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COLD COMFORT FARM TRUST (Zimbabwe Institute on Southern Africa) PO Box 8055 Causeway Harare

Telephone 703251 703228 Telex 26544

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South African Communists show their colours

Since the Pretoria regime legalised mass street demonstrations in early September, the South African Communist Party, SACP, has taken this opening to energetically promote its presence on the South African political scene. Its flag; a red banner with hammer and sickle in gold, has become a standard prop in all street demonstrations, appearing side by side with the more familiar black, green and gold colours of the ANC.

According to reports on the October 29 mass rally held in Soweto to welcome back ANC leaders released from many years in prison, the young township militants known as "comrades", showed a clear preference for the message of communism.

"If the crowd at Sunday's rally was the South African electorate and their roar votes, Joe Slovo and other leaders of the SACP and Fidel Castro would now be planning the decor for their offices at the Union Buildings"(South Africa's seat of government in Pretoria), according to one report. "The SACP's message that democracy would create the conditions for the working class to push for socialism is clearly the favoured position of the militant township youth," the writer adds.

Critics of the Red Flag

Not everyone in the Mass Democratic Movement is happy with the parade of the red flag however. Interviewed by the SA Broadcasting Corporation TV on the night of the great October rally, Rev Dr Allan Boesak, founder member and patron of the United Democratic Front, said he personally never wanted to walk under the hammer and sickle flag or the South African regime's flag for that matter. Dr Boesak said however that one did not beat communism by banning it. Only with a just democracy can communism be beaten, he said.

Dr Boesak's views have been echoed by KaNgwane Chief Minister Enos Mabuza, a ban-tustan chief close to the ANC.

"Let democracy deal with communism," Mabuza told the Financial Mail. "The majority of South Africans are in favour of a true democratic system. Communism in general has not succeeded in democratic countries and therefore it should not make people afraid," Mabuza added.

The appearance of the red flag on the streets of major South African cities has also sent alarm bells ringing within the white establishment, both for and against apartheid. Several Afrikaans- and English-language publications have interpreted the appearance of the red flag in MDM rallies as proof that the ANC is, if not a front for the SACP at least heavily under its influence.

"The apologists for the ANC who have disputed down the years the dominance of Communist Party members within the organisation's national executive have been convincingly answered: to march with the ANC is march under the red flag," says *Business Day*, a Johannesburg-based pro-business English-language daily.

The debate about the red flag has already provoked a response from the South African regime. Earlier this month, police confiscated red banners from a 50 000 rally held at a stadium at Cradock, a country town in the eastern Cape famous for its militant tradition.

New Communist Thinking

The South African Communist Party has recently published a new programme which maps out its thinking on South Africa, on Southern Africa and Africa, and on the prospects of revolution in the world in general. Entitled **The Path to Power**, the new programme replaces *The Road to South African Freedom* a programme that was adopted in 1962.

According to the new SACP programme, the only viable choice for Africa's working people is the socialist path of development. "This road holds out the possibility of resolving the many-sided problems afflicting all developing countries to the benefit of the overwhelming majority of the people," the SACP says.

On South Africa, the SACP says the immediate interests of the majority lie in carrying out a "national democratic revolution" whose main content is the national liberation of the African people in particular and the blacks in general. The national democratic revolution is however not an end in itself, says the SACP, but a step to better things, that is, socialism and ultimately communism.

"In the period after the seizure of power by the democratic forces, the working class will need to continue the struggle against capitalism," says the SACP. "It will need to strengthen its organisations and build the bases of working class and popular power in the economy, in all sectors of the state and in the communities where the people live. A deliberate effort will have to be made to prevent attempts by the bourgeoisie and aspirant capitalist elements - and their imperialist supporters - to dominate state power and divert the revolution."

The new programme describes the SACP as the workers' vanguard political party. It adds however that there is no contradiction between the "multi-class" leadership role of the ANC and the working class vanguard role of the SACP. The programme also says there is no conflict between an insurrectionary perspective and the possibility of a negotiated transfer of power.