

AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL

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South Africa: The Party faithful

The South African Communist Party (SACP) has always been proud of its position as a loyal ally of Moscow. It has faithfully supported the **Soviet** model of socialism, spurning its **Chinese** and Eurocommunist variants. Now, with the advent of *perestroika* and the adoption by **Mikhail Gorbachev** of policies long championed by Eurocommunists, South African communists are faced with a dilemma.

At first, it seemed the SACP would follow the Soviet lead in its traditional fashion. Coming from the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1986, SACP general secretary **Joe Slovo** praised Gorbachev effusively, calling the Congress the most remarkable he had ever attended. Since then, loud applause for Gorbachev inside the Party has turned to alarm. The SACP never imagined the extent to which the new thinking in the Soviet Union would bring Moscow and Washington together. The Soviets, eager to resolve regional conflicts by political means, have lost interest in the liberation of Africa. This has threatened the SACP, whose strength within the South African liberation movement has reposed principally on the African National Congress (ANC)'s dependence on the communist world for arms.

On the political front, some Soviet authorities have endorsed the principle of group rights, which places them in the same camp as Pretoria. Soviet theoreticians have even gone so far as to state publicly that socialism is unattainable in South Africa in the foreseeable future. This and other acts of 'betrayal' by the Soviets have led to a polemical combat between Slovo and CPSU ideologues which has received extensive coverage in the Soviet media.

Africa Confidential can reveal that the recent Seventh Congress of the SACP, in June 1989, was held in Havana. This is perhaps indicative of the schism between the SACP and the CPSU. The SACP, in spite of its rhetorical support for *perestroika*, has joined **Fidel Castro**, **Deng Zhao Ping**, **Igor Ligachev** and the late **Nicolae Ceausescu** as the last loyal defenders of orthodoxy.

The Stalinist tradition in the SACP dates to the 1920s, and especially the 1928 meeting of the Communist International - the Comintern - which instructed the South African Party to campaign for an 'independent native republic' in South Africa. South African Communist leaders of the 1930s, **Lazar Bach** and the **Richters**, perished at the hands of the

Stalinists during the Moscow purges for resisting Soviet injunctions. This paved the way for the takeover of the Party by loyal Stalinists led by **Moses Kotane**, a graduate of the Soviet University of the East, whose admiration for Stalin led him to name his first son **Joseph**. Kotane implemented Soviet instructions to the letter and is proudly remembered today as the father of the present SACP-ANC alliance.

It was in fact the dramatic success of Kotane and the Lenin School graduate **J.B. Marks** in piloting the Party into the era of mass struggle that alarmed the National Party government which, after its 1948 electoral triumph, banned the Communist Party two years later. It is ironic that this ultimately played in the Party's favour as the highly capable Party cadres were driven for cover into still-legal mass organisations like the ANC. This entryism paid handsome dividends as the leading lights of the Party rose within the ANC. Marks preceded **Nelson Mandela** as president of the most powerful ANC province, Transvaal. **Dan Tloome**, today the SACP chairman, lost by a mere six votes to **Walter Sisulu** in the 1949 election to the post of ANC secretary general. **Govan Mbeki** rose to prominence in the eastern Cape, and **Harry Gwala** in Natal. This initiation into the underground stood the Party in good stead when the ANC was banned in its turn in 1960. With its core of experienced underground function-

The South African Communist Party is suspicious of perestroika

aries, the Party was better equipped than any other tendency to lead the post-1960 era of clandestine resistance. With the cold war in full swing, the West chose to snub the ANC in favour of Pretoria's rabid anti-communism. Left with no other choice, the ANC went East.

The Party's first triumph was to wean the ANC from Chinese influence during the Sino-Soviet split after 1965. The ANC withdrew from Chinese camps dozens of its fighters who were undergoing training. The Sino-Soviet controversy was felt within the Party especially on Robben Island, where Harry Gwala led a pro-Beijing faction, and Govan Mbeki the pro-Muscovites. The Moscow faction ultimately won, especially among exiled communists, among whom Soviet-trained heavyweights like Kotane, Marks, and

Jack Simons were pivotal.

It was however at the ANC Consultative Conference at Morogoro, **Tanzania**, in 1969 that the Party scored its definitive victory. The ANC adopted a number of resolutions advanced by the Party caucus including:

- Adoption of the Strategy and Tactics document, a watered-down version of the Party's own 1962 programme, *The Road to South African Freedom*. The Strategy and Tactics document was allegedly authored by Joe Slovo aided by **Joe Matthews**.

- The establishment of the powerful Revolutionary Council, charged with day-to-day management of the struggle. This immediately fell into Party hands in the person of Joe Matthews, the Council's first secretary.

- The opening of ANC ranks to non-blacks. The few who joined were all Party members including Joe Slovo, **Yusuf Dadoo**, Jack Simons, **Reg September** and others.

- A formal declaration of alliance between the Party and the ANC which made it a heresy for anyone within the liberation alliance henceforth to be anti-communist.

The Morogoro Conference was chaired by J.B. Marks, then chairman of the Communist Party, assisted by **Moses Mabhida**, later to become the Party's general secretary.

The formal declaration of alliance between the Party and the ANC closed the ANC to other ideological influences. The Party alone was to preside over matters of political theory. The Social Democrats in **Sweden**, who over the years have become the main financiers of the ANC, until recently had repeatedly failed to attract a single ANC candidate with offers of political education in Sweden, in spite of several invitations. Political education was the exclusive domain of the Party and its Soviet allies, and they regarded social democracy as a heresy.

The Party quarantined ANC President **Oliver Tambo**, bestowing upon him an aura of adulation as a successful tactic to manoeuvre him out of the day-to-day political life of the ANC by keeping him on an exhausting round of diplomatic visits. He is hardly ever at his headquarters and is ill-informed about events within the movement. The principal of accountability, which is sacred within the Party, has not been respected when it concerns Tambo. The presidential staff, headed by the Administrative Secretary of the President General's Office, **Anthony Mongalo**, is, with the possible exception of Mrs. **Masondo**, an SACP fief. There was in fact confusion within the Party over the role of their point-man, Mongalo. Some felt that since he was in such a highly visible post it would not be wise for him to participate in inner party life, which centres upon the basic Party units which meet fortnightly. Hardliners dismissed that argument on the grounds that one is only a communist by virtue of unit activity. The upshot was Mongalo's refusal to attend unit meetings, which created quite a storm.

So pervasive is Party influence that it is hard to distinguish Party from non-Party in the ANC as all and sundry speak one language, Marxism. The oft-repeated allegation of tensions between Party and non-Party is a lie. It is wishful thinking on the part of Pretoria. Owing to its success in hemming in Tambo, the Party is ambivalent about the possible release of Mandela, whom it fears. There is thus a suspicion that the Party is behind the ugly rumours circulating within the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) that Mandela may strike a

deal with **F.W. de Klerk**. The object of such rumours would be to discredit Mandela in the MDM and to alienate him from his recently released comrades, who are reported to be disturbed by the news. With his power-base eroded, the Party could take on Mandela.

The Soweto explosion of 1976 and the consequent exodus of Black Consciousness youth posed a problem for the Party. So alarmed was it that it revitalised the commissariat which had been dismantled since the 1970 'disappearance' on active service of the first *Umkhonto we Sizwe* political commissar, **Flag Boshielo**. The Party dispatched Dr. **Francis Meli**, a Central Committee member, to be the first political commissar of the Nova Katenga camp in **Angola**, the Sandhurst of a whole generation of the post-Soweto *Umkhonto we Sizwe* officer corps. The Party underpinned this drive for ideological purity with the appointment of **Andrew Masondo**, also a Central Committee member, as National Commissar of the ANC to ensure that even those outside the army were within the Party's ideological ambit. Meli was impatient with the street-wise Sowetans under his charge, whom he often chided for 'walking like defeated Nazi soldiers.' He was reassigned to the editorship of *Sechaba*, the official journal of the ANC. Both Meli and Masondo were later dropped from the Central Committee at the 1984 Sixth Congress in Moscow. The fatherly **Marks Shope**, a veteran Party man and ex-secretary general of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), was brought in to replace Meli at Katenga. It was Shope, later assisted by Jack Simons, who converted the Black Consciousness-inclined Soweto youth to Marxism. They recruited to the Party the cream of the Sowetans among whom were the following:

Thami Zulu (AC Vol 30 No 18), recently reported to have died in unclear circumstances.

'Che' Ogara (AC Vol 29 No 16), likely to be voted onto the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) in this year's planned ANC consultative conference.

Peter Mayibuye (AC Vol 30 No 8), also likely to be elected to the NEC.

Klaus Maphepha, Party regional chief in **Swaziland**, also likely to be elected to the NEC.

Lentsoe 'Captain' Moeketsi, the nephew of South Africa's answer to **Charlie Parker**, the legendary **Kippie Moeketsi**. A former security chief in Angola and later deputy military intelligence chief, he was expelled from the Party in 1984 after a dispute with his chief and alleged non-conformist behaviour.

Motso Mokgabudi, first commander of the elite Special Operations unit responsible for the spectacular 1980 bombing of the Sasolberg oil plant. He was killed in a South African raid on Matola, **Mozambique**, in 1981.

Khumalo Migwe, author, and until recently the Party representative at the World Marxist Review in Prague.

Dan Cindi, former ANC representative at the United Nations. He is Shope's son-in-law, tipped for election to the NEC this year.

Kingsley Xuma, until recently ANC representative in Maputo.

Raymond Nkuku, ANC representative in Havana.

Freedom Mkhwanazi, former deputy editor of *Sechaba*, who fell out of favour and is now studying in **Britain**.

Jessica Monare, the prima donna of the left, widow of Comrade **Cyril** (AC Vol 30 No 18), now held on suspicion of spying.

Once the ANC had taken the Sowetans on board, it was transformed. Among the rich array of Stalinist methods which gained currency was the practice of discrediting dissenters by sending them into internal exile. A range of penal centres sprang up like the one in Tanzania dubbed, with macabre humour, 'Dachau', plus Moscow, Quatro, Viana and the Malange farm in Angola, the building known as RC and the Chongela Farm in Zambia. The most sensational case of the detention of a dissident was the arrest of the ANC's dynamic research director, Dr. **Pallo Jordan**, in June 1983. **Peter Boroko**, a Party member and number two in the security and intelligence organ, detained Jordan at RC in Lusaka for almost eight weeks and subjected him to the humiliation of writing repeated biographies to pledge his allegiance to the ANC. Jordan's 'crime' was to have spoken out against security excesses (AC Vol 29 No 24). He was rescued by the intervention of security and intelligence chief **Mswai Piliso** and Tambo, who had both been away at the time of the incident. Boroko, however, went unpunished, retaining his position as deputy to Piliso thanks to his Party affiliation. The practice of exile reached a climax with the death on a desolate Malange farm of the ex-*Umkhonto we Sizwe* ordnance chief **Jacob 'Mavili' Masondo**, a diabetic who had been sentenced to hard labour in late 1983. Even Party barons like Jack Simons openly condemned the practice after Mavili's death, but still it goes on unabated.

At the same time Party, and mainly white, ideologues came to dominate ANC intellectual life. One of the few notable exceptions was **Bernard Magubane**, who worked at the University of Zambia in the 1970s and came under the influence of Jack Simons, who was teaching there. By the time Magubane went to the **United States**, he was a convinced Marxist fond of quoting **Marx**, **Lenin** and **Plekhanov**. He was thus acceptable to the Party.

The ANC coat-tails and the harshness of apartheid government have worked well for the Party. Literally thousands of black activists have embraced socialism at a time when the communist world is shrinking. In rallies within South Africa the once unknown Party flag now competes with the ANC flag for prominence. It has become chic to be Marxist in South Africa today.

The implicit rejection of *perestroika* results from the absence of a reformist wing within the Party. The only known attempt at reform from within was led by **Ruth First**, Slovo's late wife. She was however killed by Pretoria's agents in 1982 before she could muster a movement for reform. Others like **Ben Turok** were simply expelled because it is almost impossible to reform the Party without violating regulations which would open the questioner to the risk of expulsion.

This is probably why **Thabo Mbeki** has elected to challenge the Party positions through his work in the ANC rather than from within Party structures. Mbeki is one of the Party's authorities on Marxist philosophy. He did a two-year stint at Moscow's Lenin School after his graduation from Britain's Sussex University. He so impressed his Soviet teachers that to this day they cite his example to new Lenin School students. Mbeki however lacks the common touch and shuns organisational tasks, so his reformist ideas have not gained currency with the rank and file, who remain diehard Stalinists. In senior Party circles, Mbeki can perhaps count on the

tentative support of **Brian Bunting**, who shows spasms of dissent, and of **Aziz Pahad**, whose brother **Essop** studied with Thabo at Sussex and Lenin School, but they too are isolated from the *povo* in the camps.

The two main factions in the Party are both Stalinist. The Joe Slovo/**Chris Hani**/**Mac Maharaj** faction has the support of heavyweights like Jack and **Ray Simons**, Military Intelligence chief **Ronnie Kasrils**, and **John Nkadameng**, and powerful officers on the ground in the persons of 'Che' Ogara, **Garth Strachan** - Kasrils' son-in-law - and **Rashid**, the ordnance chief. The other main tendency is the Moses Mabhida/**Josiah Jele** faction, weakened by the death of Mabhida. It has support among key middle-level cadres like Dan Cindi, Kingsley Xuma, Klaus Maphepha and the powerful **Jacob Zuma**. Jele has been battling to transform this faction's image from that of a revanchist Zulu clique by trying to enlist the support of Joburgers like Party chairman Dan Tloome.

The key difference between these two factions seems to be the chauvinism of the Jele-ites, who are wary of white and Indian domination. This is reminiscent of the **Rumanian** position after the Second World War with the 'Home Communists', including Nicolae Ceausescu, ranged against the Muscovites arriving in Bucharest with the triumphant Red Army. The Ceausescus wanted a home-grown brand of Stalinism.

SOME TOUGH RULES

The following disciplinary practices are current in the ANC:

1. Marriage in the ANC, like many other things, is at the discretion of the secretary general. Members wishing to marry must apply for permission, which is not a right but a privilege. A case in point is that of **Zola Mcapeyi** and **Junkie Mongalo**, nephew of **Anthony Mongalo**, which was barred because Zola was deemed not good enough for a leader's nephew. The ANC spirited Junkie Mongalo to the **United States** to separate the two.
2. At the completion of their studies in Scandinavia, ANC students cannot claim their diplomas. Institutions of learning have a written undertaking with the ANC to send the certificates directly to Lusaka. The aim is said to be to thwart the brain drain.
3. Until very recently, ANC cadres were not allowed to have communication with relatives in South Africa. Security was stated as the reason, but the upshot of this practice was to increase control of the movement by the leadership.

The Seventh Party Congress in Havana was held against the backdrop of a worrying international climate of *perestroika*, plus rapid political developments in South Africa itself. The Party also had to take stock of crippling penetration by Pretoria agents. Alleged to be prominent among these is the amazing Jessica Monare, who had been working with the ultra-sensitive Party secretariat in London that is responsible for the production of Party propaganda. In 1984 Party barons were toasting this courageous daughter of the

working class - she was the only black woman delegate to the Sixth Party Congress in Moscow that year. This year, after she had been accused of espionage, the same barons in Havana were grimly assessing the damage.

There was a dose of *glasnost* at the Seventh Congress as the Party for the first time in over fifty years admitted that its erstwhile leaders, Lazar Bach and the Richters, had been executed by the Stalinists after their arrest in Moscow in 1937. This new openness was however tempered by the adoption of a new Party programme, *The Path to Power*, an

updated version of the Stalinist *Road to South African Freedom*. The programme still talks of the inevitable collapse of capitalism and the triumph on a global scale of socialism. Old habits indeed die hard. For security reasons, not even the few dozen delegates assembled in Havana were informed of the names of their new Central Committee.

Arguably the most important decade in South African history opens with the rupture of the time-honoured alliance spanning more than six decades between the SACP and its elder brother, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union ●

Nigeria: FIFA blows the whistle

The Nigerian military authorities are still smarting from the shock of the recent decision by the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) banning the country for two years from participating in FIFA-organised competitions that have age limits. This occurred at the end of FIFA's 8 December executive meeting in Rome at which the draws of the 1990 senior World Cup competition were announced.

The reason given by FIFA was that a clear case of 'negligence in the ages of players in youth competitions' had been established against Nigeria. Although this irregularity has been the subject of rumours and gossip in soccer circles, nobody up to then had come up with any firm proof. With the ban went Nigeria's hopes of hosting the 1991 Junior World Cup.

For the Nigerian military authorities this news could not have come at a worse time. The political transition programme has lost considerable steam as evidenced by the widespread apathy and cynicism that greeted the recent announcement of the manifestoes of the two political parties inaugurated by the government in October (AC vol 30 no 21). Reported to be personally upset by the FIFA clampdown is President **Ibrahim Babangida**. A reputed soccer enthusiast, General Babangida is popularly known in Nigeria by the nickname of '**Maradona**' in recognition of his supreme political artistry and ability to dribble round Nigeria's political minefield.

Babangida had been using football as a weapon in his political armoury, not only basking in its reflected glory but also co-opting former opponents. He had hoped to stage in 1991 a spectacular show of soccer pageantry which would also have coincided with the countdown to his voluntary retirement as Nigeria's Head of State come October 1992. To this end the authorities had already started top-level preparations. The government had committed a sum of 120 million naira towards the renovation of five stadia chosen for the event. The National Sports Commission (NSC) and the Nigerian Football Association (NFA) were reconstructed. Babangida was reputed to have personally ordered the reinstatement of Air Commodore **Tony Ikazoboh** who was said to have performed wonders in his first stint as NFA boss. In addition to these, a Presidential Task Force was organised, headed by **M.K.O. Abiola**, the highly-visible ITT boss and presidential aspirant. These preparations have now been scuttled as a result of the FIFA directive.

The love of soccer is about the only thing on which there appears to be a national consensus in Nigeria's fractious polity. Successive administrations have shrewdly exploited this nation-wide passion for football. In 1973 there appeared a famous picture of General **Yakubu Gowon**, then Head of State, in soccer outfit with the Green Eagles, the national football team, after it had won the soccer trophy at the All-African games held in Lagos. In July 1985, General **Buhari** cut short his sick leave in his Daura hometown and immediately flew to Lagos in order to be seen with the national Under-16 team which had just returned from **China** with a historic gold trophy.

General Babangida has even gone a step further than his predecessors. At every home meeting of the national team, the scoreboard is awash with messages and exhortations from the general. In February 1989 after the nation's under-20 team won the silver medal in **Saudi Arabia**, the general declared a public holiday and awarded each member of the team a record sum of 75,000 naira.

The appointment of Chief Abiola to the top soccer assignment marked what observers believed to be the beginning of a political rapprochement between the two estranged friends. The relationship between Babangida and Abiola had sharply deteriorated over Abiola's ordeal at the hands of some airforce personnel in February 1988. Abiola was held hostage in his house until the intervention of higher authorities. But observers believed there was a political dimension to the feud, more so when the chief used the occasion to issue a sharp political challenge to Babangida himself. Abiola's presidential ambition was well-known at this point. So was Babangida's determination to prevent any member of the old political class from succeeding him. At the climax of the crisis, Abiola's passport was seized by security men at the Mohammed international airport as he was about to leave the country. Abiola has fought his political disqualification all the way in the law courts and lost. Since then, the relationship between the two men has been considerably strained.

The aftermath of the FIFA ban has left the Nigerian Authorities with an unpleasant political situation. Bitter complaints about the corruption, dishonesty and decadence that have bedevilled Nigeria's public life have been revived in the press. Critics of the government have seized this political whip and used it to devastating effect. This appears