

The Role of the South African Communist Party in the National Liberation Struggle

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-Mkhonto Bomvu

We are all of us gathered here in the bush, suffering the privations and dangers of war, with one common overriding aim - an aim that unites all of us - workers, peasants, students, intellectuals - into a closely-knit, tightly-organised unit. That aim is the absolute destruction of the system of oppression and exploitation that makes daily life in our country a waking nightmare for the vast majority of our people, and a paradise on earth for a tiny minority.

In order to achieve this difficult but noble aim of ours, it is not enough that we are learning the art of war - the arts of weaponry, explosives, topography and tactics - the art of evading, surprising and vanquishing the enemy. If victory is to be more than something we dream about during the dark hours of guard duty, then we have to be armed with a thorough and painstaking analysis and understanding of the society we are trying to change and the history which led to our presence today in this friendly country, thousands of kilometres away from home.

Such an analysis of our society will throw up the unavoidable conclusion that the oppression and exploitation in our country is two-fold.

On the one hand there is the national oppression and exploitation of the majority of our people. It is this factor which has put a butcher's knife through our society, slicing it cruelly into two racial camps. *

On the other hand our society is divided by a vicious* system of class oppression and exploitation.

When, despite more than two centuries of determined & unflinching resistance to the hungry imperialist monster, our people were temporarily subdued, the victory of the imperialists did not simply give them total control of the land and its resources. The social system which the imperialists

brought with them does not survive on land and gold alone. It survives primarily on labour. The cheaper the labour, the better for the system.

It was of primary importance for the system of the imperialists - a system we call 'capitalism' - that they turn the dispossessed African people into a class of workers, to man the rapidly multiplying mines, factories and farms. Thus they created the South African working class.

An understanding of the two aspects of exploitation and oppression in our country - national and class - helps us to understand the history of our struggle and the present alignment of forces that is massing against the Botha regime.

The African National Congress was formed with the primary purpose of uniting the oppressed masses of our country for the elimination of national oppression - for the restoration of the land and its resources to the people as a whole.

Today we are celebrating the 59th birthday of the South African Communist Party - the organisation that was formed on the 29th July, 1921 to lead the working class of our country in an onslaught against class exploitation and oppression, towards the creation of a socialist society, free of oppression, free of exploitation, free of racism and discrimination.

MANIFESTO

In the manifesto announcing its birth the Communist Party of South Africa called on "all South African workers, white and black, to join in promoting the overthrow of the capitalist system and outlawry of the capitalist class, and the establishment of a Commonwealth of Workers throughout the World".

Only those who have been blinded by the propaganda of the racists and the imperialists, or who have been blinded by their own desire to wear the flashy suits of the capitalists, drive around in silver Jaguars, and dine at the Carlton Hotel, will deny the fact that the communists of South Africa have played a vital and uncompromising role in the struggle to free our country.

We can proudly name amongst the great names of our struggle, dedicated communists, some who have fallen and some still fighting - Albert Nzula, Edwin Mofutsanyana, Johannes Nkosi, Jimmy La Guma, Moses Kotane, J.B. Marks, Bram Fischer, Yusuf Dadoo, Govan Mbeki, Joe Slovo and many, many others whose names are indelibly printed on the bright pages of our history.

Not only have individual communists given body and soul to

our struggle, but communism as an ideological and organisational force has given to our struggle profound analysis and revolutionary action.

To fully understand the role of the South African Communist Party in the liberation struggle we must understand the crucial role of the working class in that struggle.

As we have said, when the imperialists robbed the people of their land and forced them into the mines, farms and factories, they were creating a class of workers - a class indispensable to the workings of the capitalist system. But at the same time they were planting the seeds of a tree that would grow to massive proportions and ultimately strangle them.

If the South African working class is the key to the operation of the system of exploitation in South Africa, it is also the fundamental force that will ultimately shatter that system.

The South African working class has its fingers around the throat of the exploiters. It is the role of the Communist Party, as it is the historical role of communist parties in all countries, to teach the workers that by unflinchingly tightening their fingers around the throat that they hold they can bring an end to exploitation in their country.

CLASS AND NATION

We have said at the outset that the struggle in South Africa has both a class and national character. We must not fall into the trap of seeing these two aspects as two distinct and separate struggles. It is precisely the complex interrelationship between these two aspects of our society that has led to the mighty alliance between the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress in the struggle for the national liberation and social emancipation of our country.

The Communist Party, since its early days, has recognised that class exploitation in South Africa cannot be ended until the system of racist and national oppression has been totally pulverised. It recognised that this primary aim could not be achieved without a broad alliance of all class forces opposed to the system of racial and national oppression.

In 1928 the Communist Party fully committed itself to the liberation of the black people of South Africa when it adopted a special resolution which included the following words:

"South Africa is a black country, the majority of its population is black and so is the majority of the workers and peasants. The bulk of

the South African population is the black peasantry, whose land has been expropriated by the white minority. Seven-eighths of the land is owned by the whites. Hence the national question in South Africa, which is based upon the agrarian question, lies at the foundation of the revolution in South Africa".

Some years later, Moses Kotane, one of the greatest leaders of both the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress, said:

"There can be no working class victory without black liberation and no black liberation without the destruction of capitalism in all its forms".

FREEDOM CHARTER

Today the South African Communist Party fully supports the revolutionary programme of the South African liberation movement - the Freedom Charter. The Party's own 'Immediate Proposals' echo many of the demands of the Freedom Charter.

The Party's proposals call for the establishment of a unitary South African state in which election to representative bodies shall be by "universal, equal, direct, adult franchise, without regard to race, colour, sex or property, educational or other qualifications whatsoever".

It calls for the guarantee of the "fullest liberty of speech and thought, of the press and of organisation, of conscience and religion, to all citizens" and for the guarantee of the "people's freedom of movement".

The Party further proposes that vital sections of the country's economy must be placed in "the hands of the national democratic state" and that "historic injustice must be corrected by the nationalisation of the mining industry, banking and monopoly industrial establishments".

It also says that, in order to "rectify the injustice committed by the colonialists in seizing most of the land of South Africa, the revolutionary state must take immediate and drastic measures to restore the land to the people".

These are just a few of the revolutionary demands of the South African Communist Party - demands which are in complete harmony with the aims of our national liberation struggle. But, of prime importance, they are demands which cannot be won, implemented or defended without the leading and well-organised participation of the South African working class in our

struggle. It is the crucial role of the South African Communist Party, whose birthday we are gladly celebrating today, to ensure the leadership and organisation of our working class, so that not only can victory be assured, but so that it can also be consolidated and extended to new horizons.

We carry on our shoulders a stormy but brilliant history. This history, with all its currents and tides, streams and tidal waves, has gathered together in a torrential power capable of sweeping off the face of the earth one of the most evil and degrading social systems ever devised by the human species.

Throughout our history the exponents and defenders of this system have tried to destroy the power we possess by encouraging us to use it against one another. They have tried and failed countless times to divide us. But they have not learned their lesson. They are still trying to divide us and they will continue trying to do so until the day when we finally divide them into a billion tiny fragments.

So let us all - workers, peasants, students, intellectuals - communists and non-communists - all patriots of our country join together in celebrating our unity, in celebrating the birth of one of the vital components of our unity, in celebrating the great revolutionary alliance of which we are a part.

DAWN politiXword No.5 - Answers

Across: 1. Philosophy 6. Olga 7. Old 9. End
11. Omit 12. Solo 13. APO 14. May

Down: 1. Progress 2. Load 3. SASOL 4. Poll
5. Yardstick 7. Odd 8. Dollar 10. Delay
13. Of