

RALLY SPECIAL

UMSEBENZI



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VOICE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

BUILD THE NEW MASS PARTY!

On July 29, 1990, all roads lead to the Soweto Rally. Let us assemble there in our tens of thousands to celebrate the rebirth of the South African Communist Party as a legal organisation.

Let us pay tribute to our people, whose organised power forced the regime to legalise our Party. Let us, on this day, once again openly join hands for a future of real freedom and democratic socialism.

Forty years ago our Party was the first political organisation in our country to be declared illegal. But we refused to bow down.

We regrouped in the underground. Communists continued to be in the front rank of struggle. No sacrifice was too much. More than 100 members lost their lives on the gallows, in police cells and in battle with the enemy. Imprisonment, detention, banning and exile never stopped us from hammering away at racism and exploitation.

Those years of dedication, sacrifice and struggle were years when victory seemed far away. Our working people and our fighting youth learnt during that dark period what communists are made of.

That is why our flag flies and our songs are sung wherever our people assemble. That is why our Party and what it stands for are more popular today than at any time in our 69-year history.

But there is another reason why our Party has won a big following. Millions of patriotic South Africans yearn for a way of life which puts people above private profit. They have learnt, through bitter experience, how the evil system of racism has been built to serve capitalist greed.

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South African Communist Party

**BUILD
THE
WORKERS
VANGUARD**

29 July 1990

SACP RALLY • SOCCER CITY, SOWETO • 29 JULY 1990

The good life of the few has been made possible because of the exploitation of the cheap labour of the many.

Those holding power are becoming more and more puzzled about the growing strength of our Party and the ideas of socialism. They were hoping that the setbacks in Eastern Europe would make our people think again about their support for socialism.

But this is a false hope. Despite the failures in Eastern Europe, we know that most of the socialist states became 20th century pioneers of a way of life which, for the first time in history, began to address such basic human rights as full employment, social security, free medical care, free education, and so on.

It is clear that what failed in Eastern Europe was not socialism. What failed there was a socialism distorted by Stalinism. There are many important lessons to be learnt from this. These lessons are deepening our understanding of how to build our Party and how to build socialism.

But the most important lesson is that no leadership can afford to be separated from the people. There can be no socialism without democracy.

Capitalism is not the answer

Our people know that capitalism is not the answer. The great majority of the earth's population live in a world dominated by capitalism. It is a world of debt, unemployment, declining living standards, starvation and epidemics. It is a world in which the poverty of the under-developed former colonies is the foundation for the prosperity of the industrial north.

This is the system which has failed humanity. This is the system which has failed South Africa. This is the system which has brought nothing but misery to our dominated people.

The humane ideas of socialism remain incontestable. No rational person can doubt that the freedom of every individual can only be finally assured when no person is allowed to live off the labour of another. That is what socialism means. If the conditions for real democracy are created, we are convinced that we will move peacefully towards socialism.

We reiterate our belief in political pluralism. It is valid now, for the transition period, and for a socialist future.



• July 1985: The Party flag re-emerges at the funeral of the Cradock Four, Goniwe, Calata, Mkhonto and Mhlawuli

The SACP believes in freedom of speech, freedom of the press and the right to full freedom of worship.

We reaffirm the leading role of the ANC in the immediate struggle for national liberation.

We believe that no meaningful liberation is possible without a major redistribution of wealth and without affirmative social and economic programmes.

A victory for South Africa

The public launch of our legal SACP on July 29 will be a victory for the 40 years of dedication and struggle by our Party militants. But it will also be a victory for millions of South Africans, and particularly working people and militant youth. It is they who have stood by our Party, rallied behind its flag and struggled in wave upon wave of mass defiance.

We believe that there are now real prospects for the winning of power by the people of South Africa as a whole. Whether this happens depends more than anything on the politically mobilised working people of our country. We call on them to intensify the struggle on all fronts. We call on them to swell the ranks of our great Communist Party.

BUILD THE PARTY FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM!

The Party and the alliance



The ANC-SACP-Cosatu alliance is the engine-room of our broad liberation struggle. In the new conditions this alliance can be built into an even more powerful force.

But can we really set about building a mass SACP at a time when much basic organisational work is needed to build the legal ANC? Are we not over-extending our resources? How many militant workers, youth and radical intellectuals are going to join the SACP **instead of** the ANC? And what about union work? Will it not suffer with key organisers and shop stewards spending more time on Party political work?

It is important to ask these questions. They represent real concerns. In building the new mass Party these questions must be held firmly in mind. But, with the correct approach, these concerns can be answered.

A strong independent Party

In South Africa, a colonial-type national oppression is deeply entwined with an advanced capitalist economy. With a politically conscious working class of some 6-million, both the objective conditions and the working people themselves demand a strong, independent Party of the working class. At the same time, the most direct line of advance to socialism in South Africa lies down the path of the national democratic revolution. Any serious South African socialist will want to see a powerful ANC.

In our longstanding alliance with the ANC, the SACP has always taken the view that a strong Party strengthens the ANC, and vice versa. Apart from extremely rare cases, all Party members are at present active ANC members. It is something the Party actively encourages. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Party members are presently full-time ANC cadres. As we build a new mass Party this will have to be altered to some extent. The Party will have to deploy many more full-timers in its own right. Many more activists will have to set their Party work as their first political priority.

But in the interests of the Party itself, and of the whole alliance, a correct strategic balance will have to be maintained. For the majority of members of the new mass SACP their main Party work will remain **in the ANC, or in the trade unions, or in their youth, civic and other mass democratic sectors.** For a Communist Party to be strong and dynamic it cannot be wrapped up in itself. It must be in daily contact with the working people. And how better



ANC-SACP-Cosatu: The basic principles of our alliance

- While developing joint actions and a common perspective, the independence of each organisation must be respected and protected. One organisation that becomes a rubber-stamp for another weakens the entire alliance.
- The alliance is not a talk-shop, it must be rooted in action.
- The alliance must not be confined to committees at the top; it must also find expression in thousands of local joint committees on the ground.

than for the great majority of its militants to be deeply involved in broad, popular structures of all kinds?

Our aim is to build a large Party of quality, in which cadre development is given prime attention. The Party branch should be a place in which Party members are able to deepen their revolutionary understanding and discipline. If we begin to succeed in this, then Communists — whose main work is in other organisations — should enrich these fraternal structures. They should do this through their discipline, political maturity and hard work.

But this contribution will only be possible on one very important condition: **Party members in ANC branches, in the trade unions, and in other fraternal formations must understand very clearly that they are under the discipline of these organisations, and must be fully accountable to their internal democratic processes.**

LONG LIVE OUR FIGHTING ALLIANCE!

Nobody's Broederbond

Umsebenzi: Will the new mass SACP be disclosing all its members?

Joe Slovo: Well, before 1950 we didn't have a single secret member. Secrecy was imposed upon us when we were outlawed. Before that, all communists, including those in the ANC leadership, openly and proudly acknowledged their affiliation to the Party. And this is the way we see our future. We have not been, and do not intend to be, a Broederbond within the ANC or any other organisation. But we are not, for the moment, dismantling our underground until it is clear that the process of democratisation in South Africa has become irreversible.

And what about Party members on the NEC of the ANC? The commercial press is constantly speculating about this.

On July 29 we will announce our national, internally based, interim leadership group. It will include communists who are also on the NEC of the ANC.

The reason for speculation about communist NEC members is the allegation that the SACP manipulates the ANC...

It's simply an insult to non-communist leaders of the calibre of Luthuli, Tambo and Mandela to imagine that they would have such close and warm association with our Party if we had a history of domination and manipulation of the ANC. It's a pity that some serious opinion-formers can't rise above the comic book version of the Red under the Bed.

By your own admission the SACP was in the past not entirely free of serious Stalinist deviations. But has the Party really changed now? After all, it was not so very long ago that the SACP was supporting Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan.

Perhaps the last Stalinist bastion to fall in our Party was our slavish support of all Soviet foreign policy decisions. For many in our Party, support for Soviet intervention in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan was a reflex - it was not based on any kind of knowledge or analysis of all the facts. It is now clear to me that the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia put paid to a serious attempt to create a democratic form of socialism. It has led in a straight line to the anti-socialist hysteria which is now rampant in Czechoslovakia.

Sceptics will say that all of this is just a different version of the same old SACP position. Gorbachev has criticised these aspects of Soviet foreign policy. And now, true to form, the SACP is tailing once more

SACP general secretary Joe Slovo answers some burning questions on the building of the new Party

behind the master in the Kremlin.

On many important questions Gorbachev has tailed behind us! I'm thinking in particular of the relationship between the Party and mass democratic organisations. In this respect, the decades-long theory and practice of the SACP in regard to the ANC is without parallel.

Are there divisions within the SACP in regard to perestroika and glasnost?

There are comrades who find it more difficult than others to shed the baggage of the past. But I'm certain that the completely dominant tendency is away from Stalinism. In some areas debate continues. We will not deal with those who disagree with the new thinking by silencing them using bureaucratic means.

Are there any differences between the ANC and the SACP? If not, why have two separate organisations?

First let's take the things we have in common. There are no basic differences on the immediate objectives to end racism and to replace it with a non-racial, united, democratic South Africa. We agree too that there is room on the side of the liberation line-up for all who support real democracy, irrespective of class background or ideology. And we agree that the ANC stands at the head of such an alliance.

But there are what I would call non-hostile, non-antagonistic and non-competitive differences. We try to represent the basic interests of the working class so that its role in the alliance is not swamped by other forces. And, of course, we stand for the ultimate creation of a socialist South Africa. We believe that these socialist perspectives must be propagated now.

But do you anticipate serious differences in future between the SACP and the ANC?

The question is too speculative. But if differences do arise I am confident that they will be resolved in a spirit of togetherness.

How does the Party see a post-apartheid economy?

Our policy is informed, in the first place, by our concept of liberation. Liberation, if it is to be meaningful, means the winning of political power by the majority for the immediate purpose of redressing the

REDISTRIBUTE WEALTH!



• **Slovo: My understanding of insurrection is exactly the kind of thing De Klerk welcomed in Europe - "an irresistible tide towards freedom".**

social, cultural and economic imbalances between the races. This, among other things, involves a state-led policy for ensuring a **process** of redistributing wealth, incomes and increasing participation by producers at plant level. **People must be put above profit.** I emphasise **process** because the economy the day after liberation is the same as the day before. It cannot be changed by edict.

It is also crucial to remember that change without growth may satisfy emotions, but not stomachs. But

equally, growth without change is irrelevant to most people. We support a mixed economy with a role for private domestic and foreign capital. These forces, as we are painfully aware, are not charities and must obviously have material incentives.

In the rural areas, we want to unleash the initiative and creativity of millions of peasants by giving them land. But the supporters of private property say this is theft and heresy...

Where does the Party stand on the question of nationalisation?

We debated this concept and left the word out of our 1989 Party programme. It lacks precision and leads to distortion. Insofar as it expresses the need for state intervention in the direction of a more equitable distribution of wealth, it has merit in relation to specific sectors. But insofar as it creates the illusion that the mere transfer of legal ownership or control from a board of directors to a board of bureaucrats will advance the economy, it is counterproductive.

The SACP is involved in a tripartite alliance with the ANC and Cosatu. What is your approach to organisations like PAC, Nactu and the newly formed Wosa?

An alliance is based on a common platform. We do not have a common platform with the PAC, Nactu, etc. But let us compete for a following by civilised ideological debate, and let our constituency decide. A big obstacle at the moment to any closer collaboration with some of these forces is that they are doing the kind of thing that gives politics a bad name. They are playing with the emotions, and even the lives of people, to score political points against their competitors. I am thinking specifically of their attempts to stir up confusion around the present talks between the ANC and the regime. But our people are more mature than these organisations think. You can see this from the pathetic turn-out for their so-called mass rallies this past June 16.

The final chapter of the Party's programme sees insurrection as the most probable means for democratic change in South Africa. How valid is this perspective in July 1990?

The substance of the programme's analysis remains valid. But some of the formulations need another look in the light of new developments since 1989 when the programme was adopted. The winning of power remains the key objective and if avenues are closed for winning it by peaceful, democratic means, then insurrection is both morally and politically justified. That is why we do not see a conflict between negotiations and struggle. But in any case, my understanding of insurrection is exactly the kind of thing De Klerk welcomed in Eastern Europe - "an irresistible tide towards freedom".

LAND TO THE PEOPLE!

Party democracy

The organisation of the SACP has been based on Lenin's principle of democratic centralism.

Democratic - because Party members have had the right to the maximum opportunity permitted by conditions to take part in the formulation of Party policy. And they have had the right (again within the limitations imposed by conditions) to participate in the election of all the higher organs.

Centralism - because the Party has not seen itself as a debating society. Once decisions are taken by the higher organs of the Party, they are absolutely binding on all lower organs and individual members.

We are firmly convinced that it is this combination of democratic participation and strong organisational discipline that has made the Party what it is today. It is a force feared by the regime and the bosses, and respected by millions of working people. It is an organisation that has been carrying the fight to the enemy for 69 years. It has weathered enormous difficulties - some caused by our own errors, most the result of constant attacks by the class enemy and its apartheid state.

But is democratic centralism really valid in the new conditions? The answer is YES - provided we adjust its application to meet the new challenges. For the past 40 years the SACP has had to operate as an underground force. The survival of our underground comrades and therefore the survival of our structures has been a prime concern.

Unfortunately, the demands of the underground have always placed many limitations on the possibilities for full democratic involvement. The basic Party structure has been the secret unit of three or four comrades. All major Party strategic options have always been sent for discussion, comment and criticism to these units. For instance, the draft of the Party's new programme, "The Path to Power", was

circulated throughout our ranks many months before Congress, often at great risk. Units submitted over a thousand criticisms which were debated and discussed at the 7th Party Congress.

But there have been major limitations. Apart from clandestine Congresses with elected delegates, the need for secrecy has, until now, virtually ruled out all other broader Party forums for debate and discussion. The same security considerations have made necessary a complex system of secret elections for the Central Committee. The identity of CC members has, until now, remained a secret, even to the Congress that elects them. The identity of underground regional and district committees has also been secret, and they have not been elected.

For the majority of Party members the only known communists have been their own two or three fellow unit comrades, and the two or three publicly acknowledged SACP leaders. It is this secrecy that has enabled internal Party structures to survive. Without it, the Party would have failed in its most basic political tasks. But a price has had to be paid.

In the new situation a much wider and fuller inner Party democracy will become possible. Once we are beyond the first phase of launching and initial organisation, we must work to ensure that every level of leadership from the local branch upwards is elected. The Party needs to ensure that a lively culture of political debate and discussion flourishes within its ranks, and that forums to help this are established.

Inner Party democracy must also be supplemented by the Party making itself publicly accountable, especially to its broader working class constituency. This means, among other things, that the Party must continuously consult with fraternal organisations and mass structures at all levels. It must be open to the needs and criticisms of the working people of our country.

The new conditions present possibilities for greatly enriching Party democracy. But we must not sacrifice the positive features that we have built up in our Party - unity, discipline and revolutionary effectiveness. A Communist Party that is serious about leading the working class to socialism cannot allow itself to become a debating society. A workers' vanguard, worthy of the name, is not a bourgeois parliamentary party. It is not an alliance of warring factions stitched together through deals, and whose mass membership is just so much parliamentary voting fodder.

Let us build a democratic Party. But let us also build an effective Party, a powerful weapon in the hands of the working people of our country.



DEFEND THE WORKING CLASS!



69 years on the soil of South Africa

When the regime banned the Communist Party of South Africa in 1950, it thought it had heard the last of communism in our country. It thought it was banning a foreign ideology. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

For 69 years the Party has been actively engaged in the working class and liberation struggles. For 69 years we have been carrying the struggle to the enemy. Many Communists have paid the supreme price for their commitment:

- Fisher and Spendiff, revolutionary white workers, gunned down by Smuts' troops in the 1922 Rand Revolt,
- Johannes Nkosi, murdered by the police in 1930 while burning his pass,
- Vuyisile Mini, worker, poet and Communist, hanged on the gallows in Pretoria in 1964,
- Alpheus Maliba, peasant and journalist, and Ahmed Timol, school teacher, tortured to death in police cells,
- Joe Gqabi and Ruth First, assassinated in exile,
- Petros Linda Jobane (the "Lion of Chiawelo") besieged in Soweto, fought to his last bullet.

These and many more, our Communist martyrs, have dyed the Party flag the deepest red with their blood. The colour of our flag is not just a colour. It has been earned in the trenches, down 69 years of active struggle.

Through their dedication, our Party militants have pioneered strong and lasting traditions. The Party

has never been the sole property of its activists. Our Party, its ideas, its strategy and its organisational traditions have come to belong to the working people of our country in their millions. These are some of the traditions pioneered by our Party:

- **Non-racialism** - today non-racialism is one of the most basic organisational principles of all progressive formations. It was our Party that pioneered this principle. In fact, for nearly 40 years after its formation the Communist Party was the ONLY non-racial political organisation in our country.
- **One person one vote in a unitary South Africa** - decades before the ANC and other organisations took up this demand, the Party popularised the call for democratic, majority rule as a central demand in the first stage of struggle towards socialism.
- **Industrial trade unionism** - for four-and-a-half decades, up until the mid-1960s, Communists were virtually (although not completely) alone in building militant, well-organised industrial trade unions.

But perhaps the Party's greatest historical contribution, as the first Marxist-Leninist Party on the African continent, has been to root, develop and popularise the liberating ideas of scientific socialism within our country. As the Party goes forward in the new conditions this is a major tradition on which to build. Let us continue to forge a Communist tradition in our country - one which is internationalist in outlook, but one which is deeply South African in character.

HONOUR TO OUR MARTYRS!

1921

Launch of the Communist Party of South Africa — the first Marxist-Leninist party in Africa



Ivon Jones



SP Bunting



Bill Andrews

The CPSA emerges from revolutionary socialists active among white workers

1922

THE RAND REVOLT

The most militant white workers' strike is anti-boss and ... anti-black workers!
The CPSA needs to shift its base

1928

At first, membership is largely white. Now the Party actively 'Africanises', and outstarers join the ranks
the CPSA's 1 750

1924

Africanisation of the Party begins

The late 1930s

A non-sectarian leadership emerges around Moses Kotane

While it must not lose its international allegiance, the Party must be Bolshevised, become South African, not only theoretically but in reality



... and Party members like Ray Alexander do pioneering trade union work

1941 - mid-40s

During the war years, Communists like Dora Tamana build strong CPSA branches in the townships of the Cape, the East Rand, Durban etc. Communists play leading roles in building the Congress movement, and doctors Yusuf Dadoo and MP Naicker transform the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses into mass revolutionary organisations



Dora Tamana

69 FIGHTING YEARS

A brief history of the South African Communist Party



1960

RIVONI HQ, the



JB Marks



J Nkosi

ing black revolution-
By 1928, 1 600 of
embers are black

1929

BLACK REPUBLIC THESIS:
For the first time, the
CPSA develops a clear
strategic line, with the
assistance of the
Communist International:
*'In South Africa the
most direct line of
advance to socialism runs
through the mass struggle
for majority rule.'*

The early 30s

FACTIONALISM
The Communist
International also has
negative effects:
Growing dogmatism in
Stalin's Moscow
influences the CPSA, and
factionalism within the
Party leads to the
expulsion of veterans
like SP Bunting



ess



Yusuf Dadoo
ons

1946

**BLACK
MINEWORKERS
STRIKE**
100 000 miners
strike against the
Chamber of
Mines. The strike
is led by African
Mineworkers
Union president
JB Marks, a long-
standing Party
member

1950

CPSA BANNED: In 1948 the racist National
Party comes to power, with the CPSA as
its most unswerving opponent. In 1950,
the Party is banned

1953

SACP LAUNCHED: South
African Communists regroup
— and a new underground
Party is launched



1961

**LAUNCH OF ARMED
STRUGGLE:** On December 16,
the ANC and SACP jointly
launch *Umkhonto we Sizwe*

1962

**'ROAD TO SOUTH AFRICAN
FREEDOM':** At an underground
conference, the SACP adopts a
new programme

*South Africa
is a colony
of a special
type...*

The mid-60s

At the SACP's underground
high command of MK is captured

YEARS OF REPRESSION: Hundreds of communists are
jailed; some, like Vuyisile Mini, are sent to the gallows

1970

AUGMENTED CENTRAL COMMITTEE: At a landmark Central Committee meeting the SACP reviews nine years of armed struggle



Armed struggle without mass mobilisation and organisation will lead nowhere

1971

INTERNAL RECONSTRUCTION: The Party rebuilds its clandestine structure. Inkululeko appears — a voice from the underground.



1973 into the 80s

YEARS OF MASS MOBILISATION AND ORGANISATION: Workers strikes and mass uprisings; MK scores major armed propaganda successes.

1986

65th PARTY ANNIVERSARY: Inspired by the growth of a powerful trade union movement — and by the growing popularity of socialism — the SACP reasserts a more independent profile



COSATU

UMSEBENZI

First issue of Umsebenzi published

1989

7th PARTY CONGRESS: A new Party programme is adopted

The prospects of achieving a revolutionary breakthrough in South Africa are greater today than ever before in our history



1990



On February 2, the SACP is unbanned — ending 40 years of existence as an outlawed organisation

July 29, 1990

FORWARD TO A NEW MASS PARTY!



A vanguard party or a mass party?

Since its formation 69 years ago the Communist Party in South Africa has set itself the task of being a vanguard party of the working class. But now, with the Party's unbanning, and with a potential membership larger than ever before, should the SACP not change from a vanguard to a mass party?

This is a question being asked quite widely in the ranks of our Party and in fraternal organisations. We believe the question is based on a wrong assumption. It is wrong to automatically counterpose a vanguard role with a relatively large membership. A vanguard party and a mass party are not necessarily opposite things.

Within the broad Communist movement there is a long tradition of debate around the ideal nature, structure, size and role of a workers' party. In 1902 Lenin published his classical work on the topic, "What Is to Be Done?".

Two tendencies

Lenin was frustrated with the highly factionalised Russian socialist circles of the time. He was frustrated with the two tendencies common among these circles. They tended either to become talk-shops, or they engaged in heroic but amateurish actions. In the face of a vicious Tsarist secret police he called for a Party of a new type. It was to be a vanguard force of the most tried and tested revolutionaries. It was to act with strict centralised discipline and unity of purpose.

In Lenin's words: "The party is the politically conscious, advanced section of the class, it is its vanguard. The strength of that vanguard is ten times, a hundred times, more than a hundred times, greater than its numbers ... Organisation increases strength tenfold." Not all revolutionaries agreed with this perspective. The outstanding Polish-German revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg, argued that Lenin's approach underestimated the creativity of the masses.

After the 1905 experience of spontaneously-formed local organs of people's power (the soviets), Lenin himself adjusted some of the ideas in "What Is to Be Done?". Without abandoning the call for a vanguard party of quality, Lenin now argued more forcefully that the vanguard did not lead the masses from on high. In order to lead, the party had to be among the masses; it had to learn constantly from them.

But where does all this leave us in the new

situation in our own country? The first point is that the best organisational approach to building a working class party organisation is not an abstract matter. There are some general rules and experiences that can be applied. But in the end what is crucial are the actual conditions prevailing **at a specific time and place**. Party organisation is not an end in itself. The Party is an instrument of working class struggle, and its specific organisational character must be set by a socialist strategy that is right for the concrete conditions.

In approaching the question of party building in South Africa now, there are a whole number of issues that must be weighed up. These include:

- the national democratic revolution remains the most direct line of advance to socialism in South African conditions,
- the ANC is a long-standing revolutionary ally of the SACP. The major organisational task at present for all revolutionaries - communist and non-communist - is the building of a massive ANC, whose class composition and perspectives continue to be dominated by the working class,
- the existence of powerful mass democratic formations, and particularly trade unions, with a tradition of combining broad front struggles with organisational independence,
- a numerically large industrial proletariat - the largest in Africa. It is a politicised working class, which needs (and indeed demands) its own independent class party,
- the mass popularity of socialism in our country.

The need for balance

When all these factors are weighed up against each other, we believe that the correct approach to party building at present is to balance a relatively large membership with quality.

The party must strive to be a vanguard force of the working class, representing its immediate and longer-term interests. To do this the Party, more than any of its allies, needs to place great stress on internal Party cadre development.

But at the same time there is simply no way that the Party can represent the working class adequately, or do justice to the expectations of South African socialists, without becoming relatively large. The SACP must not become a small left oppositionist voice. It must be a mass force that remains central to the whole liberation drive.

LONG LIVE MARXISM!

Letter to Umsebenzi

Dear Umsebenzi,

As a socialist I have for some time been a critical supporter of the SACP. I have admired the courage and devotion of individual Communist Party members and I have respect for the Party's long traditions. But I have also been uncertain about some of the Party's skeletons in cupboards - its Stalinist past, some very dogmatic articles in certain Party publications just a few years ago, and the intolerance with which certain activists (I am not sure if they were real Party members, or self-appointed supporters) treated open discussion in the MDM and trade union movement.

I have been greatly encouraged by the spirit of glasnost that has been evident in recent publications and interviews given by Joe Slovo. I have also been pleased with the general line propagated by Umsebenzi. But now I have one more problem.

In his recent press interview to announce the July 29 launch of the new legal Party, Slovo is reported as saying that an Interim Leadership Group that is internally based will be publicly announced at the rally. But he is also reported as saying that this ILG will still be under the ultimate authority of the Central Committee, and that the identity of Central Committee members will not be revealed. Will we still have a secret committee controlling Party affairs? Does this really square with the new demands and the new spirit?

Yours in struggle,
SG

Umsebenzi replies:

We appreciate SG's concern. In the first place, there is a democratic principle underlying the decision that the existing Central Committee should remain the highest authority until the next Party Congress.

The present CC is an elected organ — it was elected at the 7th Party Congress last year.

The internally based Interim Leadership Group will be an appointed, not an elected committee. As in the case of the ANC, until we have real branch level organisation, elections for internal national and regional Party structures would be meaningless. Nonetheless, interim appointments should still be based on wide consultation, including consultation with relevant fraternal organisations.

The Party's objective is, however, to ensure that by the time of the next Congress, scheduled for July 1991, all leadership structures down to branch level will be fully elected and open.

As for the decision not to reveal all the names of the existing CC, this has been based on security considerations. Although we are unbanned, the process of democratising South Africa has barely begun. For our part, conditions permitting, we are fully committed to having an open membership and an open leadership in the shortest possible time.

Underground Party conference

The Party recently held an underground national consultative conference, drawing together members of our underground structures in the major industrial areas of the country.

It brought together the practical experience of comrades currently engaged in the organisation of trade unions, women, youth and civics, and those involved in the re-establishment of the legal ANC. With an average age of just under 40, the participants spanned every living generation of struggle.

The focus of the conference was the building of the legal SACP. Papers were presented on:

- The challenges we face,
- What type of Party should emerge,
- The context within which the Party emerges,
- The tripartite alliance,
- The participation of women workers, and
- A consideration of the present relevance of the Party programme, "The Path to Power".

The conference drew up an extensive set of resolutions and recommendations which formed the basis on which the Central Committee reached its decisions on the launch and character of the new, legal SACP.

WE SALUTE OUR UNDERGROUND MILITANTS!



Organising women workers

At the recent underground SACP Consultative Conference, comrades discussed the participation of women workers in the Party. An underground SACP member who is also a COSATU activist presented a paper on this topic. Here are some extracts.

Comrades, we urgently need to work out ways of getting women workers to assert themselves actively within our organisations.

In the first place, we need to realise the issue must be addressed by **both** women and men. Too often we regard the organisation of women as a problem for women activists. In this way the majority of our activists (who are male) are excused from giving any serious organisational attention to this area.

We need to develop, as a Party, education programmes around the women's question, with particular attention to women workers. Without skills training and developing confidence, women will always be severely disadvantaged. But again we must not think of education around the women's issue as solely targetted at women. Men also need to learn about the roots and ongoing causes of women's oppression. These education programmes should be jointly planned and implemented by women and men.

In Cosatu the organisation of women workers is not yet systematic, but there is some progress. It is now the norm to put questions relating to women workers on the table when negotiating with the bosses. This has led to some real shop-floor victories.

But the **way** these victories are being won needs to be examined. There is a tendency for the women workers not to be involved at all in the process. They do not feel it is their issue, and the victories mean so much less. The struggle becomes legalistic, and not mass-based. Victories are won on behalf of the constituency, and not by the constituency.

Organising women workers into the Party presents some real challenges. If, in building the new legal Party, we put emphasis on quality and activism, we might find we unintentionally exclude women workers in large numbers. It is not easy for a woman worker to be a political activist. With her factory work, her family obligations, and often with her sense of inferiority, a woman worker has enormous hurdles to overcome. The Party will need to be extremely sensitive to a whole range of issues - some of them basic things like the time of Party meetings.

Full-time women's organisers

We should strongly consider employing Party cadres to do full-time work among women workers. The SACP needs to be in the vanguard on this issue. We need to formulate a clear code of conduct for Party members addressing issues of morality and sexism. We need to insist on exemplary conduct from Party members. In building Party structures we need to pay particular attention to the inclusion of women, but this must be done without tokenism. It's not just a question of women workers taking up leadership positions - they must assert leadership.

ONE PERSON ONE VOTE!

The Party and religion

One of the most common allegations made by the regime against our Party is that we are opposed to freedom of worship.

This is simply not true. Our Party stands for complete freedom of religion in a secular state. Believers are welcome to join our Party. Indeed, there are already courageous religious people in our underground Party ranks.

In South African conditions we communists feel that we are closer to the moral content of Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish teaching than many an apartheid dominee.

It is true, however, that in the past some communists have adopted an intolerant and dogmatic, anti-religious attitude.

Abuse of religion

We need to look at the reasons for this intolerance. In South Africa, and in the rest of the world, the ruling classes use religion to encourage passivity among the oppressed masses. Like an ideological tot system, the oppressors pour out religion to encourage in the toilers a resigned acceptance of their lot in life.

In apartheid South Africa, a brand of Christianity was even declared the state religion and used to justify racism.

It was against this kind of background that many communists and other progressives developed a deep dislike for religion. But this was always a one-sided picture.

The world's major religions were born and nurtured among the popular masses. They all contain a strong moral core of progressive, even revolutionary, views - a sense of communalism, of solidarity among the poor and suffering, of moral outrage at decadence and ill-begotten private wealth.

A powerful force

In our country, religion is a powerful social force. Millions of South Africans, including very many black workers, subscribe to various religious beliefs. Our national liberation struggle has a long tradition of non-believers and believers fighting shoulder to shoulder in the common cause.

Many leading religious figures — among them Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, Father Smangalis Mkhathshwa, Sister Bernard Ncube, Molvi Cachalia and Beyers Naudé — have played an outstanding role in our struggle.

In recent years there has been a further important



development. With the advance of our liberation struggle, and other similar struggles world-wide, progressive Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and others have begun to make a systematic effort to give their religious doctrines a thoroughly liberatory character.

The ideology of the SACP is based on scientific materialism. We make no apologies for this. Understanding historical changes, the causes of oppression and exploitation, and how to overcome these scourges, requires a scientific approach. Political practice is weakened without continually developing a concrete understanding of actual, material conditions. We believe that invoking forces beyond the material world is not helpful to a clear, political understanding.

But there is absolutely no reason why a believer cannot accept every word of our programme, join the Party and actively participate in Party work.

BUILD THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATION!

FW tries to move the goal-posts

The launch of the new, legal SACP comes at a very specific moment in the South African situation. To build a strong Party, we need to understand the ground on which we are building. One key feature of the present moment is the fact that the apartheid regime is trying to conduct a retreat - but a strategic retreat.

The hammering it got at Cuito Cuanavale, years of mass struggle at home, and decades of international isolation - all of these have made it impossible for the regime to continue in the old way.

Now it wants to move back, but in its own time and in its own way. The present situation is one in which both the liberation forces and the regime are locked in an intense struggle to seize the strategic initiative.

We have amassed enough power to force the regime to talk. But we have not yet built sufficient power to guarantee that any eventual negotiations will result in the transfer of real power to the people as a whole. This remains a key task for the months and years ahead.

While the enforced retreat of the regime is cause for some rejoicing, we must not get carried away. There are many examples in history of well-conducted retreats that are turned into victories, in the end, for those who are retreating. De Klerk is making real concessions. But only so as to better safeguard those key areas (like control over the economy) where he has no plan of moving at all.

De Klerk's retreat has the strategic aim of demobilising and disorganising the broad anti-apartheid front of forces, both in South Africa and internationally. To achieve this he is trying to move the goal-posts.

Listening to De Klerk and his spokesmen you would think apartheid is a thing of the past. You would think that we already have a fully-fledged non-racial and united South Africa. (Have the bantustans disappeared?) Democracy is here, we are told. (Oh yes? So does everyone have an equal vote for a single parliament?) Then there is the small matter of the social and economic impact of centuries of national oppression. (Are we supposed not to notice that a small band of white monopolists still owns and controls two-thirds of our economy?)

According to De Klerk, thanks to this miraculous disappearance of racial oppression, the struggle today is no longer between national liberation and apartheid. That is "a thing of the past". The real

struggle now is between "socialism (he calls it an outmoded system that hasn't worked anywhere) and the free market".

This is what we mean by moving the goal-posts. Three-quarters of the way through a match that he's losing, De Klerk wants us to start playing in a totally different direction.

This attempt to move goal-posts presents a very special challenge to the emerging SACP, and to all socialists and working class militants in our country. Let us actively propagate socialism, let us attack De Klerk's beloved but bankrupt "free market" system. But let us not fall into De Klerk's trap. He wants to isolate us as a small left opposition force, both internationally and at home.

So how do we respond to this challenge? Our own offensive strategy remains the best defence against this manoeuvre:

- Let us build the triple alliance into a still more powerful and unbreakable force.
- Let us widen the anti-apartheid front within our country, and internationally.
- Let us ensure that socialism remains a major current within the national liberation front, not an isolated voice.
- Let us build a large, well organised Communist Party - bed-rock of socialist ideology, vanguard of the working class.



FORWARD TO A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY!

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FORWARD TO A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY!

BUILD THE PARTY FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM!



SACP RALLY

Speakers:

Joe Slovo • Chris Hani

July 29

Soccer City

Soweto