

SPEECH DELIVERED BY JOE SLOVO ON THE OCCASSION OF THE CELEBRATION
OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY
30TH JULY 1981 IN MAPUTO.

Comrades,

We have come together to celebrate a truly historic day; a day when South African Communists met in Cape Town on July 30th 1921 and planted the first seed of Marxism-Leninism on our continent of Africa. It is a measure of the way history has moved on that here we are, in Maputo, Capital of Socialist Mozambique, under the red banner of Internationalism, celebrating this great occasion.

In the 60 years that have passed since that founding day, the world, the continent of Africa and our own country, have made giant strides in the struggle towards a future of peace, a future of total social and economic liberation, a future of socialism. Let us take a brief look at those 60 years.

In 1921 the first workers state was barely 4 years old and still in the grips of a battle for survival. Today, on the foundations laid by October - the greatest revolution in the history of mankind - an unconquerable world system of socialism has been built. We South African revolutionaries salute this world. We embrace also the Communist and Workers Parties everywhere who are still locked in battle to extend this world and, once and for all, to put an end to all forms of exploitation of man by man.

LONG LIVE THE SOCIALIST WORLD!

LONG LIVE PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM!

In 1921, the map of the black continent of Africa was a mosaic of colours painted by the European empires. Now, with the exception of South Africa, Namibia and the Sahara the map of our continent can once again be painted in black, with the achievement of the first stage of decolonisation - political independence. Today, we South African revolutionaries salute independent Africa. We pledge to do all in our power to support the continuing struggle against imperialism against neo-colonialism and for a continent in which true liberation will achieve its final objectives - smashing of all exploiters, be they white or black or be they based in Europe or Africa.

DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM!

DOWN WITH NEO-COLONIALISM!

LONG LIVE THE CONTINUING REVOLUTION IN AFRICA!

MAYIBUYE I-AFRICA!

In 1921, in South Africa, the back of the centuries-old tribal armed resistance to the foreign conquest had only just been broken, but the new

forces for change - especially the black proletariat - were not yet fully developed. Today, 60 years later, the years of growth and struggle have created social forces - the working class, those who labour on the land, the youth of the Soweto generation - all shouting with increasing strength and unity: "DEATH TO RACISM" and "ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE".

LONG LIVE OUR GREAT PROLETARIAT!

LONG LIVE OUR RURAL WORKERS AND PEASANTS!

LONG LIVE OUR FIGHTING YOUTH!

So, comrades, in the 60 fighting years of our Party the world has changed, Africa has changed, and our own people stand poised for the most decisive battles in our history.

We will perhaps be the last to be liberated for we face a most powerful and vicious citadel of racism and imperialism. But when the victory comes, as it inevitably will, the wind of change which has been blowing across our continent these past decades will become a gale, sweeping before it the remains of the rubbish which colonialism and imperialism left behind. The struggles in Africa are inseparable. Our victory will be the victory of the whole of Africa just as the victory of people in any part of our continent is our victory.

Gathered, as we are, here in Maputo, there is one victory which has special meaning not only for us in South Africa but also for revolutionaries everywhere. Here, in Mozambique, the Socialist world has expanded. Here on the borders of the worst racist reaction in the world, an island of socialism is being built, led by the Communist vanguard of the Mozambican Working people - FRELIMO.

Here is one of the key front-lines not only of independent Africa in its struggle against racism, but also a front-line of the socialist world in Africa. It is a front-line which, above all, the racists and their imperialist allies want to crack, economically and militarily, because it breathes freedom and emancipation right down their very necks; because it has become one of the bright beacons of internationalism on our continent. Let us all cherish and help defend this achievement with all the resources we can command.

VIVA FRELIMO!

VIVA PRESIDENT SAMORA MACHEL!

VIVA O POVO MOZAMBICANA!

Comrades, this is a celebration. It is therefore right and proper that we should express our joy, shout our slogans, send our voices over the air, distribute our propaganda, and unfurl our banners not only here in Mozambique but, as is happening right now, inside our country where the underground is acting under the very noses of the police.

But it is also a day of reflection on our history, on our ideology; when we reinforce ourselves for the future struggles ahead by sharpening the key weapon of our revolutionary practice, which is our revolutionary understanding.

Revolutionary understanding does not appear suddenly like a religious vision, illuminating eternal truths! It is a process which never ends because the theory of Marxism-Leninism is a tool and not a mathematical formula. It belongs to no one people. It is as much indigenous to Africa as to any other continent. And if it is to do its job properly, it has to be shaped and moulded to the objective conditions of struggle which, in turn, are continuously on the move.

Lenin, in his famous address to the Young Communists of the University of the Peoples of the East said: "There is no communist book in which you will find all the answers to your problems". He did not mean that Marxism had no universal framework. He was saying that its specific application has to be unendingly elaborated by revolutionaries who combine a grasp of its essence with the actual experience of their own situation and the developing struggle.

If, today, the SACP can look back with pride at its contribution to the developing South African struggle, it is precisely because its history, with all its ups and downs, is a reflection of this process.

At the back of the invitation which you received from the ANC to celebrate this occasion there is a message from Alfred Nzo, the Secretary-General of the ANC, which says: "No amount of political and ideological subversion on the part of our enemies and their apologists will ever weaken the revolutionary alliance of the ANC and the SACP".

This unique association was not always there. To understand how it emerged we must look at a bit of history.

The 1921 Manifesto of the CP rang out with the language of military and revolt. It appealed "to all South African workers, organised and unorganised, white and black, to join in promoting the overthrow of the capitalist system, the outlawry of the capitalist class, and the establishment of a commonwealth of workers throughout the world".

But not a word is said about national oppression, national struggle or the national movement. Some commentators have explained this silence by drawing attention to the fact that every single delegate in 1921 was white. The Party had been formed basically from European immigrant workers. Was it their class origins in the privileged aristocracy of white labour which explains the omission? No doubt it may have been so in the case of some individuals. But it is too simplistic an explanation.

We must remember that in 1921 the South African communists were not alone in believing that, in the wake of October, the world socialist revolution was round the corner. In South Africa, the white worker, well organised and making up the bulk of the "industrial masses", had not yet won his seat at the ruler's table and still expressed a degree of class hostility towards capitalism. The newly-emerging black proletariat was small in number and lacked effective industrial organisation. Faced with what turned out to be a utopian perspective of a socialist breakthrough in South Africa (a breakthrough which Marxism told them could only be based on the industrial working class) these pioneers of South African communism believed that there still remained sufficient revolutionary potential in the white working class to deliver a "knockout blow" to the capitalist system.

How then did they bridge the gap between the two fundamental realities of the South African social structure - class exploitation and national oppression? They believed that the solution of the national question in South Africa would follow the seizure of workers' power which would provide the base from which to proceed to free South Africa's oppressed national groups.

To complete the picture as it presented itself to a 1921 Marxist revolutionary, we must also recall the character and level of the national movement of the period. The formation of the African National Congress nine years earlier - the first national movement of Africans on our continent - was an event of great revolutionary significance. But, as with the early communists, the new national movement remained, for some time, a hostage of other objective limitations.

By the early 20's, the ANC's leadership was still dominated by a small group of black intellectuals and traditional tribal leaders. The aim it had set itself of creating single African consciousness, was yet some distance from being fulfilled. Examined in the light of the present-day revolutionary militancy of the ANC, its early approach to struggle had many of the qualities of a cap-in-hand nationalism. For example, it stood for the encouragement of "a spirit of loyalty to the British Crown and all lawful authority". Some of its leaders went as far as to acknowledge "the superiority of the white race". In 1928, its House of Chiefs resolved against cooperation with the communist party, swayed by the argument that "the Tsar was a great man in his country, of royal blood like us chiefs, and where is he now".

It is against this background that the communists were tempted to designate the ANC as a "bourgeois Congress".

These then were the imperfect beginnings of the Communists Party and the ANC. I have touched on the early period because the history of the struggle in the last sixty years and, indeed the coming struggle for peoples power, revolves around the very questions which posed themselves from the first day in the life of the Party. It is these questions which, throughout the whole period, continued to surface in one form or another; they had, and continue to have, a most direct bearing on the movements' ideological formation and, even more importantly, on its revolutionary practice.

The Party began to swing away from its exclusive "class against class" position within a short time of its formation. The early shift of emphasis towards African liberation rapidly reflected itself in the changed composition of the membership. By 1928 it was no longer an all-white affair and its African membership made up 90% of the total. Influenced by Comintern discussions and directives, the Party was, in 1928, decades ahead of any other organisation on the continent of Africa in advancing the concept of black majority rule under the ~~xx~~ slogan of an "independent Native Republic" as a stage towards the overthrow of capitalism. But it was to take many more years before the strategic implications of the relationship between class and national struggle were to be more adequately synthesised in the form of the 1962 Programme of the South African Communist Party (THE ROAD TO SOUTH AFRICAN FREEDOM) adopted at the Party's sixth underground Conference in Johannesburg.

The ANC also travelled a long road of internal debate and contradiction before it reached its present level of revolutionary nationalism. One of the major catalysts of the ideological ~~g~~ leap forward was the 1948 crop of militants in the ANC Youth League led by men like Tambo, Sisulu and Mandela, and supported by leading communists in the ANC leadership like Kotane, Marks and Mofutsanyana.

In programmatic form the advances has their fullest expression at the 1969 Morogoro Conference which adopted the ANC's Strategy and Tactics - a Document which goes further than any other mass national movement has gone in the linking of social and national liberation and in highlighting the dominant role of the black working people in the struggle for national liberation.

It was natural that, despite earlier contradictions and confrontations, the maturing of the ideological content of both the national and working class movements (a process which has its basic roots in changing socio-economic conditions which cannot be elaborated here) should have resulted in a growing collaboration between them; a collaboration which, amongst other things, led to the 1961 joint decision by the Party and the ANC to create Umkhonto We

Sizwe, the armed wing of the liberation movement. Today the ANC and the SACP are embraced in the common front of liberation and, in the words of the ANC spokesman at the 1969 joint meeting of representatives of the two leaderships, these organisations constitute "the two leading pillars of our struggle".

By then, no significant differences existed between the two organisations on the immediate content, strategy and tactics of the South African revolution. This was in a large measure, the result of the loyal devotion and hard work of so many communists who were also members of the national organisation. The views, mood and argument of ANC leaders influenced the formulation of Party policy, and the process also worked the other way about. Yet the very fact that our country can boast of "two leading pillars of our struggle" which have so little which separates them in relation to the immediate strategy and tactics of the South African Revolution, continues to arouse discussion on their respective roles both as independent organs and as part of the liberation alliance..

Amongst the questions which merit discussion are: How does the Party exercise its role as the vanguard of the working class in a situation in which it has accepted the leading role of the ANC in the liberation front? Given that every revolution has its own strategic and tactical stages, how do we view the present connection between the struggle for liberation and for socialism? What, in other other words, is the relationship between the national and class struggle in present conditions? What role can the Party play in safeguarding the ideology of our revolution and protecting it against petty-bourgeois and backward nationalist tendencies?

In the first place we have to situate these questions in the terrain of the Party's overall approach to the relationship between the present phase of our revolutionary process and the aim of a socialist South Africa. This approach can be summarised as follows:

The strategic aim of our Party is to destroy the system of capitalist exploitation in South Africa and to replace it with a Socialist system.

The immediate aim of the Party is to win the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution, more particularly to win national liberation for all the black oppressed and to destroy the economic and political power of the existing ruling class.

The achievement of the aims of the National Democratic Revolution demands a broad alliance of all classes and strata, especially amongst the racially oppressed, who can be mobilised in support of these aims.

Although all classes amongst the black oppressed have an interest in ending national oppression, they do not share the same goals of the fundamental social transformation of a liberated South Africa. The inevitable victory of the national liberation movement can only be truly meaningful and guaranteed if the capitalist system of exploitation, which is the true foundation and purpose of racist oppression, is destroyed. For this reason the Party believes that within the broad alliance for national liberation the working class must be the leading revolutionary force. This means that the Party, together with other forward looking forces must ensure that the end result of the present PHASE OF OUR struggle is the winning of People's power and the creation of a State in which the working class in town and countryside and in alliance with the poor peasants will be the leading force.

In organisational terms the Liberation Alliance is expressed through the liberation front headed by the African National Congress. The ANC is a broad mass national movement which attracts to its ranks all African and other revolutionaries, whatever their class origins, who accept the programme and are prepared to fight against the racist regime by all means, including armed struggle. The Strategy and Tactics of the ANC also assigns a special role to the working people in the national struggle. But the ANC correctly continues to retain its character as a broad national movement which has room in it for cadres with differing ideological beliefs.

In the light of all this, what meaning is there to the claim by the Party that it is the vanguard of the working class?

A party does not earn the title of vanguard of the working class merely by proclaiming it. It achieves this position by the degree to which it organises the class which it represents, the calibre of its day to day leadership, and its devotion to the revolutionary cause. The need to give correct guidance to the revolutionary cause does not imply that the Party must insist on projecting itself as the public "leader" of every step in the unfolding of the conflict.

We must not confuse form with substance. We must be on our guard not to mix up the role of the party as the vanguard of the working class and its ROLE AS A REPRESENTATIVE of this class in specific alliances of class forces which are required at various stages of the struggle.

Both the Party's Programme and the ANC's Strategy and Tactics accept that, within the alliance of class forces which is demanded by the present stage of our revolution, the workers have a special place as the most consistently revolutionary force. But this is not the same as saying that the working class through its political vanguard must demand a monopoly of control of the revolutionary alliance.

If correct leadership of the Democratic Revolution requires the strengthening of the national movement as the major mass organisational force, then this

... the way in which a party exercises its leading and vanguard role in the real (and not vulgar) sense of the term. This is precisely the way in which Vietnamese Communists exercised their vanguard role in relation to the FLN during the liberation struggle and it is also the way in which the early Cuban Communists related to Fidel Castro's July the 26th Movement. As long as the Party does not lose its independence and its separate identity as a political vanguard of the working class, its projection of the ANC as the body leading the alliance of class forces in our struggle, is in no way inconsistent with the Party's role as a vanguard organisation of the working class.

Let us say a few words about another problem. The 1962 Programme of the SACP states that "the immediate and imperative interests of all sections of the South African people demands the carrying out of a... National Democratic revolution which will overthrow the colonialist state of white supremacy and establish an independent state of national democracy in South Africa... The main content of this revolution is the national liberation of African people". The Party sees the achievement of these democratic aims as playing "the indispensable basis for the advance of our country...to a socialist and communist future".

There are two ways of reading these formulations and the distinction between them has a crucial bearing on the role of a party of the working class and its relationship to the national movement.

The one interpretation would argue that the South African revolution can be divided into two distinct and compartmentalised stages; the aims of the first stage are to create a kind of non-racist bourgeois democracy, and it is only when this is achieved that the movement will turn its thoughts to the struggle for a socialist order, i.e. to the second stage of the revolution. It is this dualistic approach which has been attributed to the Party by a number of critics who allege that it has thereby abandoned its role as the working class vanguard and has moved away from the politics of class struggle in favour of a form of so-called bourgeois nationalism.. If this interpretation is correct, it would indeed put in doubt the very need for a separate working class party at this stage; at best, such a party would have to maintain itself in a sort of cocoon ready to emerge when the struggle for socialism is on the agenda.

There may have been moments in the life of the Party ~~formulation~~ which suggest a lack of precision in the understanding of the relationship between the struggle for national and social emancipation. But reading the Programme as a whole and examining the way it has been applied in the revolutionary practices of the Party, there can be no doubt that the latter portrayal of the

Party's perspectives is a distortion of its true position.

Our formulation do, of course, refer to "stages of the struggle", "stages of the revolution", etc. What do these phases signify? They signify what every revolutionary practitioner experiences, which is that every political struggle has specific phases and stages which determine the application of strategy and tactics at any given moment of time. But there is no Chinese wall between these stages; they flow from and into one another, and the dominant ingredients of a later stage must already have begun to mature within the womb of the earlier stage. This is what Marxist dialectics teaches us.

Our revolution is one continuing process. Its immediate emphasis and the chief mobilising factor is black liberation. But this immediate objective has strategic relevance in the struggle for social as well as national emancipation. The ANC's strategy and tactics correctly states that the national character of the immediate struggle must dominate its approach. But it goes on to say that:

"It is happening in a new kind of South Africa; in which there is a large and well-developed working class whose class consciousness and independent expressions of the working people - their political organs and trade unions - are very much part of the liberation front. Thus our nationalism must not be confused with chauvinism or narrow nationalism of a previous epoch. It must not be confused with the classical drive by an elitist group among the oppressed people to gain ascendancy so that they can replace the oppressor in the exploitation of the mass..."

It is clear that, nowhere more than in South Africa is the struggle for political democracy so interwoven with the struggle for eventual social emancipation, for socialism. For if every racist statute were to be repealed tomorrow, leaving the economic status quo undisturbed, white domination in its most essential aspect would remain. National liberation, in its true sense, must therefore imply the expropriation of the owners of the means of production (monopolised by a bourgeoisie drawn from the white group) and the complete destruction of the state which serves them. There can be no halfway house unless the national struggle is stopped in its tracks and is satisfied with the cooption of a small black elite into the presently forbidden areas of economic and political power.

This assertion of what true liberation is our country means, does not, of course, imply that the revolution will inevitably move in the direction indicated. It merely suggests that there is an objective basis for such an outcome. Whether or not it happens in practice depends on many other considerations, of which the most important is the role played by the working class in the alliance of class forces during the first stage of the continuing revolution.

The high level of capitalist development in South Africa has given birth to a distinctive form of class stratification not only in the enemy camp but also amongst the black oppressed. The economic foundations for the emergence of petty-bourgeois nationalism are already quiet solid and are being made more so as the enemy proceeds with its deliberate policy of stimulating the creation of the bigger black middle strata with a stake in the periphery of the system. The political representatives of such tendencies have, in the past, included such groups as the PAC, the "Group of 8", sections of the "Black Consciousness Movement", some Bantustan leaders, etc. And, as the national liberation struggle approaches its climax, we must expect a stronger urge from the non-working class black forces to stop the revolution in its tracks and to opt for a Kenya-type solution.

The historically-evolved revolutionary nationalism of the ANC is, of course, a major obstacle to the ascendancy of such tendencies. Particularly in recent years the ANC has demonstrated its capacity to combat them within its ranks. The Party as an independent force and individual Communists who also became leaders of the ANC, have undoubtedly contributed to this process. Today the ANC's Strategy and Tactics talks of "economic emancipation" as a key element in its understanding of what true nation liberation means; of a "speedy progression from formal liberation to genuine and lasting emancipation".

It is this narrowing of the ideological gap between the ANC and the SACP in relation to the immediate perspective of our revolution, which arouses discussion on the respective roles of both organisations in the area of public mobilisation. But the fact that the ANC has recognised the primary role of the working class in the coming social conflicts does not mean that it is, or should become, a vanguard party of the working class. The ANC remains a mass national movement. It is not, and should not become, an organisation which is guided by, and propagates, the integrated ideology of Marxism-Leninism. It correctly welcomes within its ranks all liberation fighters, whatever their class affiliation, who support its revolutionary nationalism. Whilst its policy for the future, as set out in the Freedom Charter, is not inconsistent with an advance towards socialism in the post-liberation period, the ANC does not and should not demand a commitment to a socialist South Africa as a pre-condition of membership. It must clearly retain its character as the mass organisational instrument of all social forces who can be won over to fight "the first battle".

Conversely, the Party is not a mass movement; it claims to represent the aspirations of a single class - the proletariat. This class not only participates in the struggle as part of the alliance which is represented by the national movement, but also fights as an independent class contingent with aims which are not in conflict with the democratic revolution but go beyond it.

At the same time the Party must guard its character as an independent vanguard of the proletariat and lead it in its class battles. But, when we talk of class struggle let us clearly understand what the term means. In our conditions it is false to counterpose the national and class struggles as if they are two separate ^{FORMS} ~~forms~~ of struggle. In a situation in which the main immediate interest of the proletariat are served by an assault on racist autocracy, its participation in the fight for national liberation is precisely one of the key ways in which it engages in class struggles.

There is thus, at one and the same time, a complementary and distinct role in our revolution for the two pillars of the contemporary struggle - the ANC and the SACP. This role, as we have tried to show, is rooted not only in our specific history, but also reflects the relatively advanced state of class stratification of both black and white. In this respect our situation contrast sharply with that of Mozambique before 1976. In that country the fact that the national liberation struggle emerged against the background of a relatively less developed level of class formation, enabled the individual Marxist-Leninists working within FRELIMO to steer it towards revolutionary nationalism and, when the democratic revolution was victorious, to transform it into a Marxist-Leninist vanguard of the working people.

I have touched only on a few of the theoretical questions which illustrate the way in which South African Communists have applied the tool of Marxism-Leninism to our specific conditions. Imperialist teaching usually places Africa outside history ^{until} ~~that~~ it is "discovered" by outsiders". We, comrades, were not discovered. We had to discover ourselves, to find our South African path; a path which was not always a straight or easy one. And so it remains.

But the impact of South African Communists has not been just as a thought-bank for the theory of the South African revolution. Our Party and individual communists have won their political place by dedication and sacrifice to the revolutionary cause in the actual arena of struggle. There is no phase of our struggle which does not have its communist heroes and martyrs; revolutionaries who watered the tree of freedom with their very blood. This is a day when we should remember a few of them as symbols of the rest. Johannes Nkosi, farm labourer and domestic servant. ^Murdered by the racist police at the head of a demonstration against passes in Durban in 1930. J.B. Marks, Chairman of our Party and top leader of the ANC. Moses Kotane, son of a peasant, migrant worker; General Secretary of our Party from 1939 to his death in 1978. Treasurer-General of the ANC.

Bram Fischer, Afrikaner barrister, leader of the Party underground. Sentenced to life imprisonment and died in goal. Vuyisile Mini, labour activist, hanged by the racists for political activity. Ahmed Kathrada, Youth and Indian Congress leader, serving life imprisonment at Robben Island. Flag Boshela, political commissar of Umkhonto We Sizwe, member of our Central Committee, killed in battle with the enemy in 1970. Govan Mbeki, teacher and journalist, member of our Central Committee, serving life imprisonment on Robben Island. William Khanyile, SACTU leader, killed by the racists in Matola in 1980. Obadi, a brilliant young communist from the Soweto generation, killed in Matola in 1980. Nkululeko Conquerer, lawyer from Natal, translated our programme into Zulu, killed in Matola in 1980.

There are scores of others. Today on our 60th Anniversary we dip our red banner for these communists and other revolutionaries who gave their all in the cause of freedom, in the cause of socialism.

Today, on the 60th Anniversary of one of the great pillars of our struggle, the South African masses are on the move as never before in our history. We pledge and vow to finish the job.

AMANDLA!

MAATLA!

POWER!

LONG LIVE THE SACP!

LONG LIVE THE ANC!

LONG LIVE THE UNITY OF THE LIBERATION FRONT!

LONG LIVE FRELIMO!

LONG LIVE PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM!

MAYIBUYE!