

Unleashing the independent voice of the Party



December 2024

Voice of the South African Communist Party

Umsebenzi



SPECIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS:

**RISE UP FOR
SOCIALISM!**

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WRITE FOR UMSEBENZI

What's the latest news from your branch, district, and province? What SACP campaigns and activities are happening in your community? Email your articles, photos or suggestions to Umsebenzi's deputy editor Cde Buti Manamela at butimanamela@gmail.com

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Towards the Special National Congress and greater independence of the SACP

The SACP's Central Committee met on 29-30 November 2024.

This is a shortened version of the statement issued.

The full version can be found at www.sacp.org.za



SACP General Secretary Solly Mapaila (right) and First Deputy Secretary General Madala Masuku at the press conference following the CC meeting. Photo Mpho Rantho

Our ally, the largest and leading non-racial trade union federation in our country, Cosatu, is celebrating its 39th anniversary today. Cosatu played a key role in the struggle against the apartheid workplace, industrial relations and the apartheid regime. Cosatu was at the forefront of South Africa's progressive labour legislation.

The SACP wishes the federation more strength and unity in the ongoing workers' struggles and beyond. The most sustainable solution to the problems faced by the workers lies in the broader working-class struggle to end the exploitative capitalist system. We will continue working together with Cosatu in these struggles.

The SACP Central Committee(CC) meeting marked a crucial moment for the SACP. The Party is heading to its Fifth Special National Congress (SNC) from 11 to 14 December 2024 in Boksburg, Ekurhuleni.

The SACP General Secretary presented the political

report, first discussed by the Politburo on 25 November outlining the framework for discussion by the Special National Congress. The political report presented to the SNC by the General Secretary will be a Central Committee political report. The CC discussed the organisational and other draft reports prepared for the Special National Congress.

Towards the SNC and the way forward

Over the last 30 years, we have witnessed significant political developments and the trajectory of South Africa's economic and social policies. These have produced both positive and negative outcomes. The key task facing the SACP at its SNC is to assert its independence with unwavering determination in the struggle to end unemployment, poverty, inequality and capitalist exploitation.

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While there have been positive outcomes, such as housing for the poor and expanded access to water, electricity, education, healthcare and social grants, the negatives reached a point where they overshadow the positives.

Unemployment has remained alarmingly high. The expanded definition, which includes discouraged work seekers, means it's over 40 per cent.

The situation is even more dire for Africans, the hardest-hit national group. Total unemployment for this group surpassed 50 per cent before any negligible declines. This is a devastating indictment of the economic policies trajectory followed since 1996.

Like unemployment, poverty and inequality are persistently at crisis-high levels.

Associated with these indicators of a deep-rooted capitalist system crisis, crime levels have skyrocketed. Crime remains unacceptably high in aggregate terms. This fuels sleepless nights across affected communities.

People endure the scourge of drugs, theft, motor vehicle and house hijackings, housebreakings, robberies, murders, massacres, femicide, gender-based violence and other contact crimes. Public infrastructure has also faced relentless attacks and looting. These atrocities strike fear into the heart of our nation. Crime is also bad for investment in the economy. It demands urgent, militant action to restore public safety and security.

“ *The inclusion of the right-wing, neoliberal DA in the government of national unity will buttress the entrenched neoliberal paradigm* ”

Trade and financial liberalisation shock therapy undermined the imperative to halt de-industrialisation and create employment. Austerity measures have undermined transformative and developmental programmes, including government investment in state-owned enterprises and the expansion of the publicly owned economy. Industrial policy, public infrastructure development, maintenance and security have all suffered as a result of austerity and other neoliberal policy measures. These policies have betrayed the working class and derailed our path to genuine economic transformation.

The inclusion of the right-wing, neoliberal DA in the government of national unity will buttress the entrenched neoliberal paradigm. In its reactionary role, the DA continues to reflect anti-working-class politics as seen in its opposition to the national minimum wage the BELA Act and the National Health Insurance, among others.

Also, the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, presented to Parliament by the Minister of Finance last month, leaves our country in a scenario characterised by persistently high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality in the coming years.

The status quo will not change without a radical shift. This requires a decisive change not only in policy but also in the political organisation and mobilisation of the working class. The CC will assert the independence of the Party by implementing the outcomes of the SNC across all key fronts of struggle, including contesting for power, also on the electoral front.

The time for bold, militant action has arrived. The shifting balance of forces and political realignments taking place in our country demand nothing less. For far too long – dating back to July 2007 – the SACP has pursued the reconfiguration of the Alliance through extensive engagements. The way the Alliance is configured must in no particular way compromise its independence. The struggle for a socialist transition is urgent. Therefore, the SNC will decide on the modalities to assert the independence of the SACP, including on how it engages in elections, which is now captured by capital. This will in a very real way bring about a tangible reconfiguration of the Alliance.

The SACP will announce the outcomes through the declaration and resolutions adopted by the SNC. The Political Bureau and the CC will delve into tactical details towards the 2026 local government elections.

Following our all-important bilateral meeting with the ANC on 24 November, our future engagement will be firmly guided by the outcomes of our SNC.

Equally, the SACP will engage in bilateral meetings with other Alliance partners, Cosatu and Sanco, as well as in joint Alliance consultative processes. This engagement process will reflect the Party's commitment to secure the success of the anti-imperialist NDR, which is the basis for our Alliance, and the overall struggle for socialist transformation.

In our determination to build broader working-class unity, strengthen our efforts to forge a popular left front and build a powerful, socialist movement of the workers and poor, we will also engage with other progressive worker and left formations, including trade unions.

Illegal mining

Illegal mining in South Africa is a glaring indictment of the capitalist system's inherent failures and crises. The capitalist minerals mining regime, rooted in the ruthless exploitation of labour and national resources, has left a trail of disused mines and devastated communities. These abandoned sites are a grim example of the greed of capitalist mining bosses who prioritised profit over sustainability and social well-being, extracting

wealth and leaving behind environmental degradation and economic despair. The crisis in Pilgrim's Rest, Mpumalanga Province, and Stilfontein exemplifies how this legacy fuels new forms of exploitation, violence and criminality.

Mostly undocumented migrants, many of whom lack work permits, have been drawn into illegal mining, some coerced by recruiters, while others join out of sheer desperation from Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and other countries.

The mostly undocumented migrant miners and their South African illegal mining counterparts, often referred to as "zama zamas", operate in dangerous conditions, risking their lives, while fuelling an illicit economy that benefits criminal networks. Included in these criminal networks are white collar criminals, who buy and sell the illegally mined minerals, profiteering. There is collusion by certain established mining houses in this phenomenon.

Illegal mining is accompanied by a host of other crimes, such as illegal trade in minerals, weapons, drugs and gender-based violence, including sexual assaults, as well as human trafficking. Some community members benefit financially, while others bear the brunt of crime and insecurity.

This division of the community exacerbates social tensions and weakens collective efforts to confront the root causes. The SACP has consistently stood with communities, advocating for unity, structural transformation and the eradication of these injustices.

We must confront the capitalist system and the failed macroeconomic and sectoral policies that have created conditions for this crisis. This includes holding mining corporations accountable for their exploitation, environmental degradation, and implementing stringent regulations to combat illegal mining.

We reaffirm our commitment to the widest possible working-class unity to ensure that communities are at the centre of sustainable development efforts, including a thriving small-scale mining sector – in a context where environmental protection prevails. Without tackling the structural causes of inequality and exploitation, the crisis will continue.

Food safety and local economic development crises

The crisis of unsafe food and the tragic deaths of children expose deep systemic issues. It is also a sign of the social reproduction crisis.

Informal traders often operate without proper regulation or adherence to health standards. Hazardous practices, including the storage of food with banned pesticides like terbufos and aldicarb have caused deaths. Poor waste management exacerbates the dangers, compounding the risks of contaminated products.

Local economies are now dominated by well-

supported and co-ordinated foreign-controlled networks, on the one hand, and by domestic large retail corporations, on the other hand. This has displaced local shopkeepers, small and informal sector enterprises, and survivalist activities, forcing many to close down, entrenching poverty. Those affected have not had support.

The government must act decisively to root out the crisis. Removing banned pesticides and implementing stricter food safety regulations is vital. There has to be robust support for community-owned stores and co-operatives, integrated with local production development and ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

“ We reaffirm our commitment to the widest possible working-class unity to ensure that communities are at the centre of sustainable development

National Health Insurance and Education Laws Amendment Act Implementation

We will intensify our joint campaigns with Cosatu and other progressive worker unions. Cosatu's resolutions on the National Health Insurance (NHI) and the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act (BELA Act), which align with the SACP's positions are among our shared immediate objectives.

We welcome Cosatu's commitment to the Friends of the National Health Insurance, a popular left front initiative to mobilise mass support for the decisive rollout of the NHI. This is essential to ensure access to quality healthcare for all and defeat capital making profits from the exploitation of healthcare.

The SACP welcomes Cosatu's resolution to counter efforts by the racists who oppose the implementation of clauses 4 and 5 of the BELA Act in what they refer to as "Afrikaans schools". These clauses are critical to end the practices of school governing bodies that uphold the apartheid legacy of discrimination and exclusion. Such practices deprive African learners of access to these schools.

The SACP denounces machinations to manipulate Nedlac process through selective consultation. No legitimate Nedlac process can legitimise racist agendas.

Drought relief

South Africa is grappling with a severe drought that threatens livelihoods, food security and the broader economy. The persistent lack of rainfall has hit agricultural regions hard, with smallholder

farmers, particularly those historically disadvantaged, bearing the brunt of inequality in access to water and other resources. Crops are failing, water sources are dwindling, and livestock deaths are mounting. This crisis disproportionately affects rural communities already marginalised by systemic capitalist inequalities, deepening their vulnerabilities and exacerbating poverty.

The SACP CC called on the government to take urgent and decisive action to prioritise drought relief, with a focus on ensuring the equitable allocation of resources, targeting those who have been historically disadvantaged. Long-term strategies, including investment in climate-resilient infrastructure and sustainable farming practices, are critical to protecting our nation from future climate-induced disasters.

Struggle for gender equality and against gender-based violence

The SACP calls on all its structures and members to intensify their efforts in advancing the struggle for gender equality and justice during the 2024 Sixteen Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children Campaign. Under the theme, “Unite Against Gender-Based Violence: Empower, Protect and Transform”, this campaign challenges all of us to confront the patriarchal structures that perpetuates this scourge. The SACP reaffirms its commitment to dismantle these systems, fostering equality, and building a society where the rights and dignity of women and children are respected.

The CC strongly condemned the horrific brutality of rape that continues to plague our country. We are appalled by reports of extortion through so-called “protection from rape” demanded by rape gangs in Mqhekezweni, Eastern Cape, targeting vulnerable victims. This despicable exploitation represents the worst form of predatory violence, which must be eradicated urgently. We call on law enforcement authorities to leave no stone unturned in apprehending these perpetrators and ensuring they face the full might of the law. SACP members and structures must work closely with communities, and organisations to fight this scourge. This task is part of the cornerstones of our revolutionary struggle.

Anti-imperialism and solidarity with the struggles against imperialist aggression and for global justice

The SACP unequivocally condemns the intensification of imperialist aggression globally and reaffirms its solidarity with all peoples resisting oppression and occupation. The decline of the United States-led unipolar world is a clear sign of the crisis within imperialism itself. For decades, the US has imposed its Monroe Doctrine on

Cuba and a neoliberal agenda on the world, exploiting nations through coercive economic practices. However, the emergence of a multipolar world, driven by the rise of the People’s Republic of China and the assertiveness of the Russian Federation, signifies a growing challenge to the US-led imperialist collective West.

The SACP stands firmly with the government and people of Cuba, who continue to endure the illegal US blockade and relentless imperialist attempts to undermine their socialist development path.

We also express our unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people, victims of the apartheid Israeli settler regime’s genocidal aggression, and the people of Western Sahara, still suffering under Moroccan occupation.

Likewise, we extend our support to the peoples of Venezuela, Syria and Lebanon, who face ongoing imperialist attacks and machination.

We call for an immediate end to the war in Sudan, which also threatens the peace and sovereignty of the African continent.

Further, we reiterate our support for the people of Swaziland struggling for democracy and freedom.

The African continent remains a focal point of imperialist exploitation, where neo-colonial structures perpetuate dependency and poverty. The ongoing conflicts in Sudan, the DRC and Mozambique are not driven by internal dynamics only. These conflicts are further evidence of imperialist powers causing instability to extract resources and maintain control.

The SACP expresses solidarity with the people of Mozambique and FRELIMO against imperialist interference, destabilisation and post-election violence.

The SACP wishes SWAPO of Namibia success in the elections just held. SWAPO is a crucial force in the anti-imperialist struggle. Imperialist forces, using money politics and media mouthpieces, have engaged in machinations against SWAPO and ultimately the majority of the Namibian people.

The SACP reiterates the necessity of regional and wider African continental unity as a counter-hegemonic force. Unity among African people and states, anchored in anti-imperialist and emancipatory principles, is essential to dismantle the domination by the imperialists. This is crucial to serve the needs of the people rather than the profits of multinational exploiters.

The Palestinian people’s struggle exposes the ruthless motives of imperialism. Backed by the US, the apartheid Israeli settler regime’s aggression in Gaza aims not only to annihilate the Palestinian people but also to seize control of critical natural resources, including offshore gas reserves. These actions reveal the true nature of imperialist alliances and their disregard for human rights and sovereignty. The SACP calls on all progressive forces worldwide to intensify their solidarity with the Palestinian people and demand an immediate end to

Israeli apartheid and genocide.

As the unipolar world order declines, it is imperative to consolidate a multipolar framework that prioritises justice, equality, peace and an end to global uneven development. The SACP supports initiatives such as BRICS, which, while not yet perfect, represent a significant step towards building a counter-hegemonic pole that challenges the US-led imperialist collective West domination. However, true liberation will require more than state-led alliances. It necessitates the active mobilisation of working-class forces, trade unions and people's movements to construct a future without the exploitation of one person and state by another.

The SACP reiterates its commitment to international solidarity as a cornerstone of our struggle. We will continue to work with anti-imperialist movements and build platforms for co-operation and resistance. In this critical moment, the choice before humanity is stark: emancipation and socialism on the one hand or barbarism and slavery on the other hand. The SACP is resolute in advancing the national, anti-imperialist, democratic revolution towards non-capitalist

development, a socialist future. We are resolute in supporting all oppressed peoples in their fight for self-determination, justice and peace.

Tribute to Naphthal Manana

The SACP pays tribute to Comrade Naphtal "Naph" Manana [5 September 1956 – 7 November 2024], an uMkhonto weSizwe combatant and our former ambassador to Cuba. Naph was sentenced to death by the apartheid regime in 1980 for his brave fight for the liberation of our people.

Together with his comrades, Petros Mashego and Johnson Lubisi, they were taken to death row at the Pretoria Central Prison. Following international mobilisation by our liberation movement against the death sentence, the apartheid regime finally relented and commuted the sentence from death to life imprisonment. Comrade Naph served his sentence on Robben Island from 1982 until his release in 1991 following the unbanning of the ANC, the SACP and other organisations. ★



SACP graffiti in Kayamandi, Western Cape.

SPECIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS

Forward to the Special National Congress

The SNC is a crucial forum to take stock of the struggle for socialism, review progress and build a strong organisation of the working class



“We need to review our progress, reflect on our mistakes and how to correct them - so that we build a strong working-class organisation to fight for socialism” - SACP GS Solly Mapaila. Photo: eNCA screengrab

Six hundred and fifty delegates representing 370,126 members in 2,092 branches in 53 districts will be converging at the Birchwood Conference Centre in Johannesburg from 11 to 14 December for the SACP’s 5th Special National Congress. Among

the delegates 469 of them will be voting delegates and the remaining 181 will include Alliance partners, other political parties, trade unions, NGOs, progressive foundations, international guests and others.

Said SACP General Secretary Solly Mapaila: “As a mid-term Congress it’s an important platform

to consider the trajectory of the socialist struggle in our country. We need to review our progress, reflect on our mistakes and how to correct them - so that we build a strong working-class organisation to fight for socialism. We have to assess the state of our party structures in our communities.

“The SNC will define the new tasks of the SACP in the contemporary fight against capitalism and how to work with other organisations in new fronts so that it’s not only us against capitalism, but society against capitalism.

“We will re-look into our Party-building strategy and how to implement the South African Struggle for Socialism, our Party’s programme in the new conditions.”

Cde Mapaila said that a “major issue will be the 2026 local government elections. There has been a call in our Party structures since 2002 that we consider standing on our own in local government elections. The YCL put this sharply on the agenda at our 2005 Special National Congress. This led to the call for a reconfiguration of the Alliance. And then the resolution at our 2022 Congress to participate in local government elections on our own.

“We will be debating the modalities of this and our level of preparedness at this SNC. Will we participate in the elections on our own or with other forces? It’s a new terrain for us as we’ve always been participating in elections with the ANC.

“There are also new political parties emerging all the time. In this year’s elections capital funded several of these and they were more active than ever. They will do the same in

2026. They understand where the locus of power is in bourgeois democracies – in electoral politics. They want to control the state through ensuring that parties favourable to capital win.”

What progress is there on a Popular Left Front

“The Popular Left Front is a difficult terrain of struggle. It’s not formalistic. Sometimes that’s where the mistake is being made. “We have, for example, had a meeting with the PAC (Pan Africanist Congress), who left the ANC in 1959 also because of their belief that the SACP had too much influence on the ANC. But we found there were areas on which we could agree, particularly on the transformation of land and some community programmes we can work together on, for example, ensuring the safety of communities. We can build a front in that space.

“But also fronts with various social movements. We’ve played a leading role in the “Friends of the NHI (National Health Insurance). We are working with Cosatu and others on this. Also, on the Universal Basic Income Grant and the BELA (Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill) campaign. So, the PLF will emerge through these various fronts.”

How will this lead to the SACP taking part in the 2026 elections on its own?

“The SACP must play a major role in all these campaigns. It is through such fronts that progressive candidates can emerge to contest elections. Some of these candidates will be from social movements, others will be SACP cadres.

“But there will also be direct candidates from the SACP. In terms of our guidelines, Party structures will request for this and it will come through the processes to the Central Committee for consideration of the motivation and a decision on the matter”

How will the SACP relate with the ANC after the elections?

“It’ll be a new terrain. But we do have a previous example. In Metsimaholo we did contest elections on our own. We tried as Alliance partners at the provincial level to deal with the tensions there between the Party and the ANC. The Alliance officials visited Metsimaholo a week before the elections and explained to our comrades that even if we are contesting each other in elections, we can work together after as comrades.

“We will need to manage these tensions in 2026 and also find new ways to do this.

“Most importantly, we need to bring new energy in through this process – and ensure we advance the interests of the communities we are elected by.” ★

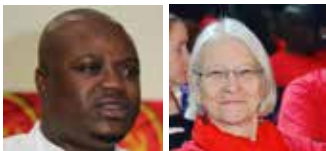


SPECIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS

Unleashing the independent voice of the Party

– building socialist practice, programmes and consciousness from the ground up

*Through the SNC, the SACP will be better able to advance the struggle for socialism and give concrete expression to our slogan “Socialism is the Future – Build It Now”, write **Tinyiko Ntini and Jenny Schreiner***



The 5th Special National Congress (SNC) will be a critical moment in the life of the SACP. The world and country we live

in require left forces to organise, campaign and educate differently. At the SNC we will take stock of progress in the implementation of the resolutions of the 15th Congress and develop proposals on how to “Consolidate and build a powerful socialist movement of the workers and poor”. Under this theme, delegates will engage on what is to be done 30 years into the new phase of our national democratic revolution (NDR)

The world is shaped by an aggressive imperialist agenda, involved in proxy wars to roll back the strengthening sovereignty and independent development path of key South countries, the rise of right-wing and fascist forces, rising levels of poverty, social dislocation and interpersonal crises, and the devastating extreme weather conditions that have impacted in particular on the working class and the poor. The SNC will undertake an in-depth class analysis of the global balance of forces and face the task of how to deepen the role of the Party in the global left and international solidarity campaigns and take forward more powerfully the anti-imperialist struggle.

The Congress takes place after the ANC lost its majority in the election, and opted for a Government of National Unity, which includes the party of our class enemy. The SNC will be expected to focus on a deep class analysis of the domestic political environment,

including reflecting on the trajectory of the NDR, the threats to it from neoliberal capitalist ideology and practice, and corruption and criminality, particularly organised crime. In this regard, the Congress will be discussing the document, *Thirty Years On: What Is To Be Done?* As the basis for Party policy positions on the economy, workplace and trade union struggles, community organisation and residential struggles, struggles for inclusivity through gender transformation and equality, non-racialism and mobilising the young people of South Africa.

“ *The SNC will be expected to focus on a deep class analysis of the domestic political environment, including reflecting on the trajectory of the NDR* ”

This will be a basis for the Party programme of action, our programme of Party building, of village and community development, and of building popular fronts on issues affecting the lives of the working class and the poor. The Congress will assess our progress in the six tributaries to the socialist movement of the workers and the poor, and our work in all sites of power as directed by the Party Programme, *The South African Road to Socialism*.

Our SNCs are designed to enable the SACP to do a deep dive into the challenges and successes in

implementing the resolution of the previous Congress, to determine, based on analysis of the material conditions of the time and the subjective factors concerning the state of revolutionary and motive forces, what needs to be done differently. The SNC will therefore evaluate the character of the SACP and consider the systems that are necessary at this juncture.

The SNC will also set the framework for an in-depth review of the SACP Constitution that will ensure that our Constitution enables the outcomes of the 15th Congress and the resolutions of the 5th SNC.

The implementation of the outcomes of the SNC will enable the strengthening of the independent profile and role of the SACP. That stronger independent activism and voice of the SACP on the ground and in the battle of ideas will reconfigure our relations with broad left forces and progressive forces who share common concerns but not necessarily a socialist posture, our relations with our Alliance partners and ultimately of the Alliance itself and the broad mass democratic movement.

We go into the SNC with the Central Committee, PECs, Districts and Branches across the country saying it is the time for Communists to step up and lead the working class and the poor and their allies into activism to defend the gains of the people of this country and drive forward the NDR. It is through this SNC that the SACP will be better able to advance the struggle for socialism and give concrete expression to our slogan “Socialism is the Future – Build It Now”. It is not the task of the SACP alone to build socialism, it is the task of the working class, and its various formations, and the 5th SNC must strengthen our ability to play a vanguard role in that revolution. ★

Cde Ntini is an SACP Central Committee member, SACP Assistant Secretary of Organising and Campaigns and former YCLSA National Secretary. Cde Schreiner is an SACP Central Committee and Politburo member, Head of the SACP Secretariat and a former MK combatant and political prisoner.



The SNC will examine the work done since the 15th Congress of the Party and how best to consolidate and build a powerful socialist movement of the workers and poor. Photo: SACP Facebook

Frank engagement between SACP and ANC

The following statement was released following the meeting of ANC National Officials and SACP Office Bearers, on 24 November



The ANC and SACP held a bilateral meeting on 24 November 2024. ANC National Officials, led by President Cyril Ramaphosa, and SACP National Office Bearers, led by General Secretary Solly Mapaila, attended the meeting. The purpose was to discuss the political situation in the country, the economy and broader social transformation and development. The meeting also facilitated the exchange of perspectives on each organisation's positions and the state and role of the broader Alliance.

President Ramaphosa presented the ANC's political input, while General Secretary Mapaila presented the SACP's political input. Both leaders provided frank reflections, addressing each Alliance partner's respective assessment of the challenges and tasks at hand. This was followed by an open discussion, further clarifying and expanding on key points raised. The meeting was pivotal in setting a direction to guide ongoing bilateral engagements between the two Alliance partners, conceptualised as a continuous process rather than a single, one-day event.

To implement the shared perspectives from Sunday's

meeting, the ANC and the SACP will hold another bilateral meeting in January 2025. This will take place ahead of the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) Lekgotla scheduled to take place by the end of January 2025. The January bilateral meeting will be preceded by the ANC's final NEC meeting for 2024 and the SACP's Fifth Special National Congress, set to take place from 11 to 14 December 2024.

The next bilateral meeting will therefore provide a platform to further exchange perspectives on feedback from and the positions adopted internally by each Alliance partner. This will include reflections on the positions exchanged on Sunday regarding the Government of National Unity and the reconfiguration of the Alliance. In addition, the meeting will share resolutions on key priorities for 2025 and beyond.

Noting the weaknesses that emerged as a result of lack of finality on the reconfiguration of the Alliance, the two Alliance partners agreed that finalising this reconfiguration is essential for strengthening the Alliance's unity of purpose, enhancing its collective impact and securing its future amid a changing national political landscape and shifting balance of forces.

Finality on the reconfiguration of the Alliance is a key task facing not only the next bilateral meeting between the two Alliance partners, building on the perspectives shared on Sunday, but, equally important, also the entire Alliance. It is a crucial task for strategic and tactical considerations within each Alliance partner and for the Alliance movement at large regarding the local government elections to be held in 2026.

Frank about the weaknesses that have emerged in the recent period, both Alliance partners agreed on the importance of maintaining regular bilateral and broader Alliance consultative processes.

As part of the broader Alliance, the ANC and the SACP will strengthen participation in the Alliance's political and technical review of economic and broader social transformation and development policy. The meeting recognised this review as vital, particularly considering the need to advance the key tenets of the manifesto adopted by all Alliance partners ahead of the May 2024 elections.

The results of the economic and broader social transformation and development policy review and recommendations on what is to be done are for consideration by the Alliance Political Council with the participation of other Alliance partners in preparation for the Alliance Economic Summit.

This summit is among the key priorities aimed at overcoming critical issues, including the high unemployment, poverty, inequality, cost of living and crime, among others. Both Alliance partners expressed deep concern about these challenges and reaffirmed their commitment to achieving meaningful progress that prioritises the interests of the people.

At the end of the meeting, both delegations expressed appreciation for the frankness of the engagement and the camaraderie that prevailed throughout, despite the challenging circumstances resulting from the strategic setback of losing the majority status in the May 2024 elections. ★



FOOD SAFETY CRISIS

A call to protect lives and dignity

Tebogo Phadu *unpacks the critical links between food safety and the crisis of social reproduction*



The recent rise in food-borne illnesses and the tragic loss of children's lives have shaken South Africa. On 15 November President Cyril Ramaphosa acknowledged this crisis and outlined measures to address it. These interventions are crucial, but lasting solutions require collective action and systemic reform.

Unsafe food practices are mainly incentivised by the quest to maximise profits over the well-being of our people, as demonstrated by the growing incidence of adulterated and expired food products.

Food safety is a public good that must be protected. The unregulated use of hazardous pesticides, poor waste management, and municipal inefficiencies are symptoms of a broader crisis of social reproduction—the breakdown of systems that sustain life. This failure is exacerbated by a capitalist system prioritising profit over people, leaving communities vulnerable to unsafe food practices and environmental neglect.

This crisis disproportionately impacts the working

class, who are most exposed to unsafe conditions. The President's immediate steps, including multidisciplinary inspection teams and stricter enforcement of regulations, are vital. Encouragingly, a growing number of municipalities are taking up these measures, showing progress in addressing systemic failures.

Co-operatives as a solution

Consumer co-operatives present an alternative to exploitative practices in the food supply chain. Owned and operated by community members, they prioritise fair business practices and reinvest surpluses ('profits') locally. However, over the last 15 years or more, townships and villages have experienced a massive takeover of locally owned stores by foreign nationals, along with significant penetration by large retail chains such as Shoprite and Pick n Pay. This has displaced many locally owned businesses, eroding community control over food systems.

The government's R500-million fund to support community shops is a positive step, but its success



Spaza shops in the spotlight: City of Joburg health and safety officials, left, carry out a food safety check in Cosmo City, while in Swartwater, Eastern Cape, police check for fake goods Photos: City of Joburg and SAPS

depends on empowering co-operatives to meet safety standards while maintaining affordability. By fostering community-owned stores, the power to shape local economies and ensure safe, equitable food systems can be restored. Partnerships between the government, co-operatives, and community organisations can foster compliance and accountability. By reclaiming control over food systems, communities can ensure their needs are prioritised and contribute to sustainable, safe food environments.

Empowering communities with education

Public education on food safety is a cornerstone of prevention. The government's campaigns must equip consumers to make informed choices while addressing systemic issues. Accessible reporting mechanisms are also essential to hold violators accountable. Education serves a dual purpose: empowering individuals to protect themselves and exposing systemic failures that necessitate vigilance. This awareness can drive collective action, demanding reforms that address the root causes of the crisis.

Unsafe food practices must be met with stringent consequences. The government's commitment to inspections and regulatory enforcement is promising but must be matched with transparency to rebuild public trust. Clear accountability for unsafe practices is essential to prevent future tragedies.

Reclaiming food systems

The rise of unsafe food practices highlights the

need for local ownership and control over food supply chains. Co-operatives can address this by ensuring that operations align with community needs. The Secondary Consumer Co-op Working Group (SCC-WG), representing 22 co-operatives, has called for thorough investigations into unsafe practices, the role of big retail and manufacturing companies in this crisis and stronger regulations and programmes to support community-owned stores.

Towards a just food system

South Africa's food system must prioritise safety, local ownership and control and sustainability over profit. Current regulations fall short; comprehensive policies are needed to equip communities with the tools for resilience. By supporting co-operatives and enhancing education, we can transform this moment into a turning point for food justice.

The food safety crisis reflects broader failures of social reproduction. Addressing it requires reimagining how society organises the production and distribution of essential goods. By centring human needs over profit motives, South Africa can honour the lives lost and build a more equitable future. Let us ensure no family endures such preventable suffering again. Together, we can create a safer, healthier South Africa. ★

Cde Phadu is a SACP Central Committee member, and DTCA MD and Malesela Makhafola Chair of the Secondary Consumer Co-op Working Group

YOUTH

Youth creation for shared prosperity

Michia Moncho recalls an inspiring story she heard in China about building better communities and its relevance to our struggle in SA for a better future



This year we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the vision of a community of shared future for mankind and the Belt and Road Initiative, launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. One of its goals is people-to-people connectivity in the international community. It is a vision where we come together as a global community to develop solutions to the challenges facing humanity, including global warming, environmental degradation, pandemics, food insecurity and many others.

I participated in the Shaping the Future: Young African Political Leaders Workshop that took place in July 2023. This workshop gave me a true reflection of what it means to build a community with a shared future. I experienced first-hand the meaning of "charity begins at home". I met some of the most extraordinary people who are actively working to change not only their lives but the lives of the community in which they live. As a people, we often tend to leave our places of birth in search of better lives and opportunities.

This workshop was about people building better communities by finding what is unique in their communities to ensure their betterment. For example, the husband of a Party



Best foot forward: "We must continue to sharpen our skills and our understanding of the international community and work together to create a shared prosperity for humanity." Photo: Kagiso Trust Youth Development

committee secretary in a village in Yanbo died. He was the sole breadwinner. Instead of leaving the village to look for work, his widow realised that her village was not doing well because of its poor infrastructure. She brought the villagers together to build a road.

It was not an easy initiative, but through her determination, resilience, commitment and discipline, she and the other villagers managed to build their village's first proper road, and through that road, the village is now a booming tourist destination and one of the leading liquor producers in Guizhou. She was able to achieve all this because she understood the power of working together to achieve shared prosperity.

Coming from a semi-rural township myself, I can relate and have learnt so much from the story above. As a woman, it could not have been easy for her as all her predecessors who led the party in her village were men and the villagers were not so sure of her leadership skills, meaning she had to work extra hard to prove herself not only to herself but to the whole village.

As a young person, I am inspired by learning from the experiences of others and how they overcame their challenges. It is said that theory without practice is sterile, and practice without theory is blind. The vision of the Belt and Road Initiative is to bring people together to share their experiences and learn from each other to build better communities - the best example of putting theory into practice and vice versa.

The community I come from is mostly influenced by Western culture, where it is much easier to dream and much harder to aspire to occupy space. I am the first generation in my family to go to university, and it is through such opportunities created by the International Department

“...telling our stories will help future generations to know where we come from so that we create better tomorrows for ourselves and for humanity.”

of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China that we are able to learn and realise that although we come from different cultures, our life experiences are not so different and that these social exchanges are mutually beneficial.

My mother, retired from work, said: “My dearest daughter, as you are the last of your siblings and the last to finish your schooling, I think I have done my best to make sure that you and all your siblings graduate from high school and this is the furthest I can take you in life”. At the time I could not understand what she meant by, “this is furthest I can take you”. She went on to say that her mother had never been to school and couldn't read or write. But she made sure that my mother and her siblings went to school and at least learned to read and write.

So, my mother made a promise to herself that she would take us further than where she finished by making sure that all her children graduated from high school, and she did accomplish that mission. She made me promise her that children from my generation would graduate from universities and better the lives of generations to come after us. Sadly, a few months after our discussion, my mother passed away.

It took me many years of doing odd jobs to manage to save enough to pay for my university fees. I am still studying part-time as I can't afford to study full time and I am left with a few modules before I graduate. I will be the first in my family to graduate from university and would have fulfilled my promise to my mother.

My heartfelt gratitude to the International Exchange Center of the CPC for sharing the life

experiences of the Yanbo village and life story of Huang Dafa and the rich history of the Chinese people. One can self-introspect and find the interconnectedness of humanity. We are all striving for a better society. The tools that we use to achieve a better society will determine the shared prosperity we seek. History has no blank pages and telling our stories will help future generations to know where we come from so that we create better tomorrows for ourselves and for humanity just like how my mom narrated my family's life-story.

We must be mindful of the stories we tell about ourselves and what we teach and normalise about ourselves. Often these stories are used to create a preconceived notion of who we are based on the environment in which we find ourselves. Our policies are sometimes not people-centred. We need to avoid the stereotypes we perpetuate among ourselves and about ourselves. A lie told repeatedly will eventually be believed to be the truth, and we will end up believing that we are what is said about us, and we will fail to aspire to be better.

We must continue to sharpen our skills and our understanding of the international community and work together to create a shared prosperity for humanity.

Long Live Africa-China mutual relations! ★

Cde Moncho is a YCLSA and Africa for Palestine activist

PALESTINE

For whom we weep will win the war

Ronnie Kasrils on why – despite the horrors of its genocidal war on the Palestinians – Israel has reached a dead end and Zionism is dying



Overwhelming grief: Israeli occupation forces committed three massacres against families in the Gaza Strip on 2 November, resulting in the killing of at least 47 Palestinians and the injury of 108 others, according to medical reports. Photo: Wafa



In Gaza, six children are murdered every hour. More than 17,000 children have been butchered. None of us, not even the poets, can summon words adequate to the horror of the fascistic bloodlust of the Israeli regime and the society that backs it. In fourteen months, over 44,000 people had been killed. This number does not include the missing.

More than 10,000 people are assumed to be dead, their bodies

buried under rubble. More than 100,000 people are wounded, many grievously. A study published in *The Lancet*, the esteemed medical journal, in July this year estimated that the total number of dead, due to direct and indirect causes, could exceed 186,000 people as of June 2024. More than 70% of the dead are women and children. Over 1,000 children are now amputees, the highest number for a comparable period in history.

A study by Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins of Brown

University, published on 7 October this year, shows that 90% of people in Gaza are displaced, 96% do not have enough food and water, there is no electricity, and just under 90% of the hospitals have been destroyed, with more than 880 health care workers killed. Four in every five children are consumed with depression, grief, and fear. Infectious diseases are running rampant.

The confirmed deaths of 44,000 people as a direct result of the attacks by the Israeli military amount to

almost two Sharpeville massacres every single day for a year.

After Sharpeville, there was relative calm after the storm. The wounded were taken to hospital, and the dead were buried with dignity. The regime was momentarily shaken by global condemnation. But in Gaza the killing is relentless.

The Zionists and their liberal allies justify this avalanche of killing as a legitimate response to the Operation Al Aqsa Flood on 7 October last year. There is an internationally recognised right to armed resistance against occupation. There is no internationally recognised right of defence by an occupying power.

Contexts of armed resistance

Indeed, the right to armed resistance against occupation does not extend to taking civilian hostages or to deliberate attacks on civilians. We need, though, to be clear on three things.

The first is that the Israelis, backed by their allies in the US and elsewhere, ran a brazen propaganda campaign after Operation Al Aqsa Flood. The claims about 40 beheaded babies and organised mass rape have been comprehensively debunked.

More than 300 of the people killed in Israel during the operation were soldiers on active duty and therefore legitimate military targets. Many of the civilians killed were part of the Israeli military reserve and therefore off-duty soldiers. Moreover, it is well documented that many of the civilians were killed by the Israeli military.

The third is that in these matters, it is always necessary to take context into account. The context is 75 years of colonial dispossession and murderous ethnic cleansing throughout Palestine. Around 80% of Gazans are refugees from Israeli 'ethnic cleansing' in 1948 and 1967. Gaza has suffered a bloody siege for 17 years. The civilians were taken

hostage to exchange them for the thousands of hostages held in Israeli prisons.

As anyone who knows the history of the revolts against slavery and colonialism will be aware, atrocities do occur when the downtrodden arise. Serious analysis understands this in context - that oppression is the root of violence and that ending oppression is the route to peace.

Every innocent death is a tragedy. We all grieve the deaths of babies in conflict, but decent people grieve the deaths of all babies. On 7 October 2023, two Israeli infants died. Within weeks, 70 newborn babies had died in Gaza. The Israelis and their liberal allies around the world wish us to grieve for the two Israeli babies and accept the death of the 70 infants in Gaza as the actions of 'the most moral army in the world'. We are supposed to accept that Israeli lives are sacred while the Palestinians are the 'Untermenschen' [people considered racially inferior]. This logic of dehumanisation has always been the logic of fascism and colonialism, and all decent people are called to resist.

People around the world have stood up on principle. Israel's colonial occupation and genocidal response to resistance would not be possible without the support of the US. In the year following Operation Al Aqsa Flood, the US has spent at least \$22.76 billion on military aid to Israel and related US operations in the region. But on university campuses across the US, young people, many of them Jewish, have courageously stood up for justice.

Surveys show that 40% of Jews in the US under the age of 35 oppose Zionism and support the Palestinians. They understand that Judaism existed for thousands of years before the state of Israel was formed and that it will continue to exist long after Israel has ceased to exist in its present form. The international movement to boycott,

sanction, and disinvest from Israel is growing rapidly stronger, and there has been significant progress towards empowering the United Nations and its apex courts, the ICC and ICJ, to finally act with the necessary urgency.

South Africa acted bravely

The South African state acted bravely to take Israel to the International Court of Justice. There is, of course, a strong pushback from Israel and the US, which includes significant attempts to sway public opinion in South Africa. The US government funds projects that make it seem that "fake news" only comes from its rivals in Brics and never from the US or Israel. In late November, the "World Movement for Democracy", a project of the National Endowment for Democracy, a US state organisation associated with many US-backed coups against elected governments, hosted an international "civil society" conference in Johannesburg that misrepresents the US and the West

as the custodians of democracy around the world. Pressure for South African NGOs to boycott the conference resulted in some pulling out.

Israel's hubris, its messianic sense of its right to kill and dominate, masks its growing weakness. In its invasion and bombardment of Lebanon, following its bombing of Iran, Syria and Yemen, there is a growing understanding that its fascism is a threat to the wider region and, ultimately, to world peace.

In over a year, Israel has failed to achieve its declared aims of rescuing the hostages and crushing Hamas. Despite significant losses, the heroic resistance in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Yemen is undefeated. The Israeli military conceals the number of its dead and injured, but there is a growing awareness in Israel that casualties are mounting.

Thousands of Israeli soldiers are suffering from psychological trauma that has rendered them incapable of combat duty. The Israeli military basks in tactical wins but suffers strategic defeats. By expanding the battlefield, they overstretch themselves, and as the war escalates, they will grind to a halt.

Israel in economic crisis

Israel is not a stable state. The divisions within Israeli society are at breaking point, and Netanyahu's effective abandonment of the hostages has weakened his support.

Moreover, Israel cannot indefinitely carry on a protracted war of attrition. The economy is in crisis, with capital flight, foreign investment drying up, and GDP rapidly dropping. There was a \$64-billion loss last year. This year will be worse. Half a million citizens have fled the country. The settlements and towns near the Lebanon border and in the south near Gaza are deserted. Hotels are

overflowing with displaced settlers at government expense.

The harbour of Aqaba is empty of ships and has declared bankruptcy. Hezbollah rockets are striking military targets in Haifa and elsewhere, including key military and Mossad bases, and Netanyahu's home has been struck by a drone. Operation Al-Aqsa Flood proved that Israel was not invincible, and Israel's Iron Dome and air defences are proving inadequate against the combined assaults from the region, from as far away as Iran and Yemen.

Israel has been severely punished by Hezbollah in Lebanon and will fail in its invasion of that country as it has in the past. Iran is another factor entirely. It is a vast country, rich in resources and a formidable foe. And unlike Israel, Iran aims at military targets. It does not launch indiscriminate attacks on civilians. People and countries around the world are taking note of this.

The times are unimaginably grim in Gaza and in the ghettos of the West Bank, where 11,500 people have been imprisoned.

But the resistance lives on, their courage and stoicism manifest in the defiance of Hamas leader, Yahya Sinwar in his last breath; and in the sheer grit of the little girl carrying her injured baby sister on her back through the piles of rubble and death.

People care and comfort one another in the most nightmarish conditions. They dig in the rubble for those buried alive. They rush to the bombed hospitals with the dying and injured in their hands, remains of shredded victims in plastic bags. They bury their shrouded dead with the utmost tenderness in mass graves. They love their land, amaze the world with their dignity, and will not forsake the land of their ancestors.

Zionism is not dead, but it is certainly dying. The cost will be devastatingly high, high beyond measure, but those for whom we weep will win the war. ★

Cde Kasrils is a veteran SACP, ANC and MK leader and former Minister



The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) reported in early December that over 415,000 displaced Palestinians are currently sheltering in the agency's school buildings in Gaza, while hundreds of thousands more are struggling to survive in even worse conditions in temporary shelters. Photo: Wafa

BOOKS

Joe Modise's positive relationship with communists

Oscar Van Heerden *replies to the review of the book about the life of Joe Modise, published in the October-November issue of Umsebenzi*



The timeline and history of Comrade & Commander - The life and Times of Joe Modise, edited by Ronnie Kasrils and Fidelis Hove, is a jewel of a contribution and deserves our applause. It lays out the tapestry of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) from start to end. The culmination is the creation of a new national defence force (SANDF), with JM appointed by President Mandela as Minister of Defence.

The book and its chosen methodology (told through 50 voices) is a work of genius and gives the reader pearls of insights. Personal accounts of individuals and their interactions with JM draw one's understanding of the harsh conditions under which MK combatants had to operate in exile.

When I was young, we heard of the mystique of the people's army, yet the book dispels the romanticism and gives a reality check. I found it fascinating that former enemy soldiers of the apartheid army were also asked to write their memories of JM. They make it glaringly apparent that he was a person of interest not only to the military establishment but also to the South African intelligence agencies. It explains the origins of the misinformation and smear campaign waged against him and peddled in a compliant media.

After all, the tactics of the apartheid regime and the disinformation campaign against others such as Chris Hani, Joe Slovo and Winnie Mandela is widely known. Joe Modise was also a victim of such smears, built up over time as a slanted narrative that unfortunately became embedded even within our ranks.

The book drifts through the ebbs and flows of MK and informs the reader of all manner of tragedies and even farces that took place in faraway lands. The modesty of leadership, be it OR Tambo, JM, Hani, Slovo and others in MK is eloquently explained. How I wish we still had that calibre of leadership in the movement.

Janet Cherry wrote a review of the book for Umsebenzi (Oct-Nov 2024), in which she questions the relationship between the ANC's MK and the SACP or lack thereof, including the effectiveness of MK and whether JM possessed the deep analysis and understanding of the

material conditions on the ground in South Africa and the course of change to come. As I am sure Janet knows, the ANC leadership operated as a central unit and its decisions, analysis, strategies and tactics would have been considered as a leadership responsibility on which by all accounts JM played an active part.

To suggest that JM did not know such material conditions – as she does – nor possess the necessary analytical tools – as she supposedly does – would suggest a misunderstanding of how the ANC leadership operated in exile. Moreover, it is very clear from the book that JM was an active, even dynamic thinker on all things political, social and gender, along with his military acumen. The extent to which he encouraged MK cadres in the camps to build structures, grow vegetables and lead by example, reflects a man of immense energy and talent.

As for the allegations of corruption with regards to the special defence procurement programme (so-called Arms Deal), a recent review in Beeld written by Erika Gibson aptly states that if indeed such millions found a way into JM's pockets, it surprisingly did not benefit his family after his passing. JM's dear wife retired Major General Jackie Sedibe, had to work up to the age of 80 years old to augment both her and JM's state pensions to ensure their children made it through their university studies. Rather odd if indeed there were those unsubstantiated millions – for JM did not die a wealthy man.

Janet Cherry laments the arms deal at length but suffice to reveal that none of the several investigations of enquiry ever found evidence implicating JM and his ministerial colleagues who handled the project under the leadership of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. Jacob Zuma, with the corruption charges he faces, was a KZN MEC and not part of the national government's decision-making at the time, and therefore had nothing to do with decisions. As for the charge by the TRC of gross human rights violations, it is fair to say we were at war with a brutal apartheid racist regime, and in war, violations do occur.

As for the effectiveness of MK and its limited

operations inside the country, I think it behoves Janet to also have some appreciation for the inspirational “idea” of MK among the young lions of our country. The fact that there was a military wing of the ANC engaged in combat operations, reinforcing mass struggle, gave inspiration to millions.

Regarding the relationship with the SACP, which Janet feels is barely portrayed, I refer her specifically to page 36, where JM states that “it was soon agreed that the ANC and SACP were to undertake the new form of [armed] struggle” in 1961, reflecting his approval of the SACP’s key role.

Although a very young JM, barely twenty years old, sided with Mandela in disrupting communist party meetings in the late 1940s, that negativity was soon set aside as appreciation of the Party’s role as an ally was grasped by an emergent radical ANC leadership. Janet mentions that the SACP planted the idea of MK’s formation. What needs to be added is this was in parallel with Mandela and particularly the youth led by JM, being in step with the Party, which is evident from a close reading of the book.

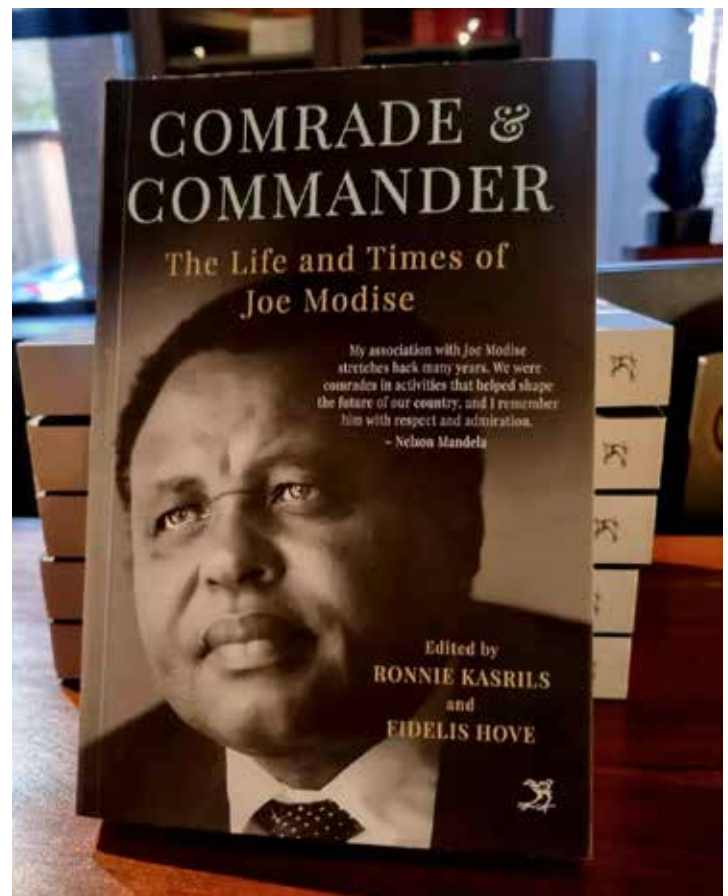
JM unhesitatingly worked closely with the leading communists in the SACP, such as Slovo, Hani, and Kasrils, throughout MK’s existence. He sought them out for high positions in the top command of a collective leadership. Then there is the fact of JM ultimately joining the Party after the Kabwe Conference of 1985 as revealed on page 171.

Scouring through the book, and its excellent index, it is evident that more than 100 references are made concerning Hani and the SACP and the relationship with MK and JM. The tension between Hani and others at the time of the Morogoro Conference (1969) was a critique of the collective ANC leadership, and not only disagreement with JM. Several contributors from that time provided important views of the so-called “Hani Memorandum” for a better grasp of the problems the ANC faced. The book makes it evident that a positive relationship developed in later years when Chris was MK Commissar and then Chief of Staff under JM.

What is more, JM thoroughly accepted the concept of Marxist theory. The revolutionary theory taught in the MK camps was Marxist Leninist in nature, and the theoretical framework with which all MK soldiers were equipped was designed to heighten their taking up arms to destroy an Apartheid system.

JM had the very same theoretical underpinnings, so to suggest that he possessed no revolutionary theory, or ideological commitment as Janet does, falls short in my view. Kasrils describes the enthusiasm with which JM embraced political theory when they trained together in the Soviet Union, and that for JM politics was a primary factor in the objectives of armed struggle, and in the breakthrough to negotiations and transformation.

There are also voices in the book on how he would



motivate MK cadres to link up with the workers and reinforce trade union struggles. Instructive in this regard is how during the 1972-73 strike upsurge in the country he drew the attention of the SACTU leadership in Lusaka to a bus driver’s strike, and as a former bus driver himself, urged them to find ways of supporting them. He never stood in the way of the need to deploy MK cadres to underground political and trade union structures or women’s mobilisation.

Those who have their doubts about JM need to ask why leaders such as Mandela, Sisulu and Tambo entrusted him with such responsibility throughout his fifty years of service in the struggle.

JM, Hani and Slovo were all at some point or the other commander, deputy commander and chief of staff of MK, and as such gave their respective lives in service of our people.

Janet concedes that “many who read this book will not think or feel the same way about Joe Modise as before.” Mandla Radebe, SACP member and UJ Professor, in praising the work states: “A ground breaking book that sheds light on the enigmatic life of Joe Modise. This literary masterpiece dismantles the prevailing stereotypes.”

This book is a must-read and I highly recommend it. ★

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