

RED OCTOBER CAMPAIGN: COST OF LIVING CRISIS & ACHIEVING NHI



October–November 2024 Voice of the South African Communist Party

Umsebenzi



**FORWARD TO A POPULAR LEFT FRONT &
POWERFUL SOCIALIST MOVEMENT OF
WORKERS & THE POOR**

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Build a popular left front and powerful socialist movement of workers and the poor

The South African Communist Party held its Central Committee Plenary in Johannesburg from 11 to 13 October at which it issued the following statement



SACP General Secretary Solly Mapaila (left) and National Chairperson Blade Nzimande at the press conference following the CC meeting

This Plenary of the Central Committee took place following our highly successful Red October Campaign 2024–2025 launch in eMalahleeni, Mpumalanga, under the theme “Tackle the cost-of-living crisis. Implement the NHI now!” The positions adopted by the Central Committee advance and broaden the objectives of the Red October Campaign and intensify the working-class struggle.

We discussed the political report presented by Party Gen-

eral Secretary Solly Mapaila and other reports on the SACP’s work and its analysis of both the domestic and international situation. The Central Committee reviewed discussion documents and other preparations for the 5th Special National Congress of the Party, scheduled for December 2024.

Class struggle in the aftermath of a monumental setback

In light of the monumental setback in the May 2024 elections, the ANC’s decline to below 50 per cent plus one parliamentary seat and its subsequent, deliberate political choice

to establish the “Government of National Unity” (GNU) coalition arrangement including with right-wing parties such as the DA, a neoliberal manifestation and organisational evolution of apartheid beneficiaries at its core, the SACP adopted a critical stance towards the GNU. The Central Committee reaffirmed this stance. The pursuit of the right-wing-including GNU coalition arrangement contradicted our position, shared at Alliance Secretariat and Political Council briefing sessions, especially our rejection of coalition arrangements involving the DA and underpinned by a neoliberal agenda.

We will intensify our programme of national-revolutionary transformation policies, defending the National Democratic Revolution as a strategy to overcome imperialist domination and to achieve non-capitalist development, while vehemently opposing neoliberal and other right-wing policies and forces both within and outside the GNU in its current form and underpinning class character as the subject and site of struggle.

While reaffirming that our critical posture towards the GNU is different from adopting an oppositional stance towards the ANC, the Central Committee emphasised our unwavering right to oppose and mobilise against a rightward shift in government policy, as in its composition. However, in no way does this mean that we must or will accept the wrong things propagated or advanced in the name of the ANC.

“*The hard-won gains of the last 30 years of our democratic dispensation, achieved by millions of people, are now threatened by neoliberalism*”

To give practical effect to this immediately, the Central Committee strongly denounced the conduct of ANC National Officials who, in seeking to justify their embrace of the right-wing and neoliberal DA in the GNU coalition arrangement, embarked on misinterpreting the facts about our Party and General Secretary, Solly Mapaila, also seeking to isolate him from the SACP.

For the record, Mapaila is not the so-called “lone voice”: as

our General Secretary, he correctly led the charge in advancing our stance as the SACP regarding the right-wing-including GNU coalition arrangement. In addition, there are many other South Africans beyond the SACP who share similar views to the SACP. We will not allow any person, regardless of their position, to export their factional opinions or conduct to the SACP.

We will not allow our participation in Alliance processes to be misinterpreted as participation in capitalist class consolidation projects.

Alliance reconfiguration, confronting capitulation to capital and forces representing the apartheid legacy

Without the reconfiguration of the Alliance, the ANC’s unilateral approach to major political and policy questions will undermine the socialist axis of the Alliance. Since the May 2024 elections, the Alliance has not met to provide joint programmatic direction for the manifesto commitments adopted by all Alliance partners or to offer strategic collective leadership towards the government’s Medium-Term Development Plan for 2024 to 2029.

The class collaboration, or elite pact, forged with the DA in the name of the ANC through the GNU coalition arrangement, will further undermine the Alliance, particularly its socialist axis. This is evident in the capitulation to forces representing the apartheid legacy as exposed by the postponed implementation of clauses 4 and 5 of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act; the flirtation with the greedy, profit-driven capitalist agenda seeking to delay or water down the National Health Insurance; and the reformist, or ineffectual, kick-the-can-down-the-road attitude towards the establishment, especially

the initial funding, of the sovereign wealth fund.

The Central Committee strongly denounced and committed itself to developing a vanguard role in confronting the capitulation and, along with other rightward shifts in or revisionist interpretations of our Alliance’s shared commitments.

The socialist axis of the Alliance can no longer rely solely on seeking reconfiguration from within. While continuing to build the vanguard character of the SACP, we will intensify efforts to forge a popular left front and build a powerful, socialist movement of workers and the poor. This will form part of the broader imperative to reconfigure the Alliance, including from without, and will remain open in our modalities to contest the battle for democracy and elections as resolved by our Special National Congress, the National Congress and further elaborated by the Augmented Central Committee.

Radical policy change

In taking forward our critical stance towards the GNU coalition arrangement, we will intensify the imperative for a radical policy change and the defence of the National Democratic Revolution, including through the following policy and mobilisation programme.

The Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement, to be tabled on 30 October 2024 and each annual budget starting from February 2025, and the Medium-Term Development Plan, must drive a decisive shift in

policy and advance a radical structural economic transformation. It is imperative to break away from the failed policies of the past 28 years, particularly those implemented since the neoliberal economic policy called Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) was imposed in 1996.

The hard-won gains from progressive policies over the last 30 years of our democratic dispensation, achieved by millions of people, are now threatened by the devastating consequences of neoliberalism, which has utterly failed to stop de-industrialisation or address the crises of mass unemployment, widespread poverty, and extreme inequality, all of which correlate with the high levels of crime ravaging our country. There must be no room for half-measures – every action must prioritise the building and increasing South Africa's productive forces and the vigorous fight to end inequality, unemployment, poverty and uneven development.

Persisting with the failed post-1996 economic policy regime would be a gross betrayal of justice and the working class – the majority of our people – and a reckless disregard for the clear warning signs in the ANC's gradual electoral decline and eventual loss of majority support.

To improve the standards of living of the impoverished millions of workers and the poor, the government must abandon austerity budgeting, invest substantially in transformation and development,

implement a programme that places our basic national wealth and resources in the hands of the people as a whole and combat their manipulation by elitist groups, whether white or black. Only through bold, radical change can we lift our economy from the yoke of historical underdevelopment, low levels of domestic production output and unlock our true national potential.

The SACP calls for and will in the coming period strengthen its mobilisation of the working class to press for the following transformation and development measures relentlessly.

State-led investment

The government and public entities must take the lead by ramping up their annual investments in critical economic infrastructure. This includes expanding road networks, building new state-owned power generation capacity, publicly owned ports and constructing bulk water infrastructure to support the economy and ensure that all families – especially those still having no piped water gain access to this basic necessity.

The state-led infrastructure programme should include massive investment in sanitation, public healthcare, education and integrated human settlement infrastructure, including recreational facilities, to drive inclusive economic growth, tackle uneven development and uplift disadvantaged communities.

Government spending on goods and services must be strategically controlled and enhanced to prioritise domestic production and localisation.

Moratoria on filling vacant posts in the state must be lifted immediately. The filling of all vacant posts must no longer be delayed – this is a crucial step in realising the vision of a capa-

ble developmental state.

To achieve this, austerity or fiscal consolidation, which has crippled growth and negatively impacted the working class, must be decisively ended.

Monetary policy and the Reserve Bank

The mandate of the Reserve Bank must be radically transformed to prioritise both maximum sustainable employment creation to resolve the unemployment crisis and to advance high-quality, inclusive growth. This means renouncing the restrictive, neoliberal inflation-targeting regime which is anchored in interest rate hikes and makes the cost of finance exorbitant, and instead using monetary policy as a developmental instrument to drive industrialisation and support large-scale employment creation.

The expansion of credit at affordable levels to stimulate diversified production and create large-scale employment must become central to economic policy.

These are among the essential steps to dismantle the neoliberal policy regime that has constrained our economy negatively impacting the working class for too long. It is the neoliberal policy regime that has maintained the paradigm of high levels of inequality, poverty and unemployment, which, dating back to GEAR in 1996, has been above 20 per cent and later above 30 per cent crisis levels by the narrow definition that excludes discouraged work-seekers, and above 40 per cent when

they are considered in terms of under the expanded definition.

Public employment programmes and social policy

The government must prioritise public employment programmes transforming them into a powerful engine of the national imperative to pursue the Freedom Charter's right for all to work. These programmes must provide workers with decent pay and working conditions.

Public employment programmes must also become a key site for skills development, including significantly expanding their reach to cover more unemployed work seekers and prepare them for work opportunities in other sectors.

The Social Relief of Distress Grant must be radically improved, at the very least doubled, or at least set at the minimum food poverty line and then progressively increased towards the upper poverty line.

This support should be immediately extended to cover every unemployed South African and offer them relief from the brutally high cost of living. Beyond survival, this grant should empower the unemployed to actively seek skills training and decent work opportunities actively.

Advancing towards a comprehensive social security system, including the transformation of the Social Relief of Distress Grant into a universal basic income grant, can play a crucial role in the broader pol-

icy interventions needed to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. This crisis affects 12.4 million unemployed people and the 40 per cent of our national population who, in 2023, lived below the lower middle-income poverty line of \$3.65 per day (equivalent to R63.44 at recent exchange rates).

Industrialisation and sectoral policies

A well-resourced, high-impact, whole-of-government driven industrialisation policy, including domestic beneficiation of our mineral resources and localisation, is a key imperative that the SACP will deepen its efforts to ensure is adopted and implemented.

Sectoral support policies must be directed towards securing sustainable livelihoods and radically raising the levels of food production to ensure national food sovereignty. This is essential not only for domestic food security but also for annually boosting agricultural exports.

Sectoral policies must also focus on raising production levels and exports across all industries, with a strategic focus driven by aggressive, broad-based industrialisation to break the stranglehold of historical underdevelopment and economic stagnation.

Through developmental sectoral policies, the government must take decisive action to lower the exorbitant costs of communication and transportation. This includes slashing the price of mobile data and advancing the urgent need for an integrated, safe, reliable and affordable public transport system that serves the working class – not just the privileged few.

For too long, industrial policy measures and the funding necessary for industrialisation have been sabotaged by fiscal consolidation, auster-

ity, or budget cuts. This must stop immediately if South Africa is to break free from the shackles of low national output, de-industrialisation and the crippling levels of unemployment and poverty that devastate millions of our people.

All unnecessarily outsourced public sector functions must be insourced. The remainder of the state's procurement of goods and services must be uncompromising in promoting localisation and developing domestic production capacity.

Expanding skills development across all sectors of the economy is critical. The government must also rapidly scale up the post-school education and training sector, including through considerations to establish new technical and vocational education and training colleges and additional universities to meet the needs of an industrialised economy and our increased national population.

Scaling up investment in the economy and turning around state-owned enterprises

Public development finance institutions, such as the Industrial Development Corporation, the Public Investment Corporation and the Development Bank of Southern Africa, must strengthen their role in driving industrialisation and supporting investments in state-led infrastructure development. These institutions should strive to buildplay a leading role in the state in

building a powerful, state-directed economy that can challenge the dominance of private monopoly capital and de-monopolise monopoly- or oligopoly-dominated sectors of our economy.

State-owned enterprises, including those in the financial sector, such as the Land Bank, must be turned around and thrive. The state must actively drive the growth of the public economy, ensuring that it not only survives but thrives through robust expansion and diversification. The public economy must advance to become a key force in transforming South Africa's economic landscape, unlocking opportunities that serve the people as a whole, the majority being the working class.

Financial sector transformation

To drive the turnaround and expansion of the public economic sector, the government must, with equal importance, prioritise the immediate implementation of financial sector transformation as an apex medium-term development plan priority, including the commitments adopted by all Alliance partners in the May 2024 election manifesto, namely:

- Building a state banking sector through the creation of development and sectoral banks, among others, focusing on supporting industrialisation.
- Establishing a public retail banking system to meet the people's finan-

cial service needs.

- Empowering provinces to create state-owned provincial banks.
- Supporting the growth of cooperative banks, including ensuring that they gain affordable access to the national payment system.
- Finalising the establishment of a public sovereign wealth fund and building it to serve as a key source of funding for transformation and development goals.
- Introducing prescribed assets to direct increased investment into industrialisation and infrastructure development.
- Adequately recapitalising public development finance institutions to ensure they thrive and support transformation and development efforts.

The implementation of these and other commitments in the progressive thrust of the manifesto cannot depend solely on the government. Consistent working-class mobilisation is therefore essential, both in securing implementation and combating capitulation or reformism.

Positive impact of a radical policy change

Modelling by the Applied Development Research Solutions on some of the measures we outlined plus others at significant levels of macro-economic policy support and change underlined a radical reduction of unemployment and poverty by 2030.

The real problem, in addition to the constraints associated with the persisting legacy of colonialism and apartheid, the impact of the multiple crises of the global capitalist system crises and the recent history of corporate and mafia state capture, is the government's choice of austerity, hid-

den behind or executed under the euphemism of fiscal consolidation.

To confront the problems, the SACP will combine mobilising and developing technical capacity with advancing sustained mass action, building maximum working-class unity and working with other progressive forces, in particular, forging a popular left front and building a powerful, socialist movement of the workers and the poor.

Fighting gender-based violence

The Central Committee strongly condemned the brutality of rape across the country and the extortion called "protection from rape" demanded by rape gangs from targeted victims in Mqhekezweni, the Eastern Cape. We call on the law enforcement authorities to leave no stone unturned in hunting down and bringing the perpetrators to book.

The SACP has directed its structures in the Eastern Cape and across the country to strengthen consistent community mobilisation efforts and technical capacity building to complement the law enforcement authorities in clamping down on the sexual assaults and other forms of gender-based violence, including femicide. This must be intensified now, ahead of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence from 25 November to 10 December 2024 and sustained beyond this period.

Fighting crime

The Central Committee reaffirmed the SACP's Red October message by strongly condemning the recent criminal massacre in the Eastern Cape, which claimed 18 lives in Lusikisiki. This attack reflects a broader crisis of lawlessness, with communities terrorised by drug networks, construction mafias, extortion gangs and other criminal syndicates.

Decisive action by law enforcement authorities and consistent societal mobilisation are essential, leaving no stone unturned, as part of an integrated effort required, while simultaneously increasing our total productive forces as rapidly as possible to resolve the unemployment, poverty, inequality and social reproduction crises.

Unwavering support for Cosatu

The SACP stood in uncompromising, militant solidarity with Cosatu and all progressive forces that took part in the Cosatu-led National Day of Action on 7 October 2024. This strike was not just a protest; it was a battle cry against the ruthless exploitation of workers and the iron grip of capital's neoliberal restructuring and policies. We will continue to relentlessly support Cosatu's efforts to advance the interests of workers and their demands: prioritising employment creation, halting retrenchments, securing a living wage for all workers and waging an uncompromising war on corruption, among others.

International solidarity and struggle against imperialism

The SACP stands firmly with the people of Palestine in their just struggle for their fundamental right to national self-determination and against the systematic genocide, other human rights violations and illegal occupation of their land by the apartheid Israeli settler regime – which the Central Committee strongly condemned.

Israel must end its occupation of Palestine unconditionally and immediately. The leaders of the apartheid Israeli settler regime must be held accountable for the genocide and other human rights violations they have committed against the Palestinian people, as well as their blatant disregard for the rulings of the International Court of Justice.

“*The SACP stands firmly with the people of Palestine in their just struggle for national self-determination*”

We reiterate our unequivocal condemnation of the imperialist United States-backed Israeli settler regime for depriving the Palestinian people of their statehood.

In the same vein, the Central Committee condemned the Israeli settler regime's attacks, killings and destruction in Syria, Iran and Lebanon. We pledge solidarity with the axis of resistance against Zionism and the apartheid Israeli settler regime in the Middle East.

We stand with the people of Western

Sahara in their just struggle against occupation by the imperialist-backed Morocco. The Central Committee welcomed the ANC's statement reaffirming its solidarity with the people of Western Sahara and calling to order its International Relations sub-Committee Deputy Chairperson Obed Bapela regarding his utterances on Morocco and Western Sahara.

The Central Committee reiterated the SACP's condemnation of the imperialist regime of France for its unlawful recognition of Morocco's so-called sovereignty over Western Sahara. We welcome the recent European Court of Justice ruling that the European Commission breached the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination by concluding trade deals with Morocco on fish, agricultural and other products from Western Sahara.

We reiterate our revolutionary solidarity with the people of Swaziland in their just struggle for democracy, unconditional unbanning of political parties, release of political prisoners and the safe return of political exiles.

South African law enforcement authorities must act swiftly in investigating the recent forced poisoning and attempted assassination of Swaziland People's United Democratic Movement President Mlungisi Makhanya, as well as the assassinations of other Swaziland democracy activists in South Africa.

The SACP reiterates its unwavering support for the people and government of Cuba against the ongoing imperialist aggression, illegal blockade and sanctions against Cuba by the United States regime. We reiterate our call for an end to every aspect of the imperialist aggression and blockade to end unconditionally and with immediate effect. Equally important, the imperialist regime of the United States must remove Cuba from the so-called "list of state sponsors of terrorism".

In the same vein, the Central Committee reaffirmed the SACP's unwavering solidarity with the people and democratically elected government of Venezuela, and the people of Nicaragua and Bolivia. We stand firmly against United States imperialist attempts at undermining their democratic national sovereignty or destabilising their countries and anti-imperialist gains.

The Central Committee reaffirmed the SACP's unwavering call for immediate peace and stability in Sudan, calling for an end to the war. We urge all progressive forces to strengthen efforts towards a negotiated resolution and national democracy.

The SACP calls for unwavering international solidarity with

the people of Haiti as they face an escalating humanitarian crisis fuelled by gang violence, displacements and imperialist exploitation. The international community, especially progressive governments and the world working class, must act urgently, not just with humanitarian aid, but by supporting the Haitian people's democratic sovereignty against imperialist interference that they have endured, and which has destabilised Haiti in various ways for many years.

Tribute to King Sibiya

While in session, the Central Committee received the sad news that King Sibiya, a lifelong South African activist, SACP member and champion of housing rights, breathed his last. Sibiya dedicated much of his life to fighting unscrupulous practices by banks, court officials and insurance practitioners. As the leader of the Lungelo Lethu Human Rights Foundation, Sibiya stood at the forefront of battles against unjust evictions and unlawful repossession of homes, often sold at auction for a fraction of their value.

Sibiya's tireless efforts bore fruit in significant legal victories, such as the 2018 Johannesburg High Court ruling, which mandated that repossessed homes cannot be auctioned without a reserve price. This ruling was a hard-fought victory that sought to prevent the abusive banking practices that had allowed properties to be sold for as little as R10, devastating homeowners, particularly from disadvantaged communities.

Message of condolence to Tito Mboweni family and the ANC

While in session, the Central Committee received the tragic news that Tito Mboweni, former ANC National Executive Committee member, had passed away. The Central Committee expressed the SACP's heartfelt condolences to the Mboweni family and our broader liberation movement on the great loss encountered. Mboweni will be remembered for his significant contributions to the liberation struggle and for leading the development of progressive labour legislation as South Africa's first Minister of Labour following our hard-won April 1994 democratic breakthrough.

Message of condolence to Mathabatha's family

The Central Committee expressed its sincere condolences to its member, Chupu Stanley Mathabatha, Deputy Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development, and to the entire Mathabatha family, for their tragic loss. On the final day of its Plenary, the Central Committee received the heartbreaking news that Mathabatha's mother, Mme Grace Mathabatha, had breathed her last.

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2024-2025 Campaign focuses on the cost-of-living crisis and implementation of the NHI

From the speech by SACP General Secretary Cde Solly Mapaila at the launch of the Red October Campaign



The launch of the 2024-2025 Red October Campaign at the Civic Centre, Emalahleni, Mpumalanga, 6 October 2024

For over two decades, the SACP Red October Campaign has been a consistent part of our working-class struggle to advance the National Democratic Revolution. Over the years, we focused the campaign on various critical economic and social development measures for the workers and poor, while taking care of the future of the entire working class as a movement through the broader struggle for socialism. The Red October Campaign is part and parcel of the process of our struggle

to secure the non-capitalist development path.

Continuing the struggle through Red October Campaigns

Initially, we focused the Red October Campaign on mobilising the working class in the fight for financial sector transformation, land redistribution and agrarian transformation, taking forward the struggle for economic and social justice, in particular, an end to economic exploitation of the working class and domination of society by the tiny minority of the heartless capitalist class.

As part of the Red October Campaign, we led working-class struggles against neoliberal policies, including privatisation and austerity. We focused on tackling the capitalist system problems of unemployment, poverty and inequality, among others, as part of our broader struggle to achieve a revolution and replace the exploitative system with a caring socialist mode of production.

Deepening our efforts to achieve industrialisation and large-scale employment creation, secure the right of all to work in practice, eradicate poverty, radically reduce inequality, improve the social relief of distress grant and transform it into a universal basic income grant, is a key part of the Red October Campaign 2024–2025 theme: ***Tackle the cost-of-living crisis. Implement the National Health Insurance now!***

The government, especially the Presidency, must avoid entertaining the profit-driven opposition to or dilly-dallying on the implementation of the National Health Insurance. Access to quality healthcare for all through the National Health Insurance is crucial for human development.

One death resulting from the cost-of-living crisis, where the victim was deprived of access to quality healthcare, is utterly intolerable. Such a death is not merely an individual tragedy, but a profound indictment of the systemic inequalities that perpetuate social suffering.

In a just society, no one should be denied essential healthcare based on their class location or position. The struggle to ensure universal access to quality healthcare is central to the fight for genuine freedom and dignity for all.

The supporting theme, ***Together, let's forge a popular left front and build a powerful, socialist movement of the***

workers and poor, is critical, as there can be no social revolution without a consciously organised social force, especially a class force. Today, the SACP calls on the working class as a whole, “Let us build this maximum unity of purpose.”

Land redistribution, food security and sustainable livelihoods

One of the key milestones of our Red October Campaign was its early emphasis on land redistribution, food security and sustainable livelihoods.

We drew attention to the persistent land ownership and related production inequalities rooted in South Africa’s colonial and apartheid history. These inequalities are now daily reproduced by the dog-eat-dog capitalist market.

We have advocated for land to be redistributed to the workers and poor people, who the state, in line with the *Freedom Charter*, must empower with resources and technical capacity to use land productively to support their lives.

The village development model

We have now developed a strong focus on village development. This is a crucial part of our efforts to tackle the cost-of-living crisis and address uneven development between rural and urban areas by empowering rural communities.

By concentrating on the land economy, broadly defined, we aim to develop and increase total productive forces and enhance, diversify and increase the levels of production in our villages. We have initiated projects in several villages across various provinces, including Mpumalanga.

As our village development model expands, it will increasingly encompass more villages nationwide, using land, water and energy as the foundation for economic production.

We want to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the traditional leaders who have made land available for this initiative.

Moving forward, we will engage with more traditional leaders, and communal property associations, to further support and expand this vital village development model.

We urge communal property associations to stop internal conflicts. Those whose terms of office have expired in communal property associations must respect democratic processes. They must allow elections for new leadership to take place. This is essential to ensure accountability and the smooth functioning of these associations, which can play a vital role in the rural economy and productive land use and management if run properly.

Anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle

The cost-of-living crisis affects the working class only, especially the poor, while the capitalist class uses its exploitative accumulation of society’s wealth to secure themselves and their families against the crisis.

In any case, the multiple systemic crises affecting the

workers and poor are direct results of the capitalist mode of production.

We cannot, therefore, intensify the struggle to tackle the cost-of-living crisis without at the same time intensifying the anti-capitalist struggle.

In the same vein, through wars and the illegal regime of unilateral sanctions, the capitalist imperialist forces have driven up the prices of oil and its byproducts, such as fuel. This has, in turn, driven up the prices of all other products that require oil and its fuel and other byproducts to produce or transport.

To the working class of our country, the SACP says:

“*Let us build maximum unity, forge a popular left front and build a powerful, socialist movement of the workers and poor to intensify the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist struggle.*”

The struggle against capitalist crises and the unjust system

The social reproduction crisis is an unbearable hardship to supporting life in households and communities.

Unemployment affects more people, over 12 million, than before the unemployment crisis prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Let us intensify our struggle against neoliberal restructuring and policies, including fiscal austerity, high interest rates, retrenchments and their impact on affected families and co-operatives. This impact includes the mental health problems that have risen.

For instance, the South African Society of Psychiatrists has drawn attention to the fact that South Africa rose to the top ten on the list of countries with the most suicides.

The World Health Organisation highlighted that 13,774 suicides were reported in South Africa in 2019. In gender terms, 10,861 or 78.85 per cent of the suicides were among men. This may indicate how patriarchal expectations around who is responsible for providing for a family weigh heavier on men while marginalising women in the economy.

Unite to advance the struggle for gender equality, tackle gender-based violence and ensure safer communities

The struggle for gender equality is essential as an integral part of the Red October Campaign. In this regard, a strong focus on eliminating interpersonal and gender-based violence and ensuring safer communities by going all out to fight the astronomical levels of crime in our communities are

integral objectives for the Red October Campaign.

For the second quarter of 2024, South Africa continued to report troubling statistics on gender-based violence. In this quarter, over 9,600 rape cases were reported, reflecting the country's ongoing struggle with high levels of sexual violence.

In the Eastern Cape, rapists extort rent from their targeted victims, demanding payment in exchange for the so-called “protection” from this sexual assault. This is the horrifying extent to which the senseless gender-based violence of rape has escalated into complete lawlessness.

The number of **femicide cases** remained particularly concerning, with more than 800 women murdered. These rape and femicide cases are roughly four times annualised than they appear for a single quarter.

There were over 12,000 cases of assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, indicating a continuing pattern of intimate partner and domestic violence.

Despite government initiatives, including the establishment of *gender-based violence desks* in police stations and Thuthuzela Care Centres to support victims, reporting barriers and systemic failures hinder effective interventions. This means that, accounting for unreported cases, gender-based violence figures are higher.

The SACP calls for efforts to tighten the legal and programmatic framework, such as the Criminal Law Amendment Bills and the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, to be finalised as a matter of priority. To be comprehensive and effective, the strategy must articulate the whole-of-state measures, including efforts to address the underlying economic, social, psychological, cultural and religious factors, among others.

Bring Eastern Cape mass shooters to book, crack down on mafia networks nationwide

The Eastern Cape mass shooting **claimed the lives of 18** victims, including **women** caught in this senseless assault, when two homesteads on the same street in Lusikisiki were targeted last week. As the SACP, we **condemn this brutal massacre** in the strongest possible terms. This attack reflects a deepening crisis of lawlessness, where communities, particularly the most vulnerable, continue to be terrorised. This must be met with decisive action by all local, provincial and national law enforcement authorities, and by consistent societal mobilisation.

We also call for urgent, uncompromising action against the construction, tender, or so-called 'protection' mafia who are terrorising South Africa. These criminal syndicates, often operating with impunity, destabilise communities and exploit workers, households

and small enterprises, among others.

Financial sector transformation

The financial sector campaign, which we launched in the early 2000s, is among the significant contributions made by the Red October Campaign. This was a pivotal effort in challenging the exclusionary and exploitative character of South Africa's financial sector, which historically marginalised the working class, especially the poor, informal workers and those without formal employment contracts.

A key victory of the financial sector campaign was the introduction of the Mzansi Account, a low-cost banking option launched in 2004. The campaign aimed to expand financial inclusion, targeting previously unbanked groups. This move was essential in allowing the masses, particularly the unemployed, self-employed and low-wage workers without pay-slips, to open bank accounts, a precursor to the widespread digital banking options available today.

Another major achievement was our role in pushing for legislative changes, most notably the National Credit Act passed in 2005. This law introduced stringent measures to curb reckless, predatory and unsustainable insecure lending, helping to protect vulnerable consumers from falling into debt traps.

The creation of the National Credit Regulator was a direct result of the financial sector campaign. This culminated in the Financial Sector Conduct Authority. These changes now play a critical role in regulating lending practices and promoting fairness, among others.

Thanks to the groundwork laid by the financial sector campaign, South

Africa's financial system was relatively more resilient compared to what happened in the United States and many countries, where deregulated banks and other financial sector institutions wreaked havoc, contributing in no small measure to the 2008 global economic crisis.

Had it not been for the regulation that can be traced to the financial sector campaign, the impact of the 2008 global economic crisis in South Africa would have been far worse.

Immediate financial sector transformation tasks

We call for structural, ownership and management control transformation of the financial sector. To this end, the working class, as the main motive force of democratic transformation and development, needs to pull up its socks.

The banking sector is still dominated by private sector oligopolies, a few profit-driven commercial banks, who together with their ilk in other segments of the financial sector, make up private finance monopoly capital. State participation, on behalf of the people as a whole, is virtually nowhere to be found in the banking sector, in contradiction to the *Freedom Charter*. Worker-owned co-operative banks still face a systemic challenge to thrive.

Both the South African Reserve Bank and the National Treasury have thus far been unhelpful. Their roles need to be re-examined to demonopo-

lise and transform the entire financial sector.

The commitment in the May 2024 election manifesto adopted by all Alliance partners to build a **state financial sector** must be implemented. The working class must ensure that this happens.

We must continue to campaign for an enabling legislative environment and support for cooperative banks.

Taking forward our critical stance

The Red October Campaign objectives are essential as we intensify our critical stance towards the “government of national unity”, which includes unrepentant representatives of neoliberal class forces, in particular, the DA. Its inclusion in the “government of national unity” reflects an underlying class compromise, or a capitulation, to a certain extent, to the interests of the class forces that the DA represents.

Dominant sections of capital, with roots traced back to colonial and apartheid oppression, sponsored right-wing parties in the May 2024 elections. Their agenda was clear: to remove the ANC from the government. How can we, after the elections, embrace such parties, specifically the

RED OCTOBER CAMPAIGN 2024-2025

TACKLE THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS AND IMPLEMENT THE NHI NOW

SUNDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2024
TIME: 10H00

EMALAHLENI CIVIC CENTRE, EMALAHLENI, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: SACP GENERAL SECRETARY: CDE SOLLY MAPAILA

Messages: MKLWV; YCLSA; SANCO; COSATU and ANC

Together lets forge a popular left front, and build a powerful, socialist movement of the workers and poor.

ANC COSATU SANCO MKLWV YCLSA

DA, and call it a “return to normal” in a “democracy”? This is not normal for us.

We will not embrace the DA, and we reject any alliance and marriage with it and the class forces of monopoly capital it represents. The DA’s history is rooted in the beneficiaries of apartheid, and it continues to serve their interests today.

The postponed implementation by President Cyril Ramaphosa of key clauses in the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act is indicative of a capitulation to the right-wing, neoliberal forces led by the DA, even if, in this case, it may be temporary – provided that the postponement is not extended further.

By cutting or stopping personnel recruitment in, neoliberal policies like

austerity severely undermine the capacity of the state to serve the people.

Austerity measures, which prioritise reducing government spending and limiting public sector growth, often result in reduced public services, overburdened staff and weakened institutional capacity. This directly impacts critical sectors, such as healthcare and education, particularly for the working class.

Neo-liberal austerity, which the DA intransigently pushed for, shifts the burden of the capitalist-system-engendered economic and social reproduction crises onto the shoulders of ordinary citizens, further entrenching systemic injustices.

We must continue to challenge the rightward shift in government composition and policy. We must press the government, among others, to adopt policies that prioritise public ownership and social control of resources. This must form part of advancing our critical stance towards the “government of national unity”.

Only through this ongoing struggle can we move closer to achieving a society where wealth and power are truly in the hands of the people, as opposed to the tiny minority.

This is an abridged version of Cde Mapaila’s speech at the launch of the Red October Campaign in eMalahleni, Mpumalanga on 6 October. The full version can be found at www.sacp.org.za

Spoilt for choice – neoliberalism or socialism?

*South Africa is at a crossroads and the SACP must rise to the occasion, reject the ANC's neoliberal agenda and lead the country towards socialism, writes **Lucian Davids***



The ideological struggle between the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress has reached a critical juncture, driven by capital through the establishment of the Government of National Unity (GNU). In this era of “democratic breakthrough”, the ANC has embraced a position that is not unique to South Africa, but is shared by many other African countries that have experienced liberation struggles.

A recurring pattern in these struggles is that, after the fight for liberation, during negotiations, they find themselves ensnared in an “economic trusteeship” controlled by their former oppressors. This arrangement mirrors the relationship between France and its former colonies in West Africa, especially with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), where political power has been ceded while economic power remains firmly in the hands of the former colonisers.

In South Africa, the debate about the direction of the ANC

is by no means new. It echoes the warnings of our late General Secretary, Cde Chris Hani, who had reservations about the negotiations that signified the country’s transition to democracy. The current sentiments expressed by General Secretary, Cde Solly Mapaila, echo a similar tension that existed in the 1990s, just before the democratic elections. The suggestion that the ANC should sever its ties with the SACP to ensure its survival is inherently worrying. Such a stance disregards the fundamental truth that the revolution did not conclude with the abolition of apartheid; on the contrary, it must be intensified.

“*The suggestion that the ANC should sever its ties with the SACP to ensure its survival is inherently worrying*”

One of the most significant barriers to national unity and state-building is the persistence of ‘coloniality’ — the remnants of colonial and apartheid structures that continue to shape our society. The DA, which currently governs the Western Cape, epitomises these remnants. The DA represents imperialism and apartheid in their most unadulterated form, and the

disparities between rich and poor are nowhere starker than in the Western Cape. Under DA rule, the income gap continues to widen, a clear reflection of their adherence to neoliberal policies. Consequently, forming a government with the DA would undeniably be counter-revolutionary. If the ANC is to remain true to its historic mandate, it must not continue with such an alliance.

Cde Mapaila appropriately highlighted the emergence of capitalist forces contending in the 2024 elections. These forces launched a comprehensive campaign, providing funds to political parties such as the Multi-Party Charter (MPC), commonly known as the “Moonshot Pact”. This pact endorses free-market policies in its manifesto and has benefited from a well-coordinated media campaign aimed at discrediting the ANC. But while this offensive from capital played a role in the ANC’s loss of support, it is by no means the sole cause. The ANC’s adoption of a “pragmatic” macroeconomic policy has significantly contributed to the current political and economic crisis.



The people of South Africa need more than social democracy; they need socialism. Zone 17 in Langa, Cape Town, has seen zero development since apartheid thanks to the state's persistent neoliberal policies.

Photo Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp

At the core of this shift is the Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR), a policy that has had devastating consequences for the ANC and the country. GEAR was presented as an extension of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), but in practice, it represented a significant departure from the RDP's transformative vision. One of GEAR's main pillars was the privatisation of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Telkom was one of the first victims of this policy, and now Eskom is being unbundled on the pretext of dysfunctionality. These measures are nothing more than neo-liberal strategies masquerading as necessary reforms.

Moreover, the unbundling of Eskom is a belated measure, proposed in the early 2000s in a policy framework entitled "An accelerated agenda towards restructuring SOEs". In

conjunction with privatisation, austerity measures and budget cuts, implemented under the guise of maintaining a "healthy fiscus", have further entrenched inequality and poverty in the country.

“The ANC has found itself trapped within a neoliberal framework, limiting its ability to address the welfare demands of the working class and the underprivileged

The structural adjustments introduced by GEAR have contributed to the rapid decline in electoral support for the ANC. In 2004, the ANC won 69.7% of the vote, a figure that has since plummeted to 40.2% in 2024. The SACP and Cosatu opposed GEAR from the outset, recognising its in-

herent contradictions and the damage it would do to the working class. But much like the GNU, GEAR was imposed without adequate discussion or input from alliance partners. The policy was presented as a *fait accompli*, accepted by the ANC and implemented as a joint programme.

In light of this, the recent comments by ANC Secretary General, Cde Fikile Mbalula, are deeply concerning. He stated that the ANC is not advancing socialism and can, at best, be regarded as a "social democratic" organisation. This implies that the ANC has no intention of going beyond a certain stage of historical development. For the SACP, this signals that the ANC has effectively abandoned the struggle for socialism and is content to remain within the bounds of social democracy. But social democracy is not an achievement. It is a platform that

continues to allow the bourgeoisie to exploit the working class and maintain the capitalist system under the guise of progressive reform.

The people of South Africa need more than social democracy; they need socialism. As Cde Hani pointed out, socialism is about ensuring access to the basic necessities of life: safe drinking water, food security, housing and quality education. These are not luxuries; they are fundamental rights that should be guaranteed to all citizens. In a society as unequal as South Africa, these rights must be seen as non-negotiable. The SACP must therefore maintain

a firm commitment to socialism and seek to overcome the limitations imposed by the ANC.

Over many years, the ANC has found itself trapped within a neoliberal framework that has limited its ability to address the welfare demands of the working class and the poor. The time has now come for the SACP to transcend these limitations and forge a new path towards socialism.

If the ANC persists with neoliberal policies disguised as social democracy, it will only exacerbate the socio-economic crises facing the nation. It is imperative that the working class be mobilised to demand a departure from this flawed model and to fight for a socialist future in which their rights and dignity are upheld.

South Africa is at a crucial juncture and faces a clear choice: neoliberalism or socialism. The ANC's current course, under the guise of social democracy, will only perpetuate the existing inequalities and injustices that plague our society. The SACP must rise to the occasion, reject the neoliberal agenda and lead the country towards a socialist future. Only then can we realise the promise of the revolution and build a society where power rests with the people, not capital.



Unlawfully occupied building in Johannesburg. South Africa faces a massive housing and welfare crisis that only socialism can fix. Photo Ihsaan Haffejee/GroundUp

Cde Davids is a National Committee Member of the Young Communist League of South Africa.

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For the ANC to survive, it must let the SACP go

Yonela Diko argues that the SACP's obsession with a fake anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist posture led the party to a desperate leadership choice that damaged the ANC



In his 1994 paper titled *“From Resistance to Reconstruction: Tasks of the ANC in the New Epoch of the Democratic Transformation — Unmandated Reflections”*, former deputy president Cde Thabo Mbeki, reflected on the challenges the ANC would encounter on its governing journey.

On the back of pragmatic policies that the ANC had to adopt in 1994, succinctly captured in the *Ready to Govern* document, alongside the global reality the ANC faced, Cde Mbeki foresaw “forces” that would try to “destroy the ANC from within [and] create contradictions and conflict between the ANC and other formations in the democratic movement”.

Mbeki anticipated attempts to “encourage the SACP to project itself publicly as the ‘left conscience’ ” and Cosatu to be “encouraged to project the pursuit of political and socio-economic objectives different from those the ANC had set itself as a governing party”.

To this extent, the coalescing of these forces led to Cde Mbeki being removed from office, making his prophecy uncanny. He also saw a time on the immediate horizon, when they would attempt to “split the ANC around the issue of leadership”.

In response to this prophecy, Cde Mbeki was clear that such changes would also “demand that the ANC and the democratic movement as a whole should be able to shed some of its ‘members’ regardless of how this might be exploited by our opponents to discredit the movement.”

“*The ANC’s pragmatic policy choices from 1994 forced the party to be moderate in its governing approach*”

While Cde Mbeki might have anticipated that the shedding of these members would likely be an ANC letting go of those partners who saw ANC’s governing choices as a threat to the ideological left, he did not foresee these forces mounting an offensive against him and removing him as ANC President and therefore taking full control.

The ousting of Cde Mbeki and those loyal to him had a seismic effect on the organisation, in that the ANC was moving from its strongest political position to date, but was able to withstand the shock with limited damage.

However, it was the first salvo of a disaster that was lurking on the horizon. The SACP and Cosatu remain valuable members of the Alliance, yet their battles with Cde Mbeki on ideological grounds created an opportunistic window for what Cde Mbeki called “charlatans, who engage in fake revolutionary posturing and promise everything that is good, while we all know that these confidence tricksters are telling the masses a lie.”

ANC at a policy crossroads

The ANC’s pragmatic policy choices from 1994 forced the party to be moderate in its governing approach, presenting a conundrum for itself and its alliance partners. The SACP felt a threat to its left leaning identity as the ANC advanced closer and closer to the centre, particularly after the ANC introduced its GEAR policy. It did not help that the ANC was

also unwilling to compromise on policies it thought were good for the country and for economic growth.

Over the years, the battles between Cde Mbeki and the SACP only intensified with accusations and counter-accusations that always portrayed a relationship in paralysis. The SACP found Cde Mbeki's leadership style to be authoritarian and prone to marginalising SACP leaders within the ANC. He always reminded the SACP that the door of the ANC was wide open, as it is not a socialist party pursuing a socialist revolution.

“*Cde Zuma had no socialist or working-class bone in his body, he just wanted to solve his financial problems and make his family and friends rich.*”

As the SACP and Mbeki were battling each other, a new battlefield for Mbeki opened between him and his then deputy, Cde Jacob Zuma. Rumours of a corrupt relationship between Zuma and Shabir Shaik were already the talk of the town in the early 2000s. These rumours were enough to force the National Prosecution Authority (NPA) to investigate Cde Zuma and ultimately declare that there was a *prima facie* case against him, but the NPA would not prosecute.

Already aware that Mbeki did not consider him a capable leader or worthy successor while feeling marginalised as Deputy President, Zuma decided to turn his legal battles into a political prosecution by his boss, who did not want him as his natural successor. It is here that the group who felt marginalised by Mbeki, the SACP, and Zuma found each other.

These were the forces mentioned in the beginning. And this time, as he had partly predicted, the SACP was a driving force. Although the SACP chose to fashion their support for Zuma as ideological, no one knew exactly what his colours were ideologically. “Hence, within the SACP are both those who see Zuma as the ‘vehicle of sweeping change’ and those who just ‘hope and pray’ that Zuma will support left policies” (Pillay, 2008).

It was this ‘hope and prayer’ that portrayed Cde Zuma as the ‘last hope

for the working class’ that led the SACP and Cosatu to throw their weight behind him and deliver him to the Union Building in 2009.

Cde Zuma had no socialist or working-class bone in his body, he just wanted to solve his financial problems and make his family and friends rich. The SACP's obsession with its fake anti-neoliberal and capitalist posture has led them to desperate leadership choices and instead of learning from its past mistakes, is again telling us that Malema, Shivambu and Cde Zuma are the last hope of the working class.

Unfortunately, Cde Zuma has taken the window that the SACP opened of packaging him as a leader of the working class and used it to split the ANC to create his own fiefdom in the MK Party, where he is finally building a personal refuge for protection and self-enrichment, the only thing Cde Zuma has ever cared about.

No one has ever known what ideology Zuma stood for until the SACP gave him his identity. He has used that to attempt to ruin the state. Hence, if the ANC is to survive, it must let the SACP go.

Cde Diko is a former Spokesperson of the Minister of Human Settlements

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Wrong to blame the SACP for divisions in the Alliance - a reply to Cde Diko

Lucky Matome Bopape on why it is the wider leadership crisis and ideological shifts in the ANC that have weakened its position, not the SACP's struggle against neoliberalism



The outcome of the 2024 general elections is a pivotal moment for the ANC-led alliance as it seeks to regain voter support and reestablish its dominance among South Africa's working class. But the increasing influence of liberal forces within the ANC undermines its progressive aspects and reveals an intolerance towards criticism.

This dynamic highlights the entrenched nature of the ruling ANC liberal elite and their apparent willingness to witness the dissolution of the ANC-led alliance in favour of a liberal alternative disguised as the Government of National Unity (GNU).

In response to an interview with SACP General Secretary Cde Solly Mapaila, Cde Yonela Diko's article *For the ANC to survive, it must let go of the SACP*, in this issue of *Umsebenzi*, overlooks fundamental aspects of the national liberation movement.

Cde Diko fails to acknowledge that the ANC, as a mass movement, encompasses not only

communists but also workers and civil society. These groups have long played a critical role in the alliance, and the triumph over apartheid was not solely attributed to the ANC but rather to a broader, multi-class movement of alliances, including communists who have steadfastly upheld their class-oriented ideology within the ANC.

Efforts to suppress the SACP's critical perspectives on the GNU decision demonstrate a lack of understanding within the ANC regarding its own nature as a multi-class movement. There is little recognition of the diverse forces that have kept the ANC in power.

“ *Cde Diko fails to acknowledge that the ANC, as a mass movement, encompasses not only communists but also workers and civil society*

Cde Diko's proposal that the ANC should distance itself from the SACP and fracture the Alliance, instead of fostering unity, represents a betrayal of the National Democratic Rev-

olution (NDR). This line of thinking seeks to marginalise communists within the ANC in favour of a neoliberal agenda, which could ultimately sever the connection between the ANC and the masses it claims to represent.

In a manner reminiscent of Cde Mbeki administration's anti-communist stance, Cde Diko implies that voices critical of ANC leadership – specifically those of communists, trade unions, and civil society – should be suppressed. He advocates for a system in which these Alliance partners are expected to obediently follow orders, thereby establishing a hierarchical relationship where the ANC assumes the dominant role.

Defending the 1996 neoliberal agenda, exemplified by the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) policy, overlooks its failures in effectively addressing the persistent issues of unemployment, poverty, and inequality in the country. The ANC's estrangement from its mass support base began with the implementation of GEAR, which prioritised liberal ideals of privatisation and market-led solutions instead

of state-driven redistribution and community development. Cde Diko also reflects on a pivotal moment in 1994 when the ANC adopted a neoliberal approach with little tolerance for internal criticism. This period marked the beginning of the marginalisation of Alliance partners such as the SACP, workers and civil society – key actors who played a crucial role in facilitating the ANC’s rise to power.

Cde Diko’s arguments dismiss the significant contributions made by these groups during the liberation struggle and imply that their relevance has diminished in the post-apartheid era. He fails to recognise that the defeat of apartheid and the ANC’s rise to power was not achieved by the ANC alone, but by a united front of communists, the trade union movement, the masses and civil society.

These forces not only combated the socio-economic disparities perpetuated by apartheid but also generated a multi-

tude of freedom fighters. The period following 1994 necessitated that the ANC address the entrenched economic monopolies inherited from the colonial and apartheid systems.

“*Ultimately, the masses, not individual elites, will determine the outcome of the struggle.*”

This imperative for economic transformation was articulated through the NDR, which sought to dismantle “white monopoly capital” and embark on a process of redistribution under the principles espoused in the Freedom Charter. However, the adoption of neoliberal policies such as GEAR deviated from this trajectory and contributed to an increasing disconnect between the ANC and the working class, as well as the wider masses.

In conclusion, it is misleading for Cde Diko to place blame solely on the SACP for any internal divisions within the ANC-headed Alliance.

He fails to recognise the wider leadership crisis and ideological shifts within the ANC that have weakened its electoral position. The ANC’s internal organisational decay and erosion of democratic processes have led to an exodus of members, including the formation of splinter groups in our country.

It is disingenuous to suggest that when the SACP raises concerns about the Alliance’s direction, it should be treated as an enemy rather than as a partner. The SACP’s critique of neoliberal policies is rooted in its class character and aims to address contradictions in ANC policy, not to target individuals within the movement.

Ultimately, the masses, not individual elites, will determine the outcome of the struggle. It is through their collective action that the ANC can realign with its founding principles and reclaim its position as a true representative of the people.

Cde Bopape is a member of the Western Cape SACP’s Provincial Executive Committee and Deputy Provincial Secretary of Nehawu in the Western Cape

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The urgent need to rethink the handing over of communications to right-wingers

*With the DA holding the DCDT portfolio, there's a risk that public media assets will be readied for privatisation, a move that would rob us of crucial revolutionary leverage, writes **Mandla J. Radebe***



Public broadcasting reaches communities across South Africa and is an essential service at must not be privatised
Photo NAB



Many revolutionary movements recognise the strategic role of the battle of ideas in advancing their cause. Throughout history, the art of persuasion has shaped perceptions, rallied supporters and dismantled oppressive systems. From stirring speeches to strategic (mis)information, the battle of ideas has always been a powerful driving force behind revolutionary momentum. In today's

digital age, its influence is pervasive, blurring the lines between truth and manipulation in the fight for hearts and minds.

It is precisely for these reasons that many revolutionaries would be jittery not only about the decision to cede power to opposing liberal forces within the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT) as part of the GNU but also about the general neglect of the role of the battle of ideas in our revolution.

While officials in the DCDT would cor-

rectly argue that their department exists primarily to drive inclusive communication services to all South Africans – encompassing broadcasting, new media, print media, and other new technologies, as well as branding the country locally and internationally – I argue that this is a strategic revolutionary lever for advancing the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). In this department reside strategic entities such as Broadband Infraco, the Film and Publication Board (FPB),

the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), SENTECH, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), the South African Post Office (SAPO), and Telkom.

For example, the SABC alone has a massive reach to millions of South Africans daily. No wonder it has been contested so much over the past decades. SABC TV reportedly has an audience of over 30 million, with SABC 1 reaching 89% of the population. Add to this 18 radio stations, which have more than 25 million weekly listeners due to their ability to broadcast in African languages. SABC+, a streaming app that provides 19 radio stations and all three free-to-air television channels as well as SABC Sport and News, is reportedly one of the fastest-growing platforms in South Africa.

This growth is to be expected in the context of creeping digitisation, arguably one of the primary reasons for its shift to digital platforms. With the rising number of internet and social media users in the country (72.3% and 49.2% respectively) and a mobile connection penetration of 187.4%, the shift to digital platforms is inevitable.

Calls for privatisation

The DA, now at the helm of this portfolio, has been consistently calling for the privatisation of these assets. Among the DA's proposals in 2009 was for the SABC to relinquish

some of its television and radio channels, with the view that this could salvage "an operational core to honour its public broadcasting mandate."

The DA has not wasted time under the seventh administration instructing its deployee Minister, Solly Malatsi, to hold public hearings to determine the future of the SABC. Apparently, these hearings are aimed at assessing the need for a public broadcaster, its possible restructuring into commercial entities or its decentralisation into provincial stations. But this is clearly a *fait accompli*. In a recent statement, the DA remarks that if "it is determined that a public broadcaster is not a necessity, we will call for the SABC to be broken up into various commercial entities and sold to the highest bidder." It is patently clear that under the liberals, the SABC and its public mandate will disappear. This should be opposed.

If the SABC and its assets are not perceived and regarded as crucial revolutionary levers, then it is hard to imagine how the South African revolution can defend its gains while advancing its strategic objectives. These assets provide great opportunities to reach and directly engage the motive forces of the revolution: the urban and rural working class.

Revolutions and the battle of ideas

Revolutions around the world, both past and present, have always recognised the crucial role of the battle of ideas. These platforms are not just for dissemination of information but are critical in constructing hegemony.

In the 1920s, the Bolsheviks developed the agitprop technique after establishing the Department of Agitation and Propaganda in 1920 by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

(CPSU) to reach the working class directly, which until then had no access to theatres. This technique quickly proved to be an effective strategy in the Soviet Union; from art galleries to movies to street corners, Russian culture was flooded with pro-Bolshevik sentiments.

In the late 1950s, the Cubans established Radio Rebelde (Rebel Radio), set up by Che Guevara in the Sierra Maestra region of eastern Cuba, to broadcast the aims of the 26th of July Movement led by Fidel Castro.

Here at home in the 1950s, the ANC set up Radio Freedom, also called Radio Zambia, Africa's oldest liberation radio station, to advance the objectives of the liberation struggle in South Africa. Like other guerrilla stations, Radio Freedom shared news, interviews, poetry, and commentary from the movement that countered the highly censored media reports from within South Africa. Regular reports on bombings and acts of sabotage by Umkhonto weSizwe gave the impression of a nearly continuous assault and encouraged listeners to join the movement.

The ANC understood the objectives of communication (the battle of ideas) in advancing the revolution's goals. Towards the end of formal apartheid and in the early part of the democratic breakthrough, the ANC carried on this rich tradition. Hence, the establishment of the Government Com-

munication and Information System (GCIS) which could be understood in this context, as the public mandate of the SABC. These were not innocent gestures to advance the liberal values of transparency and accountability; they were revolutionary tools. However, for some strange reason, the ANC seems to have neglected that part of the objective of advancing the NDR - mobilising its motive forces through propaganda and the battle of ideas.

Media and the construction of hegemony

In the absence of this, the capitalist class has used the levers at its disposal – the commercial media – to construct its hegemony and entrench its ideologies as common sense. It is the same media that the movement thinks it can use and contest in the battle of ideas. Without a shadow of a doubt, the movement has always come second best because this media has an agenda decisively opposed to the NDR.

This media's content is not innocent but rather laden with meaning, values, biases, and messages that advance relations of power and subordination.¹ Ideology is intrinsic in the media since it is all about the production of ideas, con-

ceptions, and consciousness and is interwoven with material activity. By the same token, as Marx and Engels posit, “mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people” flows from their material behaviour.

Therefore, the notion that the ruling ideas are those of the ruling class is an expression of ideological domination: “The class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force.” The mental production is an efflux of the material production. Essentially, “the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships . . . grasped as ideas.”² The system of the ruling class appears to be natural, and even historical developments are presented as logical.

With this control in place, it is easier for the dominant social groups in society to express and advance their views and ensure that they are reproduced through ideology. The role of the state in securing ideological hegemony on behalf of the ruling class is equally crucial since it often “intervenes in an attempt to secure the conditions for the working class to submit to the requirements of capital.”³ It is through ideology that the state, as an element of class rule, reproduces the submission of the underclasses to the rule and worldview of the ruling class. Ultimately, their views are regarded as common sense and perceived as immutable. Subsequently, through hegemony, the legitimacy of

the dominant capitalist class is guaranteed and made to appear natural and inevitable. This is even more the case since the public is dependent on the media to make sense of social developments, thus giving it tremendous power to dispense ideology.

Therefore, how hegemony is constructed is not necessarily obvious in the media, as it is concealed in the production process and ownership structures. Nevertheless, the media drives ideology and consent, effectively created through the state working together with civil society, which includes the media as part of the superstructure.

It is for these reasons, that if we appreciate the contested nature of ideas and a concrete terrain for the revolution, then the movement should not only reconsider ceding this department to opposition liberal forces but also elevate the battle of ideas to be at the heart of the people's revolution to transform South Africa into a truly non-racial, non-sexist and inclusive democratic state. The starting point is not only to reject the DA's attempts to privatise the SABC, but rather to remove them altogether and ensure they are nowhere near the levers of the battle of ideas.

Cde Radebe is the Chairperson of the SACP in Gauteng Province. He writes in his personal capacity.

Endnotes

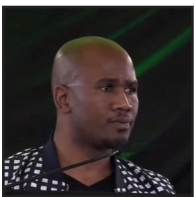
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Agreement between Western Cape government and Cape Town - towards a single police service

Benson Ngqentsu writes that headway is now being made towards a unified single police service that will improve community safety and crimefighting



About 100 people, including police officers, marched under the Silence the Guns campaign banner in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, on 12 October 2024, to protest against rising gun crime and extortion. Photo: Mary-Anne Gontsana/Ground-Up



There has been a debate within the national liberation movement about the establishment of a single police service, to be headed by a National Police Commissioner.

Although this debate became prominent from the 52nd National General Council of the ANC in the lead-up to the 2007 National Conference, before that, the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru), was the leading champion of this view.

Even though all law enforcement authorities (Saps, municipal police, law enforcement and traffic police) have the common objective of combatting crime, their approach and coordination is both disjointed and incoherent. In essence, they do not help in the effective and efficient fight against the scourge of crime in our country.

As scholars in the field of criminology also agree, the present alarming rate of crime in South Africa in general - and no less so in Cape Town - requires well-coordinated, integrated and uniform strategies and tactics. A single police service will contribute towards the professionalisation

of the police as per the ideals of the National Development Plan vision for 2030.

Both the SACP and the ANC in the Western Cape should warmly welcome the general thrust of the cooperation agreement between Police Minister Senzo Mchunu, Western Cape MEC, Anroux Marais and MMC for Community Safety, JP Smith.

The agreement, signed at the end of August this year, should be recognised as an important building block towards the realisation of the single police service. This move will also

uphold the Constitutional provision that there be a single police service.

The agreement's purpose is to record the co-operation required of the National, Provincial and Local spheres of government in pursuit of a shared vision for safety and security within the City of Cape Town and beyond.

Encompassing various initiatives, programmes, and strategies aimed at promoting a safe, secure, and conducive environment, it provides for:

- Creating a common vision of a safer city vision that maximises integrated relationships with all spheres of government and civil society in creating a safe and secure environment;
- Developing programmes, plans, interventions and infrastructure that will seek to reduce the levels of crime.
- Developing an aligned approach to support and enhance economic performance within the province.
- Ensuring that a conducive governance platform is formulated that traverses decision-making levels of all spheres of government and other relevant stakeholders.

- Building internal capacity to ensure the successful delivery of the project.
- Undertaking research and developing, procuring and commissioning technological infrastructure where resources are integrated; and
- Aligning strategies and coordinating implementation.

Essentially, the cooperation agreement - if effectively handled in the spirit displayed by the leaders present at the Cape Town City Hall where it was signed- will ultimately mitigate the many years of tensions and public spats between the national government and provincial and local government.

There is an urgent need for stronger cooperation between the three spheres of government to address the ongoing and severe challenges of organised crime, such as racketeering and extortion, which are causing pervasive fear in poor working-class communities.

The recent murder of Nompumelelo Makeleni, an elderly woman in Kraaifontein, starkly illustrates the brazenness of these criminal networks and highlights the necessity for immediate and decisive governmental action. The recently published Victims of Crime Survey brought into the spotlight the persistent and alarming threats to women's safety. The report found that psychological violence and sexual offences disproportionately

affect women, with weapons frequently used in sexual violence cases. This data highlights a broader crisis of safety, with a significant proportion of women feeling unsafe even in their neighbourhoods.

The survey showed that while about 80% of people aged 16 and older feel safe walking alone in their neighbourhoods during the day, this sense of safety drastically diminishes after dark, as only 34.9% of respondents report feeling safe walking alone at night, with women experiencing a markedly greater sense of insecurity compared to men. The crisis of extortion therefore further compounds the problem.

We hope that these collaborative efforts will not only focus on immediate security measures but will also tackle long-standing causative factors of crime affecting working-class communities. These include inadequate street lighting in crime hotspot areas, lack of accessibility in squatter camps, and broader socio-economic factors such as extreme poverty, high unemployment, and pervasive inequalities.

Addressing these systemic problems is crucial for creating a safer and more equitable environment for all residents.

Cde Ngqentsu is the Western Cape SACP Provincial Secretary and member of the Western Cape Provincial Legislature responsible for Police Oversight and Community Safety

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Pravin Gordhan – steadfast leadership, long years of service

Speech by Madala Masuku at the memorial for Cde Pravin Gordhan held by the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation on 22 September



Cde Pravin Gordhan. Archive photo: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp

We gather in solemn remembrance of a true revolutionary, a dedicated servant of our people, and a stalwart of justice—Cde Pravin Gordhan. As we reflect on his remarkable life and contributions, we extend our heartfelt condolences to his beloved family, our comrades in the ANC, and to all South Africans who have been touched by his unwavering commitment to our shared struggle for a just and equitable society.

Cde Pravin, at the age of 75, leaves us not only with memories of his steadfast leadership but also with a legacy that embodies the spirit of resilience in the face of ad-

versity. His journey from a young pharmacy student at the University of Durban-Westville, where he first joined the Natal Indian Congress in 1971, to the highest echelons of government, is a testament to his unwavering dedication to the liberation of our people from the shackles of apartheid. He demonstrated, from a young age, that activism was not just a pursuit; it was a calling to uplift and empower those who were marginalised and oppressed.

Cde Pravin was not just a leader; he was a revolutionary activist who fought valiantly in the underground movement of the SACP and ANC. His role in uMkhonto weSizwe, particularly during Operation Vula, highlights his courage and strategic acumen during one of the most turbulent

periods in our nation's history. This clandestine operation was vital for organising our forces and maintaining the momentum of the liberation struggle. His commitment to our cause was so profound that he faced detention and torture at the hands of the apartheid regime, yet he emerged unbroken, more determined than ever to see a free and democratic South Africa.

As a leader in the ANC and an architect of our democracy, Cde Gordhan played a pivotal role in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) and co-chaired the Transitional Executive Coun-



Members and guests of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation at the memorial for Cde Pravin Gordhan, held on 22 September at Johannesburg City Hall. Photo: Ahmed Kathrada Foundation

cil. His efforts in crafting a new South Africa were not merely about policy but were deeply rooted in the pursuit of social emancipation for all our people. He believed that true freedom extends beyond mere political rights; it encompasses economic justice, social equity, and the recognition of our shared humanity.

His tenure as Minister of Finance from 2009 to 2014, and later as Minister of Public Enterprises, was marked by unwavering integrity and a commitment to good governance. In a time when the very foundations of our democracy were under threat from the insidious forces of state capture, Cde Pravin stood firm. He navigated complex political landscapes and made courageous decisions, always placing the interests of the people above political expediency. The SACP worked alongside him during those critical years, united in our resolve to protect the hard-won gains of our strug-

gle against corruption and misrule.

“*He understood that true leadership is rooted in service, and he embodied this ethos throughout his life*”

Pravin’s legacy as the Commissioner of the South African Revenue Service (SARS) is one of transformation and excellence. Under his leadership, SARS evolved into a professional institution, dedicated to serving our people with integrity and efficiency—a model of what public service should be. His innovative approaches to revenue collection ensured that the state had the necessary resources to uplift the most vulnerable in society. He championed tax justice, understanding that a fair tax system is crucial for addressing inequalities and providing essential services.

But it was not just his roles and titles that defined him; it was his unwavering principles and values. Even after

stepping back from formal membership in the SACP, he remained true to the ideals of socialism, always championing the cause of justice and equality. His work in Parliament, as Chairperson of the Parliamentary Provincial and Constitutional Affairs Committee was instrumental in ensuring the implementation of our democratic Constitution—an enduring framework for justice, equality, and human rights. He recognised that our Constitution is not merely a document but a living testament to the sacrifices made by countless comrades in the struggle for freedom.

As we reflect on Cde Pravin’s life, we must also acknowledge the profound impact he had on countless individuals and communities across our nation. He was a mentor to many, an advocate for the marginalised, and a tireless worker for the common good. His humility and accessibility made him approachable, and



Archive photo: SACP 1st Deputy General Secretary Madala Masuku

he often engaged with citizens directly, listening to their concerns and aspirations. He understood that true leadership is rooted in service, and he embodied this ethos throughout his life.

Indeed, like every human being, Cde PG had his flaws; however, that doesn't warrant how people reacted after his demise. There are times when we had sharp differences with him as the SACP and he was in the forefront on that. But you knew where he stood and was ready to defend his position. What weakened Cde PG is the neoliberal trajectory of our government, which expected him as a Minister of Pub-

lic Enterprises to take an unpopular and rightward shift in posture. This is where we can't compromise what we represent and stand for. However, all these cannot downplay his contribution to the liberation of our people and clamping down on corrupt activities as spearheaded by the parasitic network of state capture.

As we honour Comrade Pravin Gordhan, let us also pledge to carry forward his legacy. Let us deepen our commitment to non-racialism, to good governance, and to the relentless pursuit of a just society. The challenges we face are immense, from the scourge of corruption to the ongoing inequalities that plague our society, but so too is the spirit of unity and determination that Cde Pravin embodied throughout his life.

In memory of Comrade Pravin, let us intensify our efforts to advance the transformation of our society. Let us strive to build a South Africa that reflects the values he fought for – a country where justice prevails, where all people are treated with dignity, and where our collective dreams of a non-racial society are realised. Let us work together to create a nation where the promise of our Constitution is fulfilled, where every citizen can thrive, and where we honour the sacrifices of those who came before us.

We celebrate a life well-lived, a life dedicated to the service of our people and the ideals of our revolution. Cde Pravin Gordhan, we salute you. Your spirit lives on in each of us, in every struggle we undertake for the betterment of our nation. We will honour your memory by continuing the fight for justice, integrity, and the rights of our people.

Let us carry forward your vision of a South Africa where all are free and equal, a society built on the principles of solidarity and mutual respect. Your legacy will continue to inspire future generations of leaders, activists, and ordinary citizens who dare to dream of a better world.

Cde Masuku is the SACP's 1st Deputy General Secretary and a former Deputy Minister and Mpumalanga MEC

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Pravin Gordhan's cautious, pragmatic Gramscian approach

From the speech given by Yunus Carrim on behalf of the SACP at the ANC's Pravin Gordhan Memorial Service, held in Durban, 18 September



"Pravin was a brilliant strategist, astute tactician and excellent organiser" – Cde Yunus Carrim speaking at the memorial service for Cde Pravin Gordhan

Pravin Gordhan was many things and in many spheres of our struggle and society. Much of this is well-known and has forcefully emerged since he sadly passed away. But what is not enough said is that he was a Marxist, a Communist. From very early in his political life. And he remained so till the end.

Even though, as part of the broader national democratic ANC and as a cabinet minister he made, as part of these collectives, tactical decisions that seemed far from his Communist roots.

He certainly wasn't a Commu-

nist in a rigid ideological sense. He was a pragmatic Communist with a keen sense of the balance of forces at a particular time and the tactical choices that needed to be made. He wasn't one to beat his breasts and say, "Look at me, I'm a Communist!..."

The SACP described Pravin's death as a "monumental loss". Despite the differences between the SACP and Cde Pravin when he was Minister of Finance and SOEs, we said in our statement that he "remained true to communist principles." And what I say here is consistent with this.

I bring to this memorial service, let me stress, the warmest greetings of the SACP General Secretary, Cde Solly Mapaila, the Central Committee

and our entire membership. Regrettably, Cde Solly is not available to be here and asked that I convey his apologies. But the SACP office bearers will attend the funeral tomorrow. Most of all, as the SACP we convey our deepest, deepest condolences to Cde Vani and their daughter's, Anisha and Priyasha and the rest of the family.

Pravin was a brilliant strategist, astute tactician and excellent organiser. As a forever activist, he impacted on student politics, the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), the civic movement, United Democratic Front (UDF), the ANC and

SACP underground, the post 1990 negotiations for our democracy, the shaping of our final constitution, parliament, cabinet, the SACP Central Committee and the ANC NEC, among other areas.

He was among the younger comrades who pushed the NIC, revived in 1971, into a more activist direction. But he quickly recognised that to reach conservative Indian and “Coloured” communities, it would be better to organise them around “bread and butter” issues – like housing, rents, water, electricity and rates – and strengthen residents associations or form new ones to do this. So came the Durban Housing Action Committee with its mass campaigns on municipal issues, through which the need for democratically elected councillors in a non-racial democracy was raised. So, political consciousness through action on basic needs in a particular way in conservative communities.

What is this if not a materialist, a Marxist method of organising outside a specifically working class constituency? Based on “a concrete analysis of concrete conditions”. And who would be the main beneficiaries if not the working class and the poor? That’s what Pravin did to differing degrees all his life – trying to benefit them primarily, if other classes and strata too.

Ever the tactician, Pravin and others, using Lenin’s arguments for the Bolsheviks

to consider taking part in the sham Russian Duma, suggested in the late 1970s that the NIC consider taking part with a progressive agenda in the apartheid-created dummy South African Indian Council (SAIC) to defeat the regime’s plans. He also engaged with the SACP’s Yusuf Dadoo and Mac Maharaj in London about this. But the approach finally taken was to boycott the SAIC. Yet again, the reference is to tactical choices within the history of communist parties.

Pravin was active in the SACP underground in the 1980s and a Central Committee member from 1995 to 1998 until he became SARS Commissioner.

“*He would refer to the pragmatic Marxism of China, Vietnam and Cuba as having lessons for us in South Africa in the unfavourable conditions confronting us*”

As the SACP we didn’t agree with him on SOEs. Some of his assessments of what was possible with the sinking SOEs were questionable but he wasn’t some crude agent of big capital who’d bought into privatisation. He hadn’t abandoned his socialist roots, and when challenged privately, that certainly came to the fore. I address this particularly to the SACP members in this memorial service, some of whom think Pravin sold us out. And I remind them that our General Secretary, no less, who often challenged Pravin said that he “remained true to communist principles.”

In the last few years, Pravin expressed his disappointment and frustration that he was seen within the SACP as being a champion of privatisation. He was clear: he supported public-private partnerships as the state was weak and the coffers were dry – but as part of an overall strategy to accelerate service delivery and development and consolidate the state over time. But he was clear that the delivery of basic services such as water and electricity had to be fundamentally in the hands of the state. He would refer to the pragmatic Marxism of China, Vietnam and Cuba as having lessons for us in South Africa in the unfavourable conditions confronting us. Even though, unlike us, those were and are states governed by communist parties.

So, his assessments of the balance of forces and the tactical choices to be made were different from that of the SACP’s, but that didn’t mean he wasn’t a Marxist. After all, there are different approaches within Marxism the world over. And he, like many other key UDF activists, was influenced by the Marxism of Antonio Gramsci and in many senses, that also shaped his approach for much of the post-1994 era.

And who, let us remember, initially suggested the “sunset clauses” and other compromises in the negotiations process with the apartheid regime if not our own Joe Slovo? Based, of course, on the balance of forces and the need for

tactical flexibility as part of an overall strategy at that time. Several comrades in the SACP disagreed with him, but the Party didn't decide that these tactical differences meant that Slovo had abandoned Marxism.

Despite our differences with Pravin we worked closely with him, most of all on fighting corruption and state capture. The SACP stresses that we will forever remember him for his bravery in this fight, as our General Secretary keeps reminding us.

Cde Pravin long realised that the fight in South Africa was not just against apartheid but the system of class exploitation it facilitated, and that unless we drastically reduce the gap between the rich and poor, our non-racial democracy will not work. So, he devoted his life to significantly reducing our class and other social inequalities consistent with his communist beliefs. Most of all, his values were communist and his long-term goals too. That, we in the SACP respect him for.

The response to his death, with a sense of loss experienced by people of all races and classes and their acknowledgment of his role, has led to a temporary resurgence of non-racialism in our country. For the moment at least, we are all, except for marginal groups and regrettably many youth, bound by a common sense of the value of a person to our country regardless of his racial background.

“*Cde Pravin long realised that the fight in South Africa was not just against apartheid but the system of class exploitation it facilitated, and that unless we drastically reduce the gap between the rich and poor, our non-racial democracy will not work*”

And so it is that in our statement, the SACP said that Cde Pravin will

“continue to inspire future generations” and we called in his memory for “our national-revolutionary democratic movement and all progressive South Africans to intensify non-racial efforts and values he stood for, to advance the transformation and development of our country in pursuit of a completely non-racial society.”

That's a call to all of us, to do what we can, in whatever way, to make this democracy work and, related to that, ensure our inequalities are significantly reduced. We owe it not to people like Cde Pravin only. We owe it to ourselves, and most importantly, to the workers, poor and other disadvantaged in our country in whose interests this democracy was primarily fought for!

Hamba Kahle Cde Pravin!

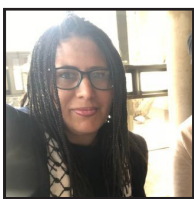
Cde Carrim is an SACP Central Committee and Politburo member and former ANC MP

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Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma – a champion of equality and development

Lefika Chetty *looks back at the life and achievements of a remarkable revolutionary*



Writing about the life and contributions of a remarkable woman revolutionary

like Ma Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma during Women’s Month in South Africa brings into focus the enduring impact of her 30 years in public service. Known affectionately as Ma NDZ, she recently retired from active politics at the age of 75, leaving behind a legacy marked by relentless dedication to the liberation and empowerment of the South African people and the broader African continent.

Born on 27 January 1949, Ma NDZ was the eldest of eight children. Her educational journey began at Adams College, a mission school in Amanzimtoti, where she matriculated in 1967. Initially aspiring to become a lawyer, she eventually pursued a BSc in zoology and botany at the University of Zululand in 1971, influenced by her father’s persuasion to study medicine. Her revolutionary spirit was evident early on as she engaged in covert ANC operations and served as the South African Student Organisation’s (Saso) deputy president. Her political activism drew the attention of the police, forcing her into exile in 1976. She completed her

medical degree at the University of Bristol in the UK in 1978.

Despite the oppressive conditions of apartheid, Ma NDZ demonstrated exceptional academic strength, principled character, and exemplary leadership qualities. Her contributions in various ministerial positions in post-apartheid South Africa include serving as Minister of Health (1994–1999), Minister of Foreign Affairs (1999–2009), Minister of Home Affairs (2009–2012), Minister in the Presidency: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (2019–2021), and Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Ma NDZ’s steadfast commitment to revolutionary theory and practice guided her throughout her career.

As Minister of Health, just a few months after the 1994 democratic breakthrough, Ma NDZ led the charge for the free provision of health services to pregnant women and children under six years of age. She was a champion of primary health care, expanding health facilities like clinics deep into under-served rural areas and townships. She initiated the

policy debate for the introduction of National Health Insurance (NHI) by establishing the Bloomberg-Shisana Commission. This commission aimed to lay the groundwork for a more equitable health-care system. However, the introduction of the neoliberal Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (Gear) strategy, along with a relentless campaign by big capital and the establishment media, significantly undermined many transformative ideas, falling short of addressing the two-tiered health system that was becoming more entrenched post-1994. This period will need further reflection on how the impact of fiscal austerity under GEAR blocked spaces for far-reaching revolutionary-reform possibilities in health and the economy in general.

Ma NDZ's revolutionary vision extended beyond South Africa's borders during her tenure as Chair of the African Union (AU) from 2012 to 2017. Her leadership focused on advancing economic development and gender equality across the continent. She questioned the narratives of "inclusivity" and posed fundamental questions: "Included into what? Existing structures of power?" Her advocacy for systemic change was evident in her promotion of Agenda 2063, a strategic framework aimed at transforming Africa's socio-economic landscape over 50 years. The plan emphasised

the integration of African economies, sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Her internationalist contributions are noteworthy. She played a crucial role in forging the Mandela-Castro Health Programme, which has benefited more than 7,000 South African medical students since 1996. This programme is a testament to her commitment to global solidarity and cooperation in addressing health disparities. Additionally, Ma NDZ placed the struggle for a Free Palestine at the centre of her internationalist agenda, advocating for the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people on global platforms.

A fervent advocate for women's empowerment, Ma NDZ aimed to see more women in leadership roles both within the AU and among its member nations.

Ma NDZ's commitment to peace and security was another hallmark of her revolutionary approach. She prioritised diplomacy and mediation in addressing conflicts in regions such as the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Mali. Her efforts often resulted in lasting peace agreements, emphasising long-term stability over temporary solutions.

Recognising the critical role of youth in Africa's future, Ma NDZ promoted laws and initiatives designed to empower young people. She supported youth employment, entrepreneurship, and education, ensuring that the voices of young Africans were heard and their contributions valued.

To those patriarchal detractors who have attempted to diminish Ma NDZ's

achievements by viewing her merely as the former wife of Jacob Zuma, it must be made clear: Ma NDZ is a formidable leader in her own right. Her revolutionary contributions and unwavering commitment to the liberation struggle and the building of a democratic South Africa stand on their own merit. There have been moments when her firm positions on particular issues put her at odds with the formal stance of our movement, yet this only underscores her principled nature. Her dedication to the values of the revolution and her willingness to challenge existing power structures are undeniable.

Ma Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma's life is a testament to revolutionary theory and practice. Her impact on South African politics and the African continent is profound, challenging the existing structures of power and advocating for systemic change. She has played a major role in transforming our democratic society, making it more equitable for the working class and women than it was pre-1994. Her legacy is one of selfless dedication to the values of the revolution.

As she embarks on the next phase of her life, we celebrate her contributions and wish her great success and rest. With love and gratitude, we honour Ma Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, a true revolutionary democrat.

Cde Chetty is a member of the SACP Central Committee International Relations Subcommittee and Gauteng PEC, and a welfare law specialist at the Department of Basic Education

Welsh solidarity against Israel's occupation and genocide

Protests in Wales and other parts of the UK in solidarity with Palestine are relentlessly exposing government genocide complicity, reports Reneva Fourie



Protesting for Palestine in London 5 October 2024. Photo Palestine Solidarity Campaign



The UK is crumbling. On the one hand, right-wing extremism is gaining traction due to increased levels of poverty; on the other, progressives are rejecting its draconian laws, especially those protecting its continued relationship with the Israeli Occupation Force (IOF).

Despite the government's strict rules against supporting the people of Palestine, citizens are protesting throughout the country. On 21 September, a demonstration took

place in Liverpool alongside the Labour Party Conference. A staggering 15,000 people gathered; their determination palpable as they demanded an immediate arms embargo on Israel instead of the partial suspension of arms export licenses.

They also expressed dismay at the Labour Party's noticeable shift to the right, particularly concerning human rights. The Labour Party has shown that, just like the USA's Democrats and Republicans, they offer no distinction in their support for the Israel Occupation Forces (IOF) and are no different from the Tory administration. Representatives of the IOF were present at their conference, and delegates were prohibited from using the

terms 'apartheid' and 'genocide'.

The Labour Party's support for the IOF's actions in the Levant region (Palestine, Lebanon and Syria) remains steadfast. When Iran retaliated on 1 October, Defence Secretary John Healy stated that "the UK stands fully behind Israel's right to defend its country and its people against threats". The Royal Navy deployed the HMS Duncan, a Type 45 air defence destroyer armed with the Sea Viper anti-air missile system. The deployment of this system, which has been used to intercept Yemeni drones and

missiles in the Red Sea since May, signifies the UK's direct military involvement in the conflict.

The demonstration in London on 5 October marked the twentieth since the start of the intensified violence against the people of Palestine after 7 October 2023. Over 300,000 people gathered, reflecting a growing determination to stop the devastating impact of the conflict, especially in light of the failure of international law to provide relief. With the support of Western allies, including the British government, the determination of leaders like Netanyahu to expand the conflict into a regional conflagration is apparent. They have decimated Gaza. They are decimating the West Bank and Lebanon. Their aggression against Syria has escalated and all signs indicate that they want to drag Iran into a war. The British people refuse to be silent when their taxes are being used for mass slaughter.

The presence of a strong delegation from Wales was notable at every protest. The people of Wales have a profound understanding of what it means to be under occupation. England conquered Wales under Edward I and it became part of the English kingdom between 1485 and 1603. Despite facing challenges, Wales managed to maintain its national identity, although its language did suffer suppression. Consequently, the people of Wales understand the struggle to preserve their freedoms, including their



Part of the student Palestine solidarity encampment at Bangor University, Wales

language, culture, autonomy, and the associated repression and suffering. Since the 1960s, there has been a noticeable strengthening of the national identity, particularly following the establishment of the Senedd (Welsh parliament) in 1999.

The Welsh have a deep connection with the people of Palestine. In North Wales, the friends of Palestine not only participate in the nationwide protests, but they also daily engage in various local activities. They hold weekly vigils in specific areas, including Bangor University, where students have established an encampment on the outskirts. The students are urging the university to divest from companies associated with the IOF and to terminate its contract with Starbucks. Every Wednesday, friends of Palestine visit the encampment to show their solidarity.

Furthermore, they have a monthly film screening, which depicts different aspects of the effects of the occupation and links up with Palestinians to share their personal experiences of brutality. Money generated at these events is donated towards food

and medical supplies for the affected in Gaza.

Like many others in Britain, the people of Wales believe that if you cannot directly confront injustice, it is imperative to speak out against it. And if you cannot speak, you should keep the oppressed in your heart. However, they still have their voices, so they bellow it loudly.

The UK government's refusal to heed its people's voices is hastening its downfall. Not only is it ignoring the rejection of its complicity in the continued genocide in Gaza and growing aggression in the region, but Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are also pressing for greater autonomy.

Throughout history the insatiable desire for power and control by empires has often been their downfall. The unrestrained and widespread use of force by the IOF is hastening the erosion of Euro-Atlantic global influence. We might be witnessing the final phases of the decline of dominant empires as advocates for peace pivot towards a multipolar global system and show growing interest in the collaborative and mutually beneficial development initiatives of Brics+ (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa Plus). The blood of the martyrs of West Asia is not only nourishing the fruit of freedom for the region but also for oppressed people across the world.

Cde Fourie is a member of the SACP Central Committee and Politburo Secretary for Gender and writes from Bangor, Wales.

Stand up the real Umkhonto we Sizwe – but where is the SACP?

Janet Cherry reviews *Comrade & Commander: The Life and Times of Joe Modise*, edited by Ronnie Kasrils and Fidelis Hove

With the startling emergence of a populist militarist political party with the name Umkhonto we Sizwe, we have been forced to re-examine the legacy of the real MK. Part of that re-examination is the legacy of its commander for four decades, Joe Modise.

Ronnie Kasrils and Fidelis Hove have compiled an impressive and unusual biography of Joe Modise. *Comrade and Commander* is unusual in allowing many different voices to remember Modise. Kasrils' narrative of events adroitly situates the various personal recollections in context and links them together, however, there is some repetition, which the editors acknowledge. There are some interesting omissions, reflecting perhaps the selection of respondents. Both editors were personally close to their subject, Joe Modise; so it is understandable that for the most part they interviewed people who did not express any criticism of Modise. Kasrils' intention is to restore Modise to his rightful place in the history of the liberation struggle, and to reclaim his honour. He has succeeded admirably in doing so: many who read this book

will not think or feel the same way about Joe Modise as before.

Modise's legacy as a military leader is impressive: he commanded a large guerilla army spread out over many countries in exile; once in government, as Minister of Defence, he oversaw the integration of the various military forces into a truly National Defence Force. Impressively, from the perspective of the anti-militarists, he ended the racist military conscription system without hesitation; and he supported and enforced the international ban on anti-personnel mines. MK should be remembered as outstanding for its restraint in not using APMs throughout the decades of armed struggle, when APMs were devastating civilian populations and disrupting farming in neighbouring countries.

The last section of the book contains moving accounts from Modise's wife and daughters of his last years, and the pain they experienced both during those years and subsequently, when the scandal of the arms deal was combined with allegations about Modise's role in abuses in MK's Angolan camps. A significant portion of the book is devoted to Modise's role as Minister of Defence in the first democratic government, and his responsibility for the arms deal (the Special Defence Procurement programme). Kasrils is at pains to refute

allegations made by journalists about corruption, and the book makes a valid argument that individuals should not be judged by the media in the absence of any evidence.

Despite the validity of this argument, there remain some unanswered questions and there are surely still valid debates around accountability as well as around the effectiveness of MK. On the latter question, the book contains some interesting reflections on the strategy of armed struggle, including debates about the relation between political and military structures of the ANC. The most critical reflections are those of Pallo Jordan and Garth Strachan, about military operations from Zimbabwe in the mid to late 1980s.

Yet even if one disputes Kasrils' analysis of the increasing effectiveness of MK over the decade of the 1980s, it must be acknowledged that Modise was under immense pressure to deploy MK troops across the borders in South Africa, which he did, although sometimes with disastrous results. An outsider reading this book might get the impression that this army, MK, went about its

business for decades with little relation to what was happening inside South Africa. Modise looked for military solutions; it is not clear that he understood the political dynamics of the society or that he was flexible enough – or imaginative enough – to see the course of change to come.

On the question of accountability, well, neither the editors nor most of the respondents in this book, hold Modise responsible for anything bad; and when it comes to the Special Defence Procurement (the ‘arms deal’), nobody in the ANC leadership takes responsibility for anything. Jacob Zuma is an easy scapegoat and is presented as a peripheral player who was the ‘bad apple’. The cabinet committee, which was headed by Thabo Mbeki, and included Modise as well as Trevor Manuel, Alec Erwin, and Stella Sigcau – later charged with corruption – was responsible for the deal. Erwin, in his contribution to the book, defends the ‘principal contracts’ in the deal, one of which was the BAE contract, as ‘above reproach’ (p 258).

However, the editors have to their credit found some non-ANC contributors to the book from within the military establishment and the arms industry; the most overtly critical is General Pierre Steyn, who was Secretary of Defence under Modise until 1998. In relation to the arms deal, Steyn notes that ‘Mr Modise’s hand was patently visible throughout the considerations of the various options.’

Alluding (p252-3) that ‘Mr Modise engaged the military top management with an air of heavy-handed authority’, he goes on to note that ‘this became evident in his decisions to prefer certain major acquisitions in contrast to the recommendations made by the chiefs of the armed services. The Secretariat’s Chief of Acquisition, Chippy Shaik, enjoyed a private privileged relationship with the minister of Defence. Mr Shaik was often guilty of usurping the controlling authority of the Secretary for Defence. He often accompanied the minister on visits to countries that vied for defence equipment contracts, to the exclusion of the Secretary for Defence. When final decisions for acquisitions of major armament systems were made, Mr Shaik was frequently accused of colluding with the prospective suppliers’.

Many will also remain sceptical about Fana Hlongwane’s relationship to Modise and to BAE. Kasrils dismisses this connection by stating that Hlongwane left Modise’s employ – yet he immediately became adviser to BAE and received a substantial commission. ‘C’est normale’, as the Thales representative said in the other arms deal case. As in the case with Thales and Schabir Shaik, the appointment of ‘middlemen’ to influence politicians is considered ‘normal practice’ by the big arms companies, notorious for their profiting from warfare and manipulation of governments around the world.

Was Modise naïve or manipulated? There is no evidence that Modise benefitted personally from these practices, even if he was influenced to favour BAE. Moreover, he was not solely responsible for the arms deal; Mbeki, Erwin and Manuel, all held up as being above reproach, were responsible. It is hard to believe that they were collectively naïve about the practices of arms companies, even in the first dem-

ocratic government. And the governments of the UK and France protected their companies. We may never get answers on this matter.

Almost all contributors remember Modise as a “soldier’s soldier”; that “politics came second in his dealings; defence came first”; he was “a soldier first and foremost” and “that was the main string in his DNA”. He is never portrayed as a populist, a poser, or an ideologue. He was a rigid disciplinarian; Steyn refers to Modise’s ‘natural skill as a leader of men at war’ who “did not take kindly to opposition and expected unquestionable obedience regarding his orders and instructions” (p253).

Reading between the lines, one can hear echoes of those who in other spaces called Modise a bully; yet he is highly regarded and acknowledged by all contributors as a professional, personally disciplined and focused person. His relationships with his family and with women are remembered as exemplary, both by his own wife and daughters, and by MK comrades and SANDF staff who remember how he supported and advanced women in the military.

Some of the unanswered questions relate to the SACP: What was Modise’s relationship to communists in the ANC and MK leadership? Did he disagree with them? How did he relate to Chris Hani; and to the Truth and Recon-

ciliation Commission: how did Modise feel about the TRC findings on the ANC being responsible for gross human rights violations committed under his watch? For readers of *African Communist*, the near absence of the SACP is interesting. SACP leader Essop Pahad remembers Modise in the 1950s taking Mandela's part against JB Marks, siding firmly with the African Nationalists against the Communists in that context: "the aim was to undermine the Communist Party so that the ANC could become the more popular force" (p33).

The only mention of Modise's role in the Party comes from Kasrils himself, who worked closely with Modise; Kasrils recounts (p171) that "Sometime after Kabwe, Joe Slovo approached me to convey a decision concerning some senior ANC comrades who for a long time had wanted to join the Communist Party (SACP).

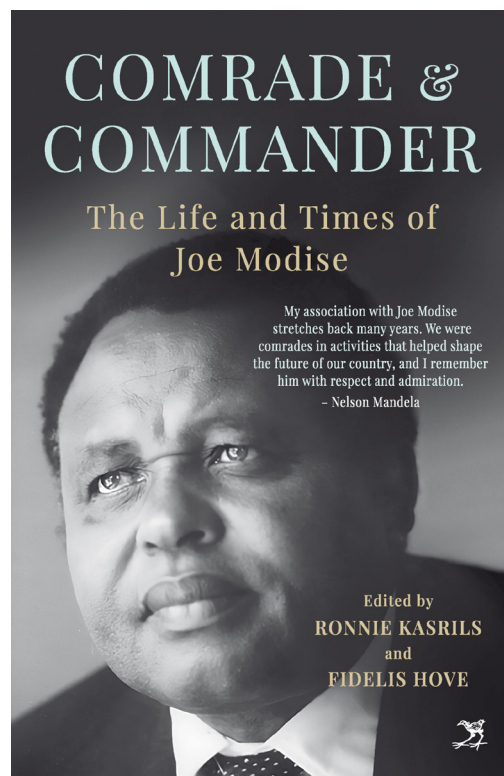
There were three special cases and it had been decided that their separate requests be accepted. They were in such key positions that their membership had to be kept very secret". Kasrils was instructed to

form this unit with these three 'special cases', one of whom was Modise. The lack of focus on the SACP from the respondents is perhaps explained by the fact that few of them knew he was a Party member; he is not remembered in ANC circles as a communist. Vladimir Shubin, Moscow's adviser to the ANC, admired Modise and in his contribution to the book is careful to portray the Soviet support for the armed struggle as separate from any communist agenda. Yet it will be remembered by readers that MK was set up by the SACP and the ANC, and the political training its cadres received was firmly in the Marxist-Leninist school of revolutionary theory. Modise's commitment to this theory

is never tested or reflected in this collection; indeed, there is barely a reference to any ideological commitment or theory of revolution. Kasrils noted (p 172) that Modise, like Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, was not a member of the SACP after the unbanning in 1990 for "strategic reasons", but that he "never criticised the Party".

While this book has achieved the objective of its editors in restoring Joe Modise to his rightful place in the history of the liberation struggle, it should also remind us that all of our heroes are flawed; we should remember the dark with the light, to understand the full picture of our complex history. Moreover, writing history is an ongoing task: the book is not yet closed. The younger generation will interrogate the history of Umkhonto we Sizwe and the role of its commanders through different, and more critical, lenses than those who were a part of the army of the liberation struggle.

The volume has an excellent index, including an index of places and a historic collection of photographs.



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