

of responsibility. The time will come when you will take my place and will shoulder all the responsibility of a successor..." - Nelly Apikya a young Soviet pupil writing to honour the 50th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

These words were written in 1967, they could as well have come from our own Chief Albert Lutuli to those that shall midwife and weld the future. Y o u a n d m e .

The Workers' Weapon of Victory

- **ANDILE MAQOMA**

As we set our eyes to the future with growing confidence, we cannot help but remind ourselves of the courageous endeavours made by our people in paving the way to the now imminent victory of our struggle for freedom. The forging of the most effective weapon of victory by the most advanced fighters for the entire South African working class was an event whose immense significance grows with time. The fruition of these efforts was marked by the founding of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) at a conference held in Plein Street, Cape Town, from the 30th July to 1st August 1921. The conference also elected an executive with its headquarters in Johannesburg. C.B. Tyler was elected Chairman, W.H. Andrews, Editor-Secretary and S.P. Bunting, Treasurer. The new Party inherited "The International" as its organ, the press and offices from its forerunner, the International Socialist League (ISL).

THE GREAT OCTOBER...

The birth of the CPSA was preceded by the greatest event of our epoch, the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. For the first time in the history of mankind one of the contingents of the most exploited class in every capitalist country successfully seized state power into its hands in Russia, in alliance with the poor peasants and led by the Bolshevik (Communist) Party of V.I. Lenin. The tyrannical rule of the exploiters, the factory-owners and big landowners, was crushed

once and for all in Russia, until then the 'prison of nations'. As with the rest of the world, this unprecedented victory had a great impact on our struggle for liberation.

Pinpointing one of the most significant lessons of the Great October Socialist Revolution to the oppressed and exploited people of South Africa and their internationalist duty, D.I. Jones wrote in November 1917:

"... Our task in South Africa is a great one. We must educate the people in the principles of the Russian Revolution. We have to prepare the workers against any attempt to mobilise them against their R u s s i a n comrades, and, in preparing, spread the flames of the most glorious and most peaceful revolution of all time."

It was during this period that the ISL advanced towards organising the black workers and the seeds of unity between working class and the rest of the national liberation forces were sowed. The Durban Indian Workers' Industrial Union, sent its delegates to the 1918 annual conference of the ISL where, with the backing of the African National Congress, the Industrial Workers of Africa was formed by the ISL. In 1919 over 70,000 African miners on the Witwatersrand came out on strike and the ISL issued pamphlets to the white workers calling on them not to scab. Leaflets were distributed among African workers with simple lessons on Marxism including explanation of working class internationalism, workers' organisation and the significance of the Russian revolution.

An ANC delegation led by President Makgatho in November, 1917 had a direct confrontation with the Prime Minister, General Botha, over the repressive Native Administration Bill. When Botha wanted the ANC to dissociate itself from the ISL which was campaigning against the Bill, organising a general strike, the ANC delegation replied that the strike will definitely take place if the Bill was not withdrawn. The government was forced to withdraw it.

The v i c t o r y of the Russian revolution had convincingly proved the correctness of the teachings of Marx and Engels as applied by Lenin and his comrades of the Bolshevik Party. In South Africa many socialist organisations were attracted to the Russian Revolution. The experiences of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Comintern were to have a tremendous influence on the formation and development of the CPSA.

THE COMINTERN

Following the collapse of the Second International as a result of the treachery of the leaders of some workers' parties who were most exposed by their support of an imperialist war, the First World War, the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution became the impetus for uniting the International Communist movement, charging the Russian Communists with the duty of initiating the creation of the Communist International (Comintern). Thus in March 1919 the Comintern was founded in Moscow, to bring together all Communist Parties of the world.

The ISL welcomed the birth of the Comintern with great enthusiasm and was among the first Parties to apply for affiliation; its letter to this effect was submitted during the Second World Congress and read out with applause. It was represented at the 1920 Third World Congress of the Comintern by David Ivon Jones and Sam Barlin.

ISL'S INITIATIVE

The ISL was not the only organisation in South Africa eager to affiliate to the Comintern; there were a number of others which had been emerging since the beginning of the century; the Social Democratic Federation of Cape Town, Jewish Socialist Society of Johannesburg, the Durban Marxian Club and others. The Comintern, however, had among its rules of affiliation (The Twenty-One Conditions formulated by Lenin) one which precluded the affiliation of more than one Party from any country.

To comply with these rules the ISL took the initiative of uniting the different socialist parties, groups and individuals with the aim of creating a united, disciplined and centralised Party of the working class, the ISL being the core. Having sufficiently reached an agreement by March 1921, these organisations, through their delegates who met in Johannesburg, elected a joint Unity Committee to draft a Manifesto, Constitution and prepare for the founding Conference of the new Party.

THE MANIFESTO

At its inaugural conference, the CPSA adopted its Manifesto. Written in the spirit of the Communist Manifesto prepared by Marx and Engels 73 years earlier as a programme of the workers of all countries, this historic document was a collective expression of the determination of the pioneer Communists of our land to be guided by the revolutionary ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin in carrying out their historic mis-

sion of leading the working class to victory over the capitalists. In the same vein the Party reaffirmed that class struggle is the motive force of social change, the leading role of the working class and its revolutionary vanguard, the Communist Party in the struggle for socialism; that the destruction of the exploitative state of the capitalists and its replacement by the democratic rule of the working class are indispensable in building the new society.

The Party also acknowledged the relevance of the example of the Great October Socialist Revolution, applied creatively, to our situation and urged the workers of our country to follow it. As its immediate main task, the Party pointed to the need to establish close links, first, with the workers "of all ranks and races," secondly, the rural poor and to spread the Communist gospel among them. The future for which the working class is called upon by history to fight for was clearly described as one "when the class war shall have been for ever stamped out, when mankind shall no longer cower under the bludgeon of the oppressor, when the necessaries and amenities of life, the comfort and the culture, the honour and the power shall be to him who toils not him who exploits, when none shall be master and none servant, but all shall be fellow workers in common."

NO READY-MADE SOLUTIONS

Armed with the scientific ideas of how to bring an end to all forms of exploitation and oppression and build a new society of hope and unhindered progress, the new Party was destined to play an outstanding role in the South African liberation movement. However, this was not going to be an easy task. Closely looking at the CPSA Manifesto one will notice that while the Party had observed that the task of mobilising all workers as well as the rural poor would be made even more difficult because "Immediate repression in the form of raids, prosecutions, mob attacks and bloodshed" by the racist oppressors "may be looked for as the propaganda is seen to be working among the helot (nationally oppressed - Ed) races whose enlightenment and organisation the ruling class dreads above all," pledging that the Communists will lose "no opportunity of demonstrating that, inasmuch as cheap docile labour is what attracts the world capitalist investor to South Africa, so its understanding of and conscious entry into the working class movement is the most deadly blow South Africa can deal to world capitalism" there were certain difficult obstacles to overcome. The Party still had to grapple with the problem of

theoretically and practically understanding the national liberation of the oppressed African majority as a necessary step towards socialism, and actively work towards its achievement.

That the Party had to spend almost a decade with much assistance from the Comintern, tackling the above-mentioned problem can best be understood when the conditions prevailing at the time of the Party's creation are taken into consideration. These were problems like: the white workers were the most organised and had been engaged in militant struggles, although by the early 20s they were beginning to lose their militancy, while the African workers because of their colonial status with the accompanying disabilities of lack of organisation and clarity about their rights, had not as yet asserted themselves as the most revolutionary force within the anti-colonial struggle. Another problem was that in those days not all the classics of Marxism-Leninism were translated and South Africa was in a way isolated from the international revolutionary scene of Europe.

Moreover, the Party had only been created and could not have solutions to all problems of the South African revolution. Communists do not find ready-made solutions in some mysterious book. The development of a correct revolutionary theory and its application to a concrete situation can only be achieved through active involvement in the revolutionary struggle, at times committing errors and correcting them. The young CPSA was not and could not be an exception to this historically-determined rule. It is significant to note that - thanks to its consistency in seeking solutions to the problems of our revolution and its creative application of the revolutionary experience of other people - the Party overcame this problem.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

While the roots of the CPSA can be traced from the ISL, founded in 1915, from which it inherited lasting revolutionary traditions, the formation of the CPSA in 1921 marked a qualitative change in the building of a Marxist-Leninist vanguard Party of the working class in our country. For the first time in our history our working class was to be led by a united, disciplined and centralised revolutionary organisation of advanced fighters, able to evolve a consistently Marxist and revolutionary attitude towards the national struggle of the African people for land and freedom and to entirely free the Party from the traces of its origin within the white labour movement.

The affiliation of the CPSA to the Comintern ensured our people, the working class especially, the opportunity of benefiting from the invaluable experience of the international revolutionary movement to further our struggle to victory. At the same time this has enabled our people to make their humble contribution to the world forces fighting for a new world, free from all forms of exploitation and oppression, a world without wars.

The birth of the CPSA was and will remain an event of great historic significance not only to the working class but to all the oppressed and exploited sections of our population. The forging of this invincible weapon of victory for the South African working class meant that this class would be best armed to confront the exploiters as an organised force guided by the liberating ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin and emerge victorious. This has greatly strengthened the forces fighting for the national liberation of the African majority and their Indian and Coloured compatriots. This truth is confirmed by the growing militancy of the black working class in our struggle to bring an end to racist colonial domination of the Pretoria fascist regime, to build a free & democratic South Africa of the Freedom Charter.

The Other Child

I am a little child
running bare buttocked in the street
Yes a little child
with a running nose
running in a frozen morning

I am the other child
Hunger pinning me to my Sunday school bench
Smiling at Jesus Christ
dividing bread amongst the poor
I wonder why generosity's only in the book

I am a little child
fearing night sounds
I heard granny whisper
they come in the night
and arrest people for 'permits'