collective discussion converged on all major issues. It was agreed that there was a new mood in the country that offers important prospects for reversing the serious declining trajectory that our movement, and our country, has been on.

The key priority now is to push forward with rolling back and dismantling the networks of parasitic looting of public resources that flourished under the patronage of former President Jacob Zuma. The CC noted important progress, with the replacement of boards in key SOEs, the establishment of the commission of inquiry into state capture, which will soon get underway under Judge Raymond Zondo, and important shake-ups at SARS, in the Hawks, and in the intelligence services, and much more. The CC also noted with approval the placing of the North West provincial government under Section 100 administration, and the resignation of the North West premier following sustained popular pressure in which the SACP in the province played a leading and constructive role.

There is still much to be done and it

is imperative that the early momentum in the drive against corruption and state capture be sustained. In this context we must neither exaggerate nor underestimate attempts at a fight-back. KwaZulu-Natal has become a seedbed for this counter-revolutionary agenda, but with tentacles spreading into other provinces. Those directly involved in the soaring number of political assassinations, and those behind them, must be brought to book as a matter of urgency.

The sheer scale of the rot that had set in becomes more and more apparent with every passing day. The SACP supports the regulatory and other investigations into the Venda Building Society, and calls for the prosecution of those in the VBS and in municipalities who have illegally diverted scarce municipal funding.

Reconfiguring the Alliance

The CC continued to enrich our approach to the necessary task of reconfiguring of the Alliance in line with the SACP July 2017 Congress resolutions. This task is not narrowly about the nonetheless important question of electoral positioning. The new situation and new prospects, as well as persisting threats, on the political terrain require a cohesive, united Alliance, more than ever. Such cohesion will need to recognise the independence of our respective formations, as well as our collective responsibilities to each

KZN is a seedbed for the counter-revolutionary agenda – with tentacles spreading to other provinces

other to help strengthen positive developments within each of our formations, while correcting and isolating those forces involved in deviations, factionalism and corruption.

In the CC's engagement with President Ramaphosa we were encouraged by an active willingness to take forward such discussions in this spirit.

The land question

The CC noted and welcomed the broad outcomes of the ANC's recent Land Summit. In particular, we welcomed the fact that the ANC had engaged with a wider range of rural activists, NGOs and research institutes – breaking with the anti-intellectual traditions that had taken a hold in the recent past. The CC also welcomed the fact that the evolving approach to the land question acknowledged that much of the current legitimate frustration at the slow pace of both rural and urban land transformation was the result of weak state institutions, policy confusions and even corruption.

The political report to the CC emphasised the importance of all three pillars of a radical land reform programme that must prioritise the working class and urban and rural poor - restitution, redistribution and tenure security. In particular, what is required is a much greater emphasis on a forward looking land redistribution programme as well as addressing the 60% of South Africans who are outside of the formal individual title deeds system - including farm-workers, labour tenants, the millions in informal settlement, and in ownerless buildings.

Radical transformation of the financial sector

The CC noted the work that is currently



Two flags; a single Alliance – the CC noted Cde Ramaphosa's 'active willingness' in reconfiguration talks

underway at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Ned-lac) towards the outcome of the second financial sector summit scheduled to take place in July. The first financial sector summit was held a decade ago. Despite commendable achievements that cushioned South Africa from the worst impact of the 2008 global economic crisis, the reality is that the untransformed systemic and structural features of the financial sector persist. The cost of financial services, such as housing financing, remains exorbitant, and consumers are heavily indebted. The debt is driven by finance capital not to support productive development but to fuel unproductive consumption. Investment in productive activity remains extremely poor, and unemployment, inequality and poverty continue.

The outcome of the summit must therefore establish a firm basis and pave the way to a radical transformation of the financial sector. In particular, the systemic and structural features of the financial sector, the financial architecture and financial sector landscape, must be transformed. The financial sector must be de-monopolised and diversified and made to serve the people. The high cost of banking and other financial services must be radically reduced. ●

Forward towards health solidarity

Health Minister, Cde Aaron Motsoaledi, presented an update on the process towards a national health insurance system (NHI). The core of his input is that we cannot consolidate an NHI unless we consolidate a common health fund that pools and redistributes health care spending on a solidarity basis. Health spending is the site of a major class struggle in a country in which private health care spending proportionate to GDP is the highest in the world. Currently South Africa spends 8,5% of GDP on health care. But 4,4% of that is spent on only 16% of the population, while 84% of South Africans depend on the remaining 4,1%.

Since 1998 there has been a massive process of concentration in three private hospital groups, all listed on the JSE. The profits of these three have sky-rocketed, and the private care system has cannibalised the public sector, drawing away medical specialists and leaching off medical aid funds and their members, who are increasingly in crisis.

The SACP pledged to support the introduction of a NHI Bill, an important step towards curbing these abuses and ensuring quality health care for all South Africans. Cde Motsoaledi also briefed the SACP on the bilateral SA-Cuba agreement. He underlined the Cuban world-class preventative approach to health care for all, as opposed to the dominant, hi-tech, costly curative approach that dominates the South African health system. A progressive move in this direction is imperative for the consolidation of the NHI. It is in this context that the SACP fully supports Cde Motsoaledi's commitment to consolidating our cooperation with Cuba. ●



Cde Motsoaledi: Support from the CC

16 JUNE

YCL 96 years on: youth struggles for socialism

As the YCL commemorates Youth Month, Mluleki Dlelanga outlines its objectives as the cultivator of future communists



As we commemorate the 1976 generation and the contribution that generation has made to the pillars of our national democratic revolution (NDR) in June 2018, Youth Month, we record that 25 May 2018 was more than an ordinary day for the Young Communist League of South Africa (YCL); it was the 96th anniversary of founding the YCL. It is not easy to establish a particular date that marks the birth of an idea. Ideas unfold and take shape through twists and turns. But the establishment of the YCL on 25 May 1922 is a milestone in the unfolding struggle for socialism.

As we celebrate our anniversary, we are encouraged and guided by what the leader of Chinese revolution, Mao Zedong told the Youth Union in China: “study on one hand and recreation, rest and sleep on the other should both receive adequate attention. Therefore the youth must study, sleep, work and play”. Our challenge today, is how to follow this guidance as young people ravaged by unemployment, poverty and inequality.

The YCL is a vehicle for mobilising young people based on socialist ideals and a future in which children and youth will be able to study, to play, to work and to rest in a society moulded to emancipate the full potential of all young people. In line with the YCL Constitution, we are supposed to recruit young people from all cultural and racial backgrounds, between the ages of 14 and 35. YCL members are organised from branch level. Our membership is voluntary, with members expected to play an active role in confronting the challenges facing the youth.

As a communist youth organisation, we are distinguished from other youth



YCL's salute: The late Cde Ruth First, the league's second National Secretary (right), with the late Cde Winnie Mandela

formations by our Marxist-Leninist ideological stance and vision of the society we seek to build. Our members, although not always communist at the outset, are expected to learn over time and understand the medium and long-term vision of the SACP. We are an organisation of young people whose main objective is to fight for socialism and advance the political and organisational programme of the SACP, and in the short-term, to agitate for a society that meets the basic demands of education, health, work, land, housing and protection of the environment. We must recruit, train and prepare

YCL aims to organise young people as an integral part of the working class movement, struggling for socialism

membership for the SACP.

The YCL is a factory for future communists.

The YCL aims to organise young people as an integral part of the working-class movement, struggling for socialism in which the development of human beings will be the basis for production and organising society. It is in this society, as opposed to a system driven to maximise profit for the few, that working-class power in all spheres of life will be utilised to achieve human development based on democracy that people will be truly liberated.

We are the sons and daughters of the communist heroes, sung and unsung, who held the baton as the first generations of the YCL. Among them we salute the YCL's first National Secretary, Cde Sara Sable, and Cde Ruth First, its second National Secretary, and all who have followed in their footsteps. These comrades



We are the YCLSA of the SACP: YCL delegates to the 14th National Congress (from left): National Treasurer Masello Senne, National Secretary Mluleki Dlelanga, Chair Yershen Pillay and Deputy Chair Joyce Tsipa

laid the foundation for us, whose contributions to building this organisation are immeasurable, and who have faced labelling, insults and scorn but remained true to their convictions.

In 2002, the SACP 11th Congress took a decision to re-establish the YCL, which was realised at the 2003 Congress held at Vaal University. The prophets of doom had declared that we would be just be another failing project of an ideology that has failed. Others, inside and outside the progressive movement, wrote us off even before we had started.

We have a daunting task of breathing fresh air into organising, political education and cadre development. We must inspire, excite, and innovate young people. We must build an active, exciting and campaigning organisation. We must continue to be relevant by taking up issues affecting young people. If we were to lose touch with the needs of the youth,

it would be hard to mobilise young people. We owe our existence primarily to our members and young people in general. It is important that we understand the organisational, political and strategic tasks facing the YCL: raising the class consciousness of the youth, strengthening the organisation, building alliances with other progressive youth formations, defending and deepening the NDR and struggling for socialism.

Our ultimate goal is to draw a mass of young people from working class communities and the other sympathetic youth into our fold. We should draw our

**We are the children
of the 1976 generation,
and we salute
that generation**

*We are the sons
and daughters of taxi
drivers, ‘garden boys’
and ‘kitchen girls’,
hawkers and
poor people*

strength from the unity and organisation of our members, and continue with the organisation building project of mass recruitment, building branches, campaigns on issues affecting the youth, political education and ideological training, resource mobilisation, cultural programmes and international solidarity work.

As we move into our 97th year, and as we celebrate Youth Month, as a Marxist-Leninist youth organisation we must continue to recruit, train and ideologically educate young communists who will have faith in the organisation’s founding principles, who will value being members of the YCL, who are prepared to sacrifice for the revolution, who will be incorruptible members and leaders, and who will act guided by our Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

As we recruit, train and educate them, these young communists should learn not to join organisations for positions, but to serve the people and organisation wholeheartedly, to be prepared to sacrifice in defence of the people, to develop love for the people, and serve the people and fight factionalism, gate-keeping, corruption, and love of money.

As we take forward youth struggles for socialism, we say: we are the YCLSA **of** the SACP. We reject any liquidationist attempts, being captured by forces who oppose the SACP and its leadership, and who seek to project us something other than the YCLSA of the SACP.

We are the sons and daughters of taxi drivers, truck drivers, of “garden boys” and “kitchen girls”, of farm workers, of hawkers and of poor people, of people who are subjected to poverty, unemployment and inequality by the brutal and inhumane capitalist system. We are the children of the 1976 generation, and we salute that generation: A Luta Continua!

As we celebrate our 96th Anniversary and Youth Month 2018, we say: YCL is alive, YCL leads! ●

*Cde Dlelanga is the National Secretary
of the YCLSA*

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

NO to the government's YES programme!

Government repeatedly attempts to address the symptoms of youth joblessness but is blind to its causes, writes Yershen Pillay



According to Stats-SA, youth unemployment in this country currently stands at 38,2% in terms of the narrow definition of unemployment for those between the ages of 15 and 35.

The newly launched Youth Employment Service (YES) programme, a partnership between business and government, is expected to have a positive impact on employment opportunities for youth. YES was launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa in March of this year and it is reported that 100 companies have since signed up to employ young people temporarily for a year. The target of the programme is to provide one million young people between the ages of 14 and 35 with job experience, thereby increasing their future prospect for more permanent job opportunities. Government has claimed that the YES programme will have a positive impact on youth unemployment in the country and will contribute to lowering the high rate of joblessness.

This is the same narrative sold to the youth of country when the youth wage subsidy was introduced – an initiative that “did not have any statistically significant and positive effects on youth employment probabilities since its initiation”, according to a study by UCT’s Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit. Government was extremely confident of the youth wage subsidy – or employment tax incentive (ETI) as it was then termed. Despite such over confidence in the ETI and lack of confidence in the programmes of the NYDA, the ETI has not delivered the results that National Treasury expected. Instead,



South Africa's youth: sleeping through another ineffective government quick-fix project

R5-billion has not generated the value for money that could have been generated had it been invested into a multi-pronged strategy of grants and business development vouchers for youth-owned enterprises, youth service programmes, scholarships, mentorship, skills development as well as job preparedness and placement programmes.

Government continues to devise interventions that seek to address the symptoms of youth unemployment in

South Africa, without addressing the root causes. The causes are historically structural and systemic. A youth employment service that offers unemployed young people a single year’s work experience and then spits them back into the cycle of unemployment, will not make any meaningful impact on youth unemployment. A silver bullet approach to youth unemployment will simply not have any impact at all.

According to the YES CEO, Tashmia Ismail-Saville: “One year of work experience, coupled with a curriculum vitae and reference letter, increases a young person’s chances of finding employment by three times.” There may be some degree of truth to this, but it is a far cry from making any dent on the real picture of youth unemployment. At most it may only scratch the surface of youth unemployment in South Africa.

As the YCLSA we are tired of the periodic silver bullet responses to youth unemployment by government and the private sector. We want long term sustainable solutions that fundamentally transform the structurally deformed labour market, which is incapable of absorbing young South Africans into permanent employment.

The dominant view held by most of the private sector is that youth are nothing more than a market to be influenced and exploited. The private sector views youth as consumers and nothing more. There is a need for the private sector and society generally to change this view, to one that recognises youth as assets and equal partners in their own development. Only then can any meaningful progress be made towards changing the landscape of youth unemployment.

Youth unemployment is not a one-di-

A silver bullet approach to youth unemployment will simply not have any impact



Walking away: Like these young people, the YCL has lost interest in the government's attempt to solve youth unemployment with a single, costly, silver-bullet programme

mensional challenge. It cannot simply be addressed with a single isolated intervention, such as a youth employment service. The content and quality of education plays an important part in employability. Simply incentivising the private sector to create more opportunities, without ensuring that young people are educated, skilled, healthy and adequately prepared for the workplace environment, can only lead to failure. South Africa's poor educational performance against the high investment in education and training seems to exacerbate the inability of the labour market to absorb large numbers of young people. Studies show that the quality and level of education are proportional to employability. Young people with only primary education or with only some secondary education are the most affected. Some 38,3% of young people with matric as their highest qualification are unemployed, according to StatsSA – but 54,8% of young people with a level less than matric are unemployed.

Youth unemployment remains the biggest challenge and the most important issue for young people in South Africa. To advance a second, more radi-

cal phase of the national democratic revolution requires a more dedicated focus on job creation for the youth and affirming youth employment creation as an apex priority of society, not just of government. It is therefore imperative that a more pragmatic and comprehensive youth employment action plan is developed and implemented during the second, more radical phase of the NDR. This youth employment action plan

must clearly define how the country will create in excess of three million sustainable jobs for youth as part of the national development plan.

Ultimately youth unemployment is a consequence of capitalism. The goal of full and productive employment and decent work for all youth will only be realized with the introduction of socialism. ●

Cde Pillay is the YCLSA Chairperson

Umsebenzi

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THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Workers must unite now or risk perishing tomorrow

*Conflict between worker formations gives the ruling elite an ideal opportunity to weaken the entire working class, writes **Benson Ngqentsu** – and it's using that opportunity*



In 2014, the South African Communist Party (SACP) developed an analysis to the challenges faced by South Africa's labour movement titled *Meeting the challenges facing the labour movement*. This analytical document came just two years after the 2012 mine-workers strike in the platinum belt – a strike that caught the labour movement Cosatu (Congress of South African Trade Unions) and the Alliance collectively off guard. They found themselves on the defensive and missed an ideal opportunity for self-reflection. There was mutual suspicion between elements of the Alliance leadership and the strike's leaders. Wittingly or unwittingly, the strike was assessed narrowly, without recognising the relationship between political dynamics and state of the labour movement.

The dust has settled, but little attention has been given to the consequences of that strike. Since the SACP penned *Meeting the challenges* there have been major developments to distract the labour movement – Cosatu's special national congress, Cosatu's congress and the birth of a new federation made up of many Cosatu unions (Numsa, Fawu etc). Although Cosatu was founded with the slogans *One Country, One Federation and One Industry, One Union*, South Africa has not one but four federations: Cosatu, Saftu, Nactu and Solidarity. What has gone wrong? Is this ideal achievable? As a socialist axis, we need to answer these questions. The fact that we talk about working class formations, rather than one working class formation shows how deep the crisis is facing the working class.



Cracks in the labour movement, caused by the emergence of elitism in Cosatu

Today government can just introduce VAT, workers perish in mines underground, get hired on month-to-month contracts, work is casualised – all without an assertive response from working class organisations. This article seeks to generate a vital debate within the working class formations, reflecting on the current state of affairs and a possible response.

As we reflect on the state of South Af-

For decades, 'the labour movement' was understood to mean Cosatu – but no more

rica's working class and its organisation we need to think about our forebears who dedicated themselves to the struggle against class exploitation and who fought fearlessly for working class unity – Cdes JB Marks, ZZ Arch Sibeko, John Gomomo, Elizabeth Nana Abrahams, Ray Alexander, Crosby Moni, Chris Dlamini, Mthuthuzeli Tom and many more.

For decades, "the labour movement" has been understood to mean Cosatu. We need to consider why that is no longer true. Cosatu has been an embodiment of the unity of the workers in our country irrespective of their political affiliation or nationality. South Africa's labour movement prides itself on having understood the dialectical relationship between shop-floor struggles and community struggles.



The poster says it all: consolidate the union – consolidate working class power

Because of this, the labour movement made an indelible contribution in the struggle for national liberation. It shaped and led to major reforms in South Africa's labour discourse in the 1980s and after the 1994 democratic breakthrough – the amendment of the Labour Relations Act, Basic Conditions of Employment Act and many other pieces of legislations and policy. It was this united, firm and fighting labour movement that fought with resilience against the introduction of neo-liberal policies by this democratic government. As the shield and spear of the workers it inspired confidence in millions of workers in our country and instilled fear in the owners of the means of production – and in the democratic government. It is within this context that joining a union (specifically a Cosatu union) was fashionable among workers.

But in the past 10 years or so cracks began to emerge within the labour movement – cracks resulting from the emergence of elitism and erosion of a dialectical grasp of the interface between the working class organisations and the liberation movement in this current phase of our revolution. By elitism I mean the use of trade unions as vehicles for narrow personal interests rather than as the shield and spear of the workers. Leading a union means access to and control over union resources, deployment to boards, and in many respects trade unions leaders become full-time in union offices with improved conditions of em-

ployment while not reporting direct to the employer, and thus union congresses becomes life and death. An either me or nothing phenomenon developed and has become the defining feature of our working class organisations. Links with the liberation movement also provided a career path for union office-bearers – an exit route from trade union politics to government for narrow career and personal interests.

It is useful here to invoke the phrase from in the *Communist Manifesto*: "Workers of the world, unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains". This phrase needs to be put into action. More than any other period of our revolution, workers in our country must unite as a class. If the working class and its organisations do not unite today they risk perishing tomorrow. The basic contradictions in any class divided society remains the exploitation of workers by the owners of the means of production. Capitalism in our country continues to renew itself to maintain its barbaric and exploitative accumulation path. The democratic state plays a role in this exploitation – Lenin advised us that a state is a tool to ad-

We must heed the clarion call: Workers of the world, unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains

vance the narrow interests of the ruling class. The obvious question is who is the ruling class in South Africa?

The current neo-liberal restructuring of work and labour legislation represents the interest of the ruling class and is a major threat to the future fighting capacity of our labour movement. The labour movement must appreciate that the general tendency of capitalist production is not to raise, but to lower the average wage.

In the current minimum wage debate, it does not help for any of the workers' organisations to adopt a narrow rejectionist or wholesale acceptance of the minimum wage. These conflicting postures fragment and divide the working class and its organisations – a fragmentation that serves only the interest of the ruling class. The labour movement must appreciate that only a united labour movement is capable of using its organised force as a lever for the final emancipation of the workers. Disunity puts the labour movement at risk.

Fragmentation of working class formations was clear during the workers' month, May 2018. Trade unions and their federations held separate celebrations, dedicating energy and time to vilifying and discrediting each other. They failed to cooperate with each other to achieve victory in class conflict. The working class and its organisations are fragmented, to the point that they are not acting in solidarity with one another as a class in common struggle, but are in conflict among themselves. Thus, the state and capital are free to do as they wish – for instance imposing the VAT increase.

So what is to be done? Workers and their organisations must unite and launch a counter-offensive against the state and capital. We must use Workers' Month as a launch pad for a mass counter-attack and resistance to the state and capital, calling for:

- Scrapping the VAT increase;
- A national minimum wage which all workers can agree on and benefit equally from; and
- A campaign against fatalities in the mining and construction sectors.

The workers must push for the full implementation of the Freedom Charter clause that there shall be work and security. The neo-liberal restructuring of work currently underway is fundamentally undermining our Freedom Charter. ●

Cde Ngqentsu is the SACP's Western Cape Provincial Secretary

HEALTH CARE

Universal health care a building block of socialism

Sheila Barsel argues that there needs to be the scope for Chinese health training and technology to be used in SA

President Xi Jinping has referred to building a world of common prosperity free from poverty and building an open inclusive world free from isolation.

It is in this spirit I here focus on the health sector, as this is a key building block for – that cannot be separated from – the prosperity of the people.

First, some basic information about the South African health system. South Africa's population is 55-million people spread over nine provinces. There are public and private health sectors, with the vast majority of ordinary citizens come under the public health care system. Currently 58% of the funds are spent in the public health sector which serves 84% of the population, while 42% of funds are spent in the private health sector (mainly on medical specialists and private hospitals), which serves only 16% of the population. This money is collected through medical schemes where medical scheme members have access to a vast range of services. But medical specialists and private hospitals are known to charge patients more than the medical schemes allocate and this additional amount must be paid by people out of their own pockets.

A highly unequal system of health service delivery is created where the vast majority of South Africans only have access to an overburdened and underfunded public health system.

The ANC government is determined to introduce a system of universal health care (UHC) – which in South Africa is called National Health Insurance (NHI) – so the whole population will be able to access the same level of services through both public and private health care facilities. This proposed NHI will also correct the imbalance of health care delivery by



NHI: aimed at correcting South Africa's health care imbalance

ensuring that the public health sector is funded appropriately. For a socialist society, the introduction of UHC is essential.

In other Southern African countries, there is a similar maldistribution of services, although it is not always as pronounced as in South Africa. In Zimbabwe soon after independence the health system was probably the best primary health care system in Africa, but for various reasons has been allowed to deteriorate and no longer provides services of the same quality.

That is why many foreign nationals come to South Africa without documentation, particularly from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho and Malawi. In 2011 the official statistic of those who entered South Africa was 2,2-million with 1,5-million coming from the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The major reason for people crossing borders to come to South Africa is to escape poverty. But large numbers of migrants and asylum seekers come into South Africa to seek medical assistance, including to give birth, so that their children are

South African.

Turning now to China-Africa cooperation in the health sector, we have examples of young people being trained in China in various health occupations. However, they return to South Africa where their qualifications are not recognised and they are unable to be utilised, as the curricula used on their training in China may not have been standardised with the professional councils in South Africa.

In the same vein, equipment and technology from China may not be compatible with standards used in South Africa and so becomes redundant and cannot be maintained if it malfunctions.

For us to build socialism in South Africa, we would welcome assistance, among other things, with building of local pharmaceutical industry – South Africa is held ransom by multinational big pharma based in the United States, Britain and Europe. ●

Cde Barsel is an SACP Politburo member



'Charles' Setsubi



Fezeka Loliwe



Winnie Mandela

In Memoriam

THE SACP pays tribute to three revolutionary heroes

Hambe kahle Cde 'Charles', Sechaba Setsubi

SACP Statement

The South African Communist Party expresses its heartfelt condolences to the family of Sechaba Aloys Cosmas 'Charles' Setsubi, the Party's Central Committee and Political Bureau Member, a veteran of our struggle for liberation and social emancipation. Sechaba Setsubi, 70, born on 15 January 1948, passed away in the early hours of Monday 12 March in Leratong Hospital, Kagiso. Charles Setsubi, as he was fondly known within the ranks of the SACP and the Alliance by his combat name, was a full-time professional revolutionary.

The SACP dips its red flag in honour of this fine revolutionary, a long standing member of the Party and one of the most experienced stalwarts of our struggle against apartheid, the struggle for liberation and complete social emancipation. Cde Charles was first elected to the SACP Central Committee by the 11th Congress of the Party held in 2002. He served as SACP Central Committee Member with outstanding dedication since 2002 and was successively re-elected by the 12th, 13th and 14th Congresses (2007, 2012 and



'Charles' Setsubi

2017). He was deployed as a full-time Central Committee member from 2011, specialising in political education and ideological training.

Setsubi started as an active underground functionary of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1970 while a student at the University Fort Hare and left for exile in 1975. He accumulated ideological, political and military knowledge, experience, capacity and professional education. He received

extensive and specialised training and education in class ideology, politics and military science in the former USSR between 1975 and 1976. He was later deployed under the joint SACP and ANC military wing, uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) inside South Africa to establish revolutionary underground cells. He performed this task between 1977 and 1979 while also based in exile in Lesotho.

He was a functionary of the MK Military High Command and was deployed between 1979 and 1989 as a senior staff officer at MK HQ in Zambia, where he also served as an MK intelligence officer. Between 1990 and 1992 Comrade Charles served as an ANC Military Attaché in

Tanzania. Through the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) he facilitated education and regular army training of MK personnel in various armed services and operations in sympathetic countries. He worked with many outstanding stalwarts of our struggle, notably Cde Chris Hani, former SACP General Secretary and chief of staff of MK.

Cde Charles was fluent in Russian and completed his MA in political science in 1982-1984 at the Lenin Party School; an advanced diploma in education in 1992-1993 and MA (education) in 1993-1994 at the University of London in 1993-1994; civil service management (short course) at Oxford Brooks University in 1994. Cde Charles left an important legacy of a good leadership example to the youth of South Africa in education and training.

Post-1994 he served in various roles in his continued service to the people: chief of staff in the office of MEC for Sports, Arts and Culture in North West Province in 2010; delegated authority of special pensions of National Treasury and head of adjudication in 2008-2009; Head of special pensions unit in 2001-2003; manager of the Centre for Research and Community Development in 1997-2000 and co-ordinator of student internship at the University of Natal in 1995-1997.

He offered his services in international solidarity to comrades elsewhere in the world and on the African continent, including to our comrades struggling for democracy in Swaziland.

*Hamba Kahle Mkhonto
Robala Ka Khotso Commissar* ●

InMemoriam

Our Commissar and our sister – Cde Fezeka

By **BLADE NZIMANDE**

As the SACP dips the Red Flag in honour of Cde Fezeka Loliwe, we send condolences to her family, her comrades in Parliament, her comrades in Sadtu, her comrades in the Eastern Cape Province and in the ANC, her comrades in the SACP, and all of those who have had the honour to know, live and work with her.

Cde Fezeka was always introduced in family functions as “uSister lo untitshayo” and when she was deployed to Parliament as “umntana wase khaya lo uphangela eParliament” such was the pride and love of this family for their daughter and our comrade.

Cde Fezeka died tragically and too soon, just three days before International Women’s Day on 8 March. The key address at the SACP national International Women’s Day event in Metsimaholo was dedicated to Cde Fezeka, dealing with building a patriotic broad front, popular left front, the importance to the national democratic revolution of a reconfigured Alliance, and participatory democracy driven by the views and needs of the people.

The important issue of building a progressive women’s movement was covered as inseparable part of this process of organisational renewal, and has to be deepened in memory of Cde Fezeka:

- An activist from the grassroots in the Eastern Cape, active in the ANC, Cosatu, the SACP, the ANC Women’s League and Sadtu, in which she was entrusted with various responsibilities as high as the union’s vice president for sports, arts and culture;

- An SACP Central Committee Member, first elected by our 13th Party Congress in 2012 and re-elected at 14th Congress in 2017

- An MP, elected in 2014, she served as a member of the Labour Portfolio Committee, formed part of the formida-

ble Parliamentary inquiry into governance decay at the SABC; and served as a whip of ANC Caucus Disciplinary Committee;

- A youth education and community empowerment activist, she was busy with in her Parliamentary Constituency in Fort Beaufort in Amathole District.

Cde Fezeka has appropriately been described as humble educator, labour rights and gender activist, diligent servant of the people, and indeed a communist to the front. She was a true cadre of the Alliance, one who understood that the reconfigured Alliance must be active on the ground to make a difference to the lives of our people, the majority of whom are working class, the main motive force of the NDR. Cde Fezeka understood that



Fezeka Loliwe

a reconfigured Alliance must function under the principles of democratic consensus-seeking consultation, collective leadership dedicated to the NDR, and accountable not only of individual members but also of leaders to the revolution in making a difference to the lives of our people! She took her knowledge and understanding of our NDR into every forum in which she participated. It is no surprise that in the massive outpouring of condolence messages, Cde Fezeka is often referred to as ‘our Commissar’, whether by teachers, by women mineworkers, by women’s organisations – she has been saluted as a humble leader, and a dedicated educator in the class room, in our organisations and in her community and constituency.

Our Central Committee will feel the loss of Cde Fezeka acutely. Without fail, she has participated in Party debates and decision-making with clarity and commitment to the socialist future of South Africa. We have lost a strong voice that has led the Central Committee since her first election on issues of women’s emancipation, labour matters, working

class leadership and transformation of the education sector.

Cde Fezeka must, in particular, be recognised for her sterling contribution to our 14th Congress in July 2017, where she presented the deliberations of the commission on gender relations and patriarchy to plenary and steered the discussion on the very wide-ranging resolution. This resolution has paved the way for every Party member to have direction on the woman question, no matter what sector they are working in.

The way that we salute our fallen comrades is to pick up their spears and ensure that the struggle to which they have contributed so much is taken forward. To do this for a cadre of Cde Fezeka’s calibre means:

- Strengthening the Parliamentary oversight of public sector departments and of public entities to ensure clean governance and service delivery;
- Dealing decisively with corruption, including rooting out the corruption of corporate capture of our state, movement and our overall direction as society;
- Hunting down all state capture fugitives wherever they disappeared both in South Africa and anywhere else, tracking their collaborators and subpoenaing all of those who are dodging inquiries into governance gone wrong in state entities;
- Bringing all the state capture fugitives and their collaborators to book and holding them accountable, including through the forfeiture of all assets acquired by corrupt, irregular, unexplained or other forms of undue means, and where required by law imprisoning them; Rebuilding the unity and strength of our trade union movement and building progressive trade unionism across the entire spectrum of the labour movement;
- Building the progressive women’s movement and the working-class women’s leadership of it;
- Strengthening the entire education sector and in particular ensure quality education for the children of the working class;
- Developing rural communities, addressing the land question and advancing agrarian transformation based on the national imperative of bringing an end to inequality;

In Memoriam

- Building strong, activist and vibrant branches of the SACP and working in broad patriotic and left popular fronts based on forging principled and programmatic unity of perspective and unity in action;

- Decisively tackling the problems of persisting high levels of class, race and gender inequalities, unemployment, poverty and social insecurity in our communities, including wiping out the

scourges of gender based abuse, gender based violence, human trafficking, drug dealing and substance abuse.

To take this forward is the only way that we can salute our dedicated and humble sister, comrade and leader – a cadre of top quality who has gone from us too soon. ●

Cde Blade Nzimande is the SACP General Secretary.

See: <http://www.sacp.org.za/main.php?ID=6578>

Cde Winnie – a dynamic and valiant warrior

By RENEVA FOURIE

The portrayal of history is informed by its authors. It is shaped by the perspectives of those in power; informed by paradigms restricted by their material conditions and social upbringing, and heavily influenced by hegemonic class interests and subjective aspirations. Given the relativity of history, and the limited access that the working class and the poor have to determine the content of the recording of history, the history of black people will never be accurately recorded, and more so the history of black women.

The recording of the history of Cde Nonzamo Winnie Madikizela Mandela falls far short of capturing the dynamism of this valiant warrior.

The context in which her selfless boldness was expressed can never be painted in words, for words cannot capture the humiliation of being stripped of basic human rights and being subjugated to the most brutal conditions of subservience, with the elderly being forced to pander to the whims of kids purely because the skins of these kids had less melanin than theirs. Words cannot capture the indignity of poverty, the pain of watching your children starve and the frustration

of living in a world that prevents you from making a living that can provide them the comfort that they deserve purely because of the colour of your skin. Words cannot capture the brutality of the apartheid regime, which did not hesitate to roast people alive as a form of torture for some who dared to resist this system. Words cannot capture the sophisticated network of apartheid intelligence services that made it virtually impossible to carry out a revolution – though the revolution happened.



Winnie Mandela

The revolution against apartheid succeeded because of the bravery of people like Cde Nonzamo Winnie Madikizela Mandela.

The records of history fail to portray the warmth and compassion of our valiant warrior – her empathy so deep

that she unequivocally placed her life in danger over and over again in resistance to that which was wrong and to protect militant youth who refused to be oppressed, and who lived out the reality of “Freedom or death! Victory is certain!”. Between 1983 and 1993 over 2 700 young people were killed and assassinated in South Africa. Over 60 000 were detained during the State of Emergency between 1985 –1986, some of them spending years incarcerated, subjected to the most brutal

forms of torture. Given the inaccuracy in how history is recorded, the figures might be much higher. Cde Nonzamo Winnie Madikizela Mandela’s love for the South African people was so strong that she was often a lone boisterous outcry against the outrageous cruelty that besieged a country characterised by low intensity warfare, ongoing states of emergencies and heavy militarisation – making her a target for arrest and torture.

It is easy to pass judgement on actions taken in the absence of understanding the prevailing material conditions that informed them. It is easy to intellectually impose a morality informed by subjective analyses of the material conditions. Mama Winnie enjoyed the overwhelming support of black South Africans, young and old, because she did not theorise the conditions of her people. She was there amongst us, living our pain, feeling our frustrations; and bravely, with limited resources, fighting against it.

Her defiance was not only against the system of apartheid, resisting the barriers enforced on the basis of race. She defied the restrictions that society placed on women by boldly asserting herself as an unrelenting soldier and occupying a leadership position regardless of gender. She defied the restrictions of class by emphasising the importance of placing the black working class, and Africans in particular, at the centre of the struggle against apartheid colonialism. She asserted African dignity in every way; her sheer beauty, her elegant style of dress, her unrestricted expression of opinions, and her lack of hesitation to act when action was required.

The Mass Democratic Movement has been fortunate to have many great leaders. Cde Nonzamo Winnie Madikizela Mandela falls within the ranks of struggle heroes like comrades Lillian Ngoyi, Oliver Tambo, Ruth First, Chris Hani, Ray Alexander Simons, Joe Slovo and many others. She lived a full and exemplary life. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to her family for sharing her with the nation and for permitting her to be an integral part of our liberation struggle. We pledge to ensure that her life and role is accurately recorded in history. ●

Cde Fourie is a full-time SACP CC member.



Slow change coming: Since the democratic breakthrough, just 5,48% of commercial farmland has been redistributed

THE LAND QUESTION

HLP reports on the Land Question II

This is the second part of Zenande Boozi's Umsebenzi series on the High Level Panel report to Parliament on the land question



The relevant constitutional provision on land redistribution and equitable access to land is section 25(5). It obliges the state to take reasonable legislative and other steps to foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis. Relevant to compliance with this provision is section 25(2), setting out instances where expropriation is appropriate, and section 25(3), dealing with the factors relevant to determine just and equitable compensation.

The research considered by the High Level Panel (HLP) showed that the pace of land reform has been incredibly slow.

Since the land redistribution programme started an annual average of just 5,46% of commercial agricultural land has been redistributed. There has also been a significant decline in the pace of land redistribution since the 2008 peak. Law and policy has also moved away from its initial pro-poor stance and has no vision for inclusive agrarian reform. An insistence on 'production discipline' suggests that those with the resources to continue commercial farming operations will be prioritised. Coupled with the absence of means tests and leveraged grants, this ensures there is no way of determining if the intended beneficiaries are actually being targeted – or that the right to equitable access to land is being realised.

The HLP also found evidence of severe tenure insecurity even on the land that had ostensibly been redistributed. There were serious questions related to who was getting the land, how allocation decisions are made, about what type of tenure rights they get and how they are secured. After 2011, the state stopped giving people the means to buy land. Instead, government buys land, retains ownership and allocates leases. Currently, people typically get conditional use rights – in many case people with no recorded rights. There has also been inadequate research into the impact of the land redistribution programme on livelihoods. There is no functioning monitoring and evaluation programme

showing whether the land redistribution programme is reducing poverty and improving lives.

The HLP found existing legislation failed to meet the objectives of the Constitution. The current law – the Provision of Certain Land for Settlement Act of 1993 – is an inadequate mechanism to give effect to the Constitution, because it is permissive rather than prescriptive. The HLP recommended a National Land Reform Framework Bill to operationalise equitable access and provide a transversal framework for all aspects of land reform.

Security of tenure

The Constitution's Sections 25 (6) and (9) relate to the provision of security of tenure for people or communities whose tenure is insecure because of past racially discriminatory laws, and requires that Parliament pass legislation to this effect. This section aims to deal with the consequences of colonial and apartheid laws that not only dispossessed black people of their land but also imposed a discriminatory tenure system that created a second-class set of off-record and largely informal forms of land rights. Communal systems of tenure, used by more than 17-million South Africans in the former homelands, people on farms and urban informal settlements are particularly affected. The HLP found that even with the Constitution, and tenure rights legislation, tenure remains insecure for these groups. It also found that tenure insecurity contributes to social, spatial and economic inequality and perpetuates divisions across race, class, gender and habitation.

The position of people living on communal land owned in trust by the state is incredibly vulnerable – exacerbated by the absence of comprehensive legislation to would secure their tenure, and by the powers assumed by traditional leaders to treat the trust land as if it is their own. The little protection communal land rights holders have, through the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act (IPILRA), is not implemented because they are neither be consulted and their consent obtained. They are not compensated for loss of rights when their land is earmarked for development.

On communal land, the HLP found the absence of legislative protection or implementation of IPILRA has enabled elites to take advantage of communities' insecure land rights. The HLP identified these elites as including transnational

mining companies, foreign investors, traditional leaders and commercial farmers. The HLP recommendations rejected currently proposed legislation such as the Communal Land Tenure Bill. It instead urged the state to focus on strengthening individual and household rights through improved land administration and stronger consent requirements. The HLP also recommended that IPILRA be strengthened and explicitly included in relevant legislation such as the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act and the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act.

The HLP also considered the operation of the Ingonyama Trust – established by legislation. It was the result of a deal between the National Party and Inkatha Freedom Party before the transition in 1995. The Trust is responsible for administering almost 2,8-million hectares of land, which the trust theoretically administers on behalf of specific communities. The HLP found that the operation of the trust violated section 25(6) of the Constitution. It noted that the practise of converting PTOs (legal "permission to occupy" arrangements) and other customary rights to land into leases was particularly dangerous to tenure security of communities on trust land. It also found no evidence that revenue from these leases was used for the benefit of the communities. The HLP also heard from people complaining that the trust concluded leases with developmental projects without consulting or obtaining consent from affected communities.

The HLP recommended that the Act be repealed to bring KwaZulu-Natal in line with national land policy. Should immediate repeal not be possible, the HLP recommended that the Act be substantially amended to adequately secure the land rights of people living on trust land and to ensure that the body the land vests in is accountable. The HLP also stated that complaints against the trust by people whose land rights have been infringed need to be investigated and resolved.

Land administration

Land administration refers to the sub-systems that make strategies to implement land policies a reality within a broader land management system. It comprises various operating systems, including land registration systems, the cadastral surveying and mapping system, and land related conflict management

administration. What was apparent from submissions to the HLP is that there has been a complete systems collapse in land administration. The breakdown in land administration was identified as the key driver of tenure insecurity. Current and proposed legislative and policy frameworks have been ineffective at reflecting and recording the nature of the customary and *de facto* land rights that exist in practice for most South Africans. The state has not developed land administration institutions to support, enforce, adjudicate, record, update and sustain off-register rights of individuals at household and family level – rights that should be protected are not fully legally recognised. Existing land administration systems the support a hierarchy of rights that places systems of the Deeds Registry and Surveyor General's Office at the top. Due to the disjuncture between the common law and customary law, and other systems of tenure, trying to convert these rights into title deeds results in a range of issues.

There are no laws or policies in the pipeline aimed at dealing with the current land administration failure. Relevant government departments, including the Departments of Rural Development and Land Reform, Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and Human Settlements, do not seem to have a grasp of the gravity of the issue. The HLP recommended the adoption of a Land Records Act, this Act would create a framework to deal with tenure insecurity, urban and spatial inequality, land administration, customary and living law rights, family rights, women's rights, and others. The aim of the Act would be to capture the nuances in customary and other off-register rights that the Deeds Registry is not equipped to do. The report recommended that the law Reform Commission or an inter-ministerial Commission should drive the process of developing the Land Records Act.

Parliament has announced that the Joint Rules Committee established a multiparty subcommittee to make recommendations on processing the report of the Panel. The Joint Rules Committee, headed by the National Assembly Speaker Baleka Mbete and National Council of Provinces Chairperson Thandi Modise, were due to receive these recommendations by 15 May 2018. ●

Cde Booi is a researcher at the Land and Accountability Research Centre at UCT

NewsBriefs

These international news briefs cover a selection of the activities of communist parties around the world and their responses to major political developments. They will appear regularly in Umsebenzi



Palestinians' March of Return begins - 20 March 2018

ISRAEL

Communists campaign for urgent medical aid to Gaza

The Communist Party of Israel (CPI) has drawn attention to the massive burden on hospitals and emergency health services in Gaza due to the large number of Palestinians wounded in the Great March of Return protests.

By mid-June, 129 Palestinians had been killed and 13 000 wounded by Israeli sniper fire, firebombs and tear gas.

The rolling protest, which started 30 March, marks the 70th anniversary of the Nakba, the forcible removal of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians by Zionist militias to make way for the state of Israel.

The CPI is working to get support to Gaza hospitals and health clinics under its Humanitarian and Medical Aid Campaign. The party states: "Hospitals in Gaza are in great distress and cry out for both medical and humanitarian aid to help the medical staff continue the important life-saving operations and surgeries needed.

"Gaza's already overstretched health sector has been struggling to cope with the mass influx of casualties. Medical supplies are significantly depleted and access to healthcare for non-trauma patients is being compromised, with non-surgical wards converted to surgical wards to cope with the huge influx of trauma patients."

The CPI is focusing on supporting the ability of hospitals in Gaza to cope with the large numbers of wounded Palestinians. Medical teams, drugs and equipment are all needed. The party has called on communist and left parties internationally to "urgently examine the possibility of recruiting and mobilising international support to aid hospitals in Gaza".

IRAQ

First woman communist to win seat in parliament

Iraq has its first ever woman communist MP. Cde Suhad al-Khateeb was elected in the May elections as the MP for the

city of Najaf.

The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) is one of a number of participants in the Saeroon Alliance, led by the popular Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. The alliance won 54 seats in the Iraqi parliament, making it the largest bloc in the 329-seat assembly.

Cde Khateeb is a teacher and activist on anti-poverty issues and women's rights. She had not run in previous elections, but was inspired by the anti-corruption, anti-sectarian message of the Saeroon Alliance and the ICP's support for it. The alliance's policy is for a civil state based on the principle of citizenship, where all Iraqis are equal irrespective of their ethnic, religious or ideological affiliations.

Cde Khateeb's popularity in Najaf and unstinting work in poor communities meant that she had a broad support base. People were willing to vote for a communist candidate with a long track



Cde Suhad al-Khateeb: On the campaign trail

record of work for people's rights.

"People visited me at school," she told *Middle East Eye* following the election. "They looked up to me and saw me as a role model of how a politician should be. My colleagues, who support various political parties, respect me and support me. Someone who is successful in his work, as simple as running a school, could be successful in running a state institution."



Oleg Khorzhan: in detention without trial

TRANSNISTRIA

Ukraine’s anti-communist witch-hunt spreads west

Taking their lead from Ukraine, the authorities in the Moldavian Transnistrian Republic (MTR) have unleashed a wave of persecution of communists.

MTR has a population of just 4,3-million. It lies between Romania to the west and Ukraine to the east. In recent years its political orientation has been heavily influenced by the far-right nationalism spreading from neighbouring Ukraine.

In early June, police arrested the Chair of the Transnistrian Communist Party (TCP) Oleg Khorzhan and other party members, allegedly for attacking law enforcement officers. No charges have been filed against them but they remain in detention.

Cde Khorzhan is a deputy of the republic’s Supreme Soviet, it’s main legislative organ (no relation to the constituent body under the former USSR).

The clampdown on communists comes in response to the party’s robust efforts to oppose the rise of neo-Nazi groups in the republic, particularly the followers of Stepan Bandera, the fascist Ukrainian leader whose organisation worked with Nazi occupiers in Ukraine in World War II to eliminate hundreds of thousands of Jews and communists.

COLOMBIA

Partnership with Nato a bad move, say communists

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato), traditionally spearheading North American and West European military interests in Europe, has turned its attention to South America – signing up Colombia to join.

Colombia will be the first South

American country to join Nato’s “global partnership”, which already includes Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan. The partnership with Colombia was ratified at the end of May.

The Communist Party of Colombia has denounced the move as undermining Colombia’s national sovereignty by harnessing the country to imperialist military interests, and, because the US is de facto leader of Nato, bringing it closer to the US Southern Command. The party also warns that the presence of Nato in South America will undermine efforts to achieve unity on a progressive basis among the states of the region.



Polish neo-Nazi banner demands ‘Freedom for Janus Walusz’

POLAND

Communists hounded, fascists indulged

Poland is witnessing an increase in state attacks on the Communist Party and the left in general. In early May, police burst in on a conference on Marxism at Szczecin University, in western Poland, to search for literature and other material “promoting a totalitarian system” – one of the standard charges levelled at communists.

The Communist Party of Poland (CPP) has condemned the attack on the university’s autonomy and the constitutional right to freedom of academic activity. And it points out that, as elsewhere in parts of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet area, the incident is “an example of increasing violations of political and civic liberties” that particularly target communists.

For more than two years, four editorial workers at the party’s paper *Brzask* (Dawn) and website have been on trial for “spreading totalitarian ideology”. In 2016 the four were sentenced summarily – without due process – to 9 months limited freedom with gratuitous social

work and fines. Their appeal has led to a protracted trial that could see them imprisoned.

The authorities have also recently tried to suppress the *Wladza Rad* (Soviet Power) web portal (which has pages in English for those interested), including confiscating equipment and written material from activists.

Communist activity is not prohibited by the penal code, but the stipulation against advocating “a fascist or other totalitarian system of state” is being used by the authorities to persecute communists and equate communism with fascism.

But the government and law enforcement take a permissive view of neo-fascist parties and activity, and allow fascist rallies and marches. It is at these events that Polish neo-fascists have displayed a banner heroising and calling for the release of Polish national Janusz Walus, the murderer of Cde Chris Hani.

IRAN

Hands off Iran!

The communist Tudeh Party of Iran, which is banned in Iran, has issued a joint appeal with communist and worker’s parties through the Solidnet portal, urging widespread action against the withdrawal by the US Trump administration from the nuclear deal with Iran. The appeal also condemns the re-imposition of sanctions against Iran.

“The actions and policies of the US administration in relation to Iran have been – and continue to be – coordinated with those of the governments of Israel and Saudi Arabia. The recent military aggression against Syria, including the aerial bombings carried out by Israeli forces, has intensified the possibility of all-out war.”



The statement warns against “any military attack on Iran and/or use of economic sanctions as a means of starving the people of that country into submission. We further believe that these actions will have a disastrous impact upon the continuing struggle of the Iranian people for peace, sovereignty, social justice, as well as human and democratic rights.”

Compiled by Mark Waller

VENEZUELA

The revolution under siege

Reneva Fourie, SACP observer at the recent presidential elections in Venezuela, reports on the intense disinformation war targeting the socialist government of Nicolas Maduro



There was no better illustration of the war of information against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela than the May 2018 presidential elections. The US and its imperialist supporters wanted the elections delegitimised at all costs. With its revolution under siege, the government of Venezuela pulled out all stops to ensure that the elections were free and fair. This included inviting more than 100 international observers to oversee the process. South Africa was represented by two delegates from the Independent Electoral Commission and a representative each from the National Association of Democratic Lawyers, the South African Solidarity Union of Venezuela and the South African Communist Party.

The Bolivarian Socialist Revolution first found expression in Venezuela when Hugo Chavez was democratically elected president in 1998. From the beginning of his tenure till his death early in 2013, President Chavez initiated swift structural changes to the economy, the state and society. These fundamentally benefitted the poor. He pulled Venezuela out of the World Bank and the IMF, and participated in initiatives that drastically reduced the influence of the US in the region. He oversaw the nationalisation of key industries, massive public investments in infrastructure, the roll-out of free education and health care, and an increase in social benefits. During his tenure Venezuela produced its own space satellites for the first time. President Chavez also supported an alternative trade initiative that undermined the US “Free Trade Area of the Americas”, and boldly introduced



a programme to provide reduced-priced heating oil for impoverished citizens in the US itself.

Chavez’ strong anti-imperialist stance made him a target from the outset. There was an attempted coup in 2002, a general strike in 2002-2003, a recall referendum in 2004, and an opposition boycott of the parliamentary elections, all backed by the US. Since 2006 Venezuela has been subjected to trade restrictions targeting defence and services. The efforts to unseat Venezuela’s Bolivarian Revolution continued when President Chavez was succeeded by Nicolas Maduro.

US aggression has intensified under the Trump administration. More than

US sanctions on the oil trade with Venezuela will cripple its economy



President Nicolas Maduro (left) and (above) his mentor and predecessor Hugo Chavez, with Cuba’s Fidel Castro

40 Venezuelan individuals are currently sanctioned; and business transactions have been frozen between Venezuelan companies – particularly state owned institutions – and companies and investors in the US. The US has also successfully pressurised the European Union to apply sanctions of its own. These, together with the drop in oil prices, has plunged Venezuela into a ruinous economic crisis marked by severe shortages of medicines and foodstuffs. The progressive gains of the Bolivarian Revolution in reducing poverty and infant and maternal mortality rates are being reversed as basic supplies of antibiotics, gauze, soap and toilet paper have become scarce. Diphtheria and malaria, previously eliminated from the country, have re-emerged. The decision of the US to impose sanctions on the oil trade with Venezuela will undoubtedly cripple the economy because Venezuela is more than 90% dependent on oil revenue.

Venezuela has also been plagued by



President Nicolas Maduro greets Venezuelan oil workers during the 2018 election campaign

a series of protests, political demonstrations, and civil insurrection. The efforts to remove the government of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), a coalition established in 2007 of parties committed to President Chavez's Bolivarian Revolution, have been unending. In 2015, the opposition won the National Assembly elections. Despite this achieve-

ment, they were not able to unseat President Nicolas Maduro, nor to win the 2017 Constituent Assembly and regional elections. The 2018 presidential elections was therefore critical to both the PSUV and to the USA- backed opposition.

Efforts to undermine the elections took place long before polling day. As part of the propaganda war, in Febru-

ary the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) opposition coalition declared its intent to boycott the elections. In March, the United Nations announced that it would not provide electoral assistance. Then the European Union refused to send observers, and early in May dubbed the electoral process fraudulent. Prior to the elections, the Lima Group¹ too indicated that it would not recognise the results of the presidential elections due to the perceived lack of transparency. The elections none-the-less proceeded on 20 May. President Maduro was re-elected with 67,7% of the vote. Presidential candidates Henri Falcon, Javier Bertucci and Reinaldo Quijada got 21,1%, 10,8% and 0,4% respectively.

In Spanish-speaking Venezuela, I was forced to watch the only English news channel available, CNN. If I had not observed the elections myself, I would have found it hard to believe what I witnessed, as I was bombarded with ongoing cover-

EU resorts to guesswork to condemn election

Shortly after Venezuela's presidential elections, the EU issued a press statement condemning the poll as rigged, subject to vote buying and filled with reporting irregularities.

The EU stated "...the election and its outcome lacked any credibility as the electoral process did not ensure the necessary guarantees for inclusive and democratic elections. The absence of those guarantees also prevented the EU from planning any form of observation to monitor the electoral process..."

In reply, members of the 100-strong international monitoring team that actually monitored the elections questioned the accuracy of the EU's allegations. After all, if no observers from the bloc were present to monitor the elections, how could it be so sure of its facts?

Representatives of the team wrote to the EU: "The claims in your press release are fabrications of the most disgraceful kind, based on hearsay and not on evidence and unworthy of the EU. It has not escaped notice that the EU was invited to send observers to the election and declined to do so. None of the criticism in your EU press release is, therefore, based on direct EU observation in the field."

For more on this see: <http://www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk/international-observers-to-venezuelas-election-pen-letter-to-the-eu/>

¹ A group of 17 countries - Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru – that convened in Lima, Peru in August 2017 to consider a peaceful solution to the crisis facing Venezuela.



Prime target: Venezuela's state-owned PDVSA oil company is the central focus of Trump administration and EU sanctions

age attesting to numerous electoral irregularities, including vote-buying.

In Caracas, murals of all presidential candidates were clearly visible and there were no obvious signs of campaigning having been restricted. Voting day was peaceful and all political parties and the public enjoyed freedom of movement and could freely engage with the media and the international observers. No protests were detected and despite the claims by anti-government forces, not even their own propagandists had any media footage of “protesters”, suggesting strongly that reports of unrest were fabrications.

Observers were able to meticulously scrutinise the voting process. The National Electoral Council was professional and unbiased in the execution of its responsibilities. In addition to the external observers, the conduct of the National Electoral Council was also formally monitored by official international elections monitors. The system, which is highly sophisticated and completely digitised, makes vote buying impossible. The superior automated voting system was complemented with manual mechanisms of control, which could easily be verified by party agents, who were present at every voting station, in the event of disputes. Any suggestions that the voting systems were flawed can be confidently disputed as scientifically impossible.

A key argument by detractors was that the elections were not legitimate due to the voter turn-out being slightly below 50%. Voting in Venezuela is not

mandatory, so while some voters might have chosen to boycott the elections, a low voter turnout is not justification for the dismissal of the result. Even the oldest democracies have had lower voter turnouts. Switzerland for example in 2015 had a voter turnout of less than 40%. Hypocritically also, countries such as Chile and Columbia, among President Maduro's most vocal critics in the Lima Group, have experienced lower voter turnouts.

Economically dominant forces control the media and therefore the news narrative. The distorted, false narrative shapes perceptions, understandings and behav-

our. Progressive forces have a responsibility to defend the sovereignty of countries, to demand respect of the outcomes of popular elections, and to protect from imperialist bullying those countries that dare to advance socialist agendas. Progressive forces therefore have to unite and contest alternative platforms such as community-based and social media to influence and attain hegemony in the battle of ideas. This is critical, as power resides with those who are able to win the war of information. ●

Cde Reneva Fourie is a full-time member of the Central Committee

US sanctions bid to destroy revolution

On 21 June, the day after Venezuela's presidential elections, US President Donald Trump announced a new round of sanctions designed to hamstring the re-elected United Socialist Party of Venezuela by bringing the country to its knees. The sanctions prevent the sale of Venezuelan state assets and those of the state oil company to US citizens or corporations. The US said the move was to stop the sale of public assets by corrupt Venezuelan officials, while Trump linked the sanctions to his call for President Maduro to “restore democracy”.

The sanctions will likely make it impossible for Venezuela to re-finance its debt by borrowing on international markets, thereby closing off the route to any chance of economic recovery. A similar strategy was used by the US against the socialist government of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973, paving the way for the bloody coup of September that year.

More than 150 celebrities and academics, including Danny Glover and Noam Chomsky, from the US and Canada have signed an appeal condemning the sanctions. They state: “We are deeply concerned by the use of illegal sanctions, whose effect falls most heavily on the poorest and most marginal sectors of society, to coerce political and economic change in a sister democracy.” ●