

The Marxist, XXXI 3, July–September 2015

COMMUNIST PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA

Strengthening the Organizational Capacity of the SACP as a Vanguard of Socialism

Following are the excerpts on organisation from the South African Communist Party's (SACP) 5 Year Plan that charts the course for the expansion and consolidation of the Party.

Over the next five years we need to grow the SACP with a quality membership of 500,000. This is informed by, amongst others, the fact that there is a limit in growing the influence of the SACP without a dedicated focus on building our organisational structures and capacities to effectively play our vanguard role. The significant growth and strength of the SACP since our last Congress has been realised through party activism on a range of fronts informed by our Medium Term Vision - in other words, by building a campaigning SACP. There is a dialectical relationship between our campaigns and activism *and* building the organisational capacity of the SACP. This is the fundamental principle that should continue to guide our Party going forward.

It is of fundamental importance that the Party is built as an independent organisation, with its own identity and distinct programmes and role in South African society. We however cannot build an independent SACP without strengthening our organisational capacity. At the same time, we seek to strengthen the independence and organisational capacity of the SACP within the context of a strategic national democratic alliance. There is absolutely no contradiction between building an independent SACP and being part of this Alliance. In fact it is an independent Party that is best capable of entering into principled alliances without sacrificing its own identity.

Building a strong and independent SACP is an exercise that must not be undertaken in the abstract. It is a task undertaken in the context of deepening and defending the national democratic revolution as our direct route to socialism. This means we need to build an SACP that is capable of taking responsibility, together with our Allies, for the national democratic revolution and all its tasks at different moments in the evolution of our struggle. Taking a significant share of responsibility for the national democratic revolution by our Party is the only guarantee that this revolution attains its objectives and indeed secures our transition to socialism.

We are also building the capacity of the SACP in the context of the 1994 democratic breakthrough, and therefore on a terrain of multi-party electoral democracy, where the SACP itself is part of governance, though not a ruling party as such. It is therefore an SACP that must also take responsibility in, and for, governance as a critical terrain to advance the goals of the national democratic revolution, rather than leaving this terrain to other sections of the national democratic movement. Our principled approach to governance is that it must be a combination of strengthening the capacity of our democratic government to drive transformation, and ensuring the ongoing mobilisation of all motive forces of the national democratic revolution.

THE CHARACTER OF THE SACP

In the context of the above, we need to build the capacity of the Party with the following 10 key features:

1. Building a *political party* that is made up of the *most politically advanced sections of the working class*, whilst seeking to unite and represent the overall political interests of the working class as a whole.
2. Building a class party that is a leading force in the struggle to *address the three principal* contradictions of our revolution: class exploitation, and national and gender oppression.
3. A flexible, dynamic and campaigning party of socialism which is internationalist and anti-imperialist in its outlook rooted in the prevailing material realities and conditions of South Africa. It must be a party that is able to adjust to political, social and economic changes and conditions, whilst being a force for revolutionary changes in favour of the workers and the poor, domestically and globally.
4. The majority and the bed-rock of the Party's membership must be largely, though not exclusively, drawn from the ranks of organised workers, whilst at the same time recruiting from other strata of the workers and the (urban and rural) poor, as well as from youth, professionals and intelligentsia, small businesses and other strata who can be won over to socialism; and provide leadership in particular to all strata and components of the working class.
5. Building a strong cadre, a commissariat inside the Party responsible for the political and ideological development of the membership of the Party.
6. Building a party that has the capacity to generate and influence policies in the whole of society for the benefit of the overwhelming majority of the workers and the poor.
7. A party that has a presence and influence in all key sites of power, including in the state, and in all fronts and terrains of struggle, with priority being an effective presence of communists in all the structures of our allied formations.

8. Building a Party that is able to organise and have presence and influence in all key social strata of society through sustained and visible sectoral work and organisation.

9. Building the ideological capacity of the SACP through its ability to undertake a sustained critique of capitalism, whilst simultaneously mobilising for concrete alternatives towards a socialist society

10. A party that is financially self-sufficient with its own independent sources of income and other resources required to effectively play its vanguard role, including increasing a full-time cadre of the Party at national, provincial and district levels.

ENHANCING THE PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE OF THE SACP IN SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY

In elucidating on the capacity and role of the SACP in South African society and in class struggles, it is important to emphasise that whilst the Party seeks to have a visible presence in all key sites of struggles, it is neither a broad movement (like the ANC), nor a trade union federation, nor a non-governmental organisation. It is a political party of the working class that has a fundamental interest in all aspects of power, including state power.

The fact that the Party is in an alliance must not lead to the dissolution of the Party into that alliance, nor should it seek to duplicate the role of any of its alliance partners. Similarly in leading or participating in sectoral mass struggles and other mass formations we should not turn the party into a sectoral mass-based formation. We seek to build a large, but vanguard Party. A large party is not necessarily a mass party, as the size of the Party is not a fixed number of members, but is determined by the tasks at hand. Whilst our Party was underground between 1950 and 1990, it was necessary that its size be small. Conditions in the wake of the 1994 democratic breakthrough dictate that the size of the Party must be significantly increased whilst not sacrificing quality and its political and class character.

In building the SACP in the coming period our organisation and campaigns must pay particular attention to key social strata in society, and systematically focus on sectoral struggles. In so doing, it will not be necessary that the SACP build its own structures in all the sectors, but to engage meaningfully and seek to influence organisations and formations already operating in the various sectors of society. Particular attention will have to be paid to the following:

The Party and the trade union movement - The Party must deepen its work in the trade union movement with the aim of building a red trade union movement, rooted in the Congress tradition, militant and socialist in orientation. Whilst deepening its relationship with and presence in COSATU unions, the Party must actively seek to recruit members from other

progressive unions that are not in the COSATU fold, thus contributing towards the goal of one country, one federation.

The SACP must systematically prioritise the recruitment of shop-stewards and other key layers of leadership in the trade union movement. Joint political education with the trade unions must be institutionalised by seeking to build on the institutional capacity already available in the trade union movement itself. Priority must be given to the building of a viable Ideological and Organisational Commission to co-ordinate joint activities and campaigns with COSATU, with this structure replicated at provincial and district levels.

There must be targeted work towards building SACP workplace units, as part of bringing the SACP closer to organised workers.

The Party and the youth - All SACP structures must actively foster, build and strengthen our Young Communist League (YCL) by ensuring that it has branches in all the areas where the Party is organised and that it is adequately resourced. This must be seen as part of the self-sufficiency of the SACP as a whole.

The YCL must be strengthened to prioritise the organisation and communist education of all sections of youth with particular attention being paid to young workers, students, professionals, and marginalised and unemployed youth. One of the biggest challenges facing our country is to address the needs of the youth, and one of the best ways to do this is to challenge the influence of capitalist ideology, tenderpreneurship, drugs and alcohol abuse amongst the youth. The core of the YCL organisation must be young workers, students and unemployed youth. The YCL must be strengthened to undertake ideological work, with its members being encouraged to participate, as members in their own right, in all structures of the progressive youth alliance and seek to build a positive relationship with the ANC Youth League. All YCL members should be encouraged to join branches of the ANC Youth League.

As part of strengthening its ideological and organisational work, the YCL must be assisted to build YCL structures in all universities and colleges in our country. All YCL structures in educational institutions must establish Marxist-Leninist Reading and Study Circles and the SACP must mentor and groom young communist writers.

However, much as the SACP must seek to strengthen the YCL to be the leading communist formation on matters relating to young people, the SACP itself must empower its structures to deal with youth matters as the overwhelming majority of our membership is young. Our approach must be that the YCL must serve as a preparatory school for the SACP.

The SACP must encourage all its cadres to further their formal education, with a particular focus on youth. The SACP must build on the YCL campaign to make (formal) education fashionable.

The SACP and the intelligentsia - The SACP must systematically invest in the development of its own intelligentsia, cultivating reading and writing

skills and habits in order to enhance the ideological visibility of the SACP and socialist ideas in society. The SACP must introduce formal reading and writing courses for its cadres, and consciously train a layer of cadres in the entire spectrum of media production.

The SACP must build on its long history of progressive publications, and train and develop a cadre to contribute to internal Party publications. In addition to our national publications, we should encourage the production of branch and district newsletters dealing with local issues and as means for communist propaganda in the various localities. We must also encourage comrades to write in the mass media.

The SACP must strive to create platforms for left-wing intellectual debate and deliberately seek to engage progressive intellectuals in society, even if they are not party members. This engagement is important for spreading SACP ideas and as a recruiting ground of progressive intellectuals into the fold of the Party.

The SACP must seek to engage in the platforms of the bourgeois media so that this space is not left to reactionary and liberal forces. However, the SACP must pay close attention to building community media and seek to transform the SABC to play the role of a public service broadcaster serving principally the interests of the workers and the poor.

The SACP and women and gender struggles - Whilst there is a distinct relationship between women's and gender struggles, struggles for progressive gender transformation will be severely hampered if there is no sustained organisation and mobilisation of women. In its own recruitment, the SACP must aim to recruit more women workers into the Party, with particular attention being given to the more marginalised strata of the working class where there tends to be a preponderance of women (domestic workers, farm workers, services sector, co-operatives, stokvels and hawkers).

Historically there has been uneven participation of women communists in the structures of the ANC Women's League. The SACP must encourage our women cadres, particularly those from the working class, to actively participate in the structures of the League.

The SACP must ensure that our campaigns and organizational structures create the necessary institutional and organisational practices and environment to facilitate the fullest participation of women. Particular attention must also be paid to the education of all our cadres in gender equality and the need to confront all patriarchal practices and stereotypes within our organisation and work.

The Party and the rural masses – The SACP, through its various campaigns, has organisational presence in many of our rural areas. It is important that Party work in the rural areas is strengthened by empowering our rural branches and districts to take up issues of rural development comprehensively. One of the key weaknesses in our rural areas is the

absence of the mobilisation of the rural motive forces. Our Party structures must build land committees in the rural areas as the principal form of building the capacity of the rural motive forces.

The geographical divide and inequalities in South Africa are not only between the urban and rural areas, but we still have two 'countrysides' in our country; the former bantustans and white owned farms. It will therefore also be important for the SACP to work closely with the trade unions organising on agricultural farms, as well as using other forms of organisation, to reach out to millions of our people in the countryside. The building of viable alliance structures and programmes in the rural areas is one such critical method of organising and mobilising the mass of our rural people.

The SACP, cultural struggles, performing arts and sport – Due to our own capacity problems, the SACP has not paid adequate attention to cultural struggles, including organisation and influence in the performing arts sphere. This is a very crucial dimension of the ideological struggle in our country. A critical struggle on this front is to assist in the organisation of the highly exploited cultural workers and performing artists.

Over and above this, the SACP itself should encourage cultural and creative work within its own structures (poetry, drama, music, etc), as well as active participation in structures responsible for community sport activities.

Institutionalising Political Education and the theoretical development of our cadres

The SACP must institutionalise political education and the theoretical development of our cadres. Whilst cadre development is more than just political education and theoretical work, this task in itself is very important.

At least once every year, the Central Committee and Provincial Executive Committees must hold or meet as a political school. Our district executive committees must meet as a political school twice a year, once in each half of the year. Our BECs must meet as such at least four times a year.

In addition to the above, once every year the Central Committee must convene one national political school targeted at the provincial leaderships of the SACP. Similarly each province and district must hold one provincial and district council per year as a dedicated political school targeted respectively at provincial, district and branch leadership.

Each district must ensure that each branch of the SACP must hold at least 4 political schools targeted at all Party members in a branch.

A dedicated commissariat drawn from leaders of the Party at all levels must be developed to ensure that the running of such political and theoretical education programmes of our Party. This must be one of the principal tasks of the national secretariat of the SACP.

SACP ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES, DEPLOYMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to achieve all the above it is important that attention be paid to the completion of the restructuring of the Party structures. All our branches must be based on voting districts, whilst the districts ensure effective SACP presence, influence and co-ordination at ward level.

All our elected executive structures must be structured on a portfolio basis and to ensure effective sectoral deployment, Whilst flexibility should be allowed on how party responsibilities are distributed at various levels of our structures, the following must be established as the core of party organisation and allocation of responsibilities:

- party building and political education
- campaigns and mass work
- gender and social transformation
- finance and fund raising
- specific sectoral work in line with local and regional challenges

The SACP must have Deployment and Accountability Committees at national, provincial and district levels whose role is to ensure maximum possible deployment and accountability of our cadres in various responsibilities in both the state and outside the state. These structures must aim to also strengthen the capacity of SACP cadres to perform well in the widest range of their deployments, while at the same time ensuring accountability and answerability to the Party.

All Party structures must have a structured programme of induction for new members and newly built branches and districts. Such an induction programme must include understanding *the SACP Constitution, aims and objectives; basic introduction to Marxism-Leninism; the nature and, role of our Alliance; our five priorities for this term of government; local developmental priorities in each locality; and ensuring participation in the 'Know Your Neighbourhood Campaign' as the basic campaign through which all the new members and structures are inducted into mass work.* All candidate members and new structures must be required to participation in this campaign.

All our structures must develop a concrete plan to implement capacity building as outlined in this section. The capacity building plans of lower structures must be submitted to, approved and actively monitored by higher structures (eg. all branches must develop concrete capacity building plans and submit them to their District Executive Committees, and be reported on at every branch AGM). Similarly, all our structures must have annual programmes of action approved by higher structures. For instance, annual programmes as developed by the Central Committee derive from the Party

Programme as adopted by Congress, and for the Central Committee to report back on progress to the Special and National congresses.

For the Party to be an effective vanguard, we have no choice but to significantly build our capacity and improve our quality. Clearly, there is much that we can do in this regard. We will need to find the resources. But even with our limited resources, we can do much! We need to act urgently!