

THE ROLE OF THE SACP IN THE
STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

- A. Madala

The South African Communist Party is the oldest Communist Party in the whole of the continent of Africa. It was formed on July 30, 1921. The Party has played a profound role in the history and lives of our people during their struggle for national and social emancipation. The Communist Party, like its ally - the African National Congress - commands immense respect and support both at home and abroad.

First, we might ask ourselves, what is a Communist Party? A communist party is a political organisation of the working class. It consists of all the advanced members of the working class, dedicated to the liberation of the working class and the establishment of a classless society. Communist Parties are guided by the Ideology of Marxism-Leninism - an ideology founded on truth. A POWERFUL WEAPON OF THE WORKING CLASS. Communist Parties abide by the principles laid down in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, which states:

"The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement. The Communists are distinguished from other working class parties by this only:

- (1) In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independent of nationality.
- (2) In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bour-

geoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole".

This applies to the South African Communist Party like all other communist parties the world over.

The birth of the CPSA in 1921, was a historic necessity. The Party emerged out of the whole labour movement and during this period the African proletariat was still in its infancy. More significant was the very fact that from its inception the Party was a non-racial body. The Party quickly learned from experience that the main effective force for the overthrow of white domination and imperialism was the organisation of the African masses. At the time the most outstanding leaders were Bill Andrews, S.P. Bunting and Ivor Jones.

The Party started African trade unions and waged campaigns against illiteracy. From 1921 to 1928, the number of Africans joining the ranks of the Party grew. This negates the lies spread by the enemy that only whites became communists and that Africans are incapable of understanding Marxism. By 1928, out of 1,750 members, 1,600 were Africans. Amongst the early African members were comrades who were to become not only symbols in the struggle against apartheid but also leading figures in the world communist movement - Moses Kotane, J.B. Marks, Edwin Mofutsanyana, Albert Nzula, Johannes Nkosi, Gana Makabeni, Jimmy La Guma, the present Chairman of the Party, Yusuf Dadoo and many others.

The Party continued to work tirelessly amongst the people fighting for higher wages and the right to bread, land and freedom. In the process the ties between the Party and the African National Congress were cemented.

The President of the ANC, J.T. Gumede, had this to say at the Congress of the League Against Imperialism, held in Brussels in 1927: "I am happy to say that there are communists in South Africa. ... it is my experience that the Communist Party is the only party that stands behind us and

from which we can expect something". Further in his presidential address to the ANC Conference of 1927, he said: "Of all the political parties, the Communist Party was the only one which honestly and sincerely fought for the emancipation of the oppressed natives".

During the 30s and 40s the Party spared no efforts in organising the masses. Following the outbreak of World War II, the Party became a powerful force in uniting opponents of all races against fascism and nazism.

After the war the conditions of the African workers had deteriorated to such an extent that in August 1946, African mine workers went on one of the biggest strikes involving 100,000 miners. This strike was led by one of the Party militants - J.B. Marks. As a result of this historic strike, the entire Johannesburg party leadership was arrested for "conspiracy". During the same period there was a large Anti-Pass Campaign and a mass Indian Campaign against residential segregation led by party militants, Dadoo, M. Naicker, George Ponnen.. It was during the class battles against white domination and capitalist exploitation that the unity between Africans, Indians and Coloureds was forged. The alliance between communists and non-communists, between the Party and ANC, grew out of the common struggle with stalwarts like Kotane, Marks and Dadoo playing a magnificent part.

At this time a new dynamic leadership was coming to the fore within the ANC. Leaders like Mandela, Tambo, Sisulu soon found that communists were loyal, dedicated allies in the national liberation struggle. Life and practise proved that the firm unity of communists and non-communists, of Party and national liberation movement, helped to advance the struggle. This simple truth is a great lesson to this day.

When the nazi-inspired Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, the Party became its prime target and was subsequently banned in 1950. But in banning the Party in 1950, the fascist regime did not succeed in suppressing its spirit and ideals. Party members continued to play an active and leading role

in the tumultuous period of the 50s and 60s, with unparalleled actions and campaigns such as the Defiance Campaign, the Congress of the People at which the historic Freedom Charter was adopted, the Treason Trial, nation-wide political strikes and peasant uprisings, etc.,

The decision to form MK in 1961 by our leaders was made with the participation and support of the CP members. From that time onwards, the Party has regarded the revolutionary armed struggle as the main method of crushing the apartheid regime.

The enemy uncovered our High Command at Rivonia and arrested Party members together with ANC leaders. The CP has made considerable sacrifices in the struggle for the liberation of our people. Communists have suffered the same harassment as other freedom fighters - they have been imprisoned, gaoled, hanged, tortured and have fallen in battle. We should recall the late Bram Fischer, who was a tireless and self-sacrificing fighter for freedom.

Successive governments have tried to destroy the Communist Party. But, the party shall never be destroyed. It continues to play a leading role in the struggle.

The malignant propaganda spread by the Pan African Congress and other reactionary elements like the expelled "gang of eight" alleging: that the Communists are not fighting, and that the Party is only using the ANC as a front to further their own ends, are malicious lies fabricated by the enemy in order to divide our people and weaken our ability to fight. In fact this is the tune composed by the Boers and imperialists.

The politico-socio-economic structure of South Africa is one in which we find national oppression side by side with ruthless capitalist exploitation. This indisputable fact shows very clearly that it is essential for the Party to work alongside the African National Congress, and explains their different origins and roles.

The struggle against national oppression and class exploitation are not contradictory. The nationalism espoused by the ANC is not a narrow

nationalism but a revolutionary nationalism and is uncompromisingly anti-imperialist. The Party programme supports the National Democratic Revolution the pivot of which is the Freedom Charter. However its long-term programme entails the establishment of a socialist society leading to a classless communist society. The ANC representing all strata and national groups, leads the struggle for national liberation.

It is a matter of fact that in the ANC we have always had communists. Communists have always been loyal to our movement. They work tirelessly and fulfil every assignment given to them by the leading organs of the movement; they help develop political and class consciousness of our comrades and patriots; to develop staunchness among cadres in order to be able to defend our ideology.

It is our duty to fight against enemy propaganda which distorts the role of the Party and ANC. It is our task to explain the policy of our movement, the African National Congress, and to explain its alliance with the Party. We need also to explain to our people who our friends are. It should be made known to our people that in this life and death struggle for the liquidation of South African fascism and its imperialist allies, we have strong and unstinting allies in the Socialist Community and the world progressive forces. With the unity of all progressive forces we will win. Remember: "A UNITED PEOPLE CAN NEVER BE DEFEATED!"

"THE LESSON OF OUR HISTORY IS THAT THE KEY TO FREEDOM IS A UNITED PEOPLE FIGHTING FOR A SINGLE COMMON GOAL: PEOPLE'S POWER OVER EVERY INCH OF AN INDIVISIBLE SOUTH AFRICA".

- DR. YUSUF DADOO -