06 January 2017, marked the 22nd anniversary commemoration of the passing of Comrade Joe Slovo.

Comrade Slovo was the National Chairperson of the SACP at the time of his death, served in the Politburo, Central Committee Member of the Party, and National Executive Committee of the ANC and was the Minister of Housing.

The commemoration was held at Avalon Cemetery in Soweto. The commemoration was attended by scores of members from the tripartite alliance, all there to pay homage and respect to a revolutionary strategic thinker, intellectual, selfless leader, whom led in the movement during trying and difficult times during the era of apartheid.

The event was addressed by various speakers from the alliance, amongst others; National Secretary of the Young Communist League, Cde Mluleki Dlelanga, COSATU General Secretary, Cde Bheki Ntshalintshali, SACP Gauteng Provincial Secretary, Cde Jacob Mamabolo, SANCO NEC Member, Cde SP Skosana and also the ANC Deputy President, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa.

The keynote address to the commemoration was delivered by the 2nd Deputy General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, Comrade Solly Afrika Mapaila, whom in his address reminded those gather at Avalon on the reasons why they are gathered at the grave site of Cde Slovo; to celebrate and remember the life of revolutionary.

Keynote Address by SACP 2nd DGS, Cde Solly Mapaila

Happy New Year and best wishes to you comrades present here today and to all our people, the majority of whom is the working class and poor. Congratulations are in order to the successful Matriculants as they pursue their new career paths to serve our country and humanity as a whole. To those who did not make it the SACP says this is not the end of the road - repetition is the mother of learning and exploring alternatives and innovation are important ingredients on the road to success.

Comrades we have gathered here today to commemorate the 22nd anniversary since the death of our great revolutionary, Communist, people`s leader, thinker, jurist and our movement`s strategist and tactician, Commander Joe Slovo, the founding commander of our joint SACP-ANC liberation army, uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), along with Commander Nelson Mandela, who became the first President of our country`s democratically elected government.

Slovo served our struggle for liberation and social emancipation with distinction. He served on the Revolutionary Council, and contributed to the drafting of the first ANC Strategy and Tactics document in 1969. The
document provided greater clarity on the ANC’s ideological outlook and clearly set the path to our democratic transition. At that time the ANC was not yet open to Whites in its leadership. This was affirmed by the very Consultative Conference that adopted the Strategy and Tactics in Morogoro, Tanzania. Practically the ANC opened its leadership ranks to Whites in 1985 in a Consultative Conference held Zambia, where Slovo was elected to its National Executive Committee.

Slovo rejected wallowing in White privilege. He decided to wage a relentless struggle against the system of racial oppression, gender domination, capitalist class exploitation and its highest stage of imperialism. Although today very few White people will admit to ever having supported apartheid, in reality, at the time of apartheid very few of them were prepared to follow the example of Slovo and other White revolutionary democrats who joined the ranks of our struggle for national liberation and socialism, among others Michael Harmel (A. Lerumo), Jack Simons, Ray Alexander Simons, Brian Bunting, Helen Joseph, Bram Fischer, Dennis Goldberg, Ruth First and Albie Sachs.

Slovo served as the General Secretary of our Party and Chief of Staff of the MK. At the time of his death he was the Minister of Housing after the 1994 democratic breakthrough, our Party’s National Chairperson and ANC National Executive Committee Member.

As the SACP we characterise our April 1994 transition as a democratic breakthrough, because it represented the basis for an advance to democratise and transform our society, from apartheid power and colonial economic relations to a government and economy that will serve all the people.

We did this, comrades, cognisant that for the working class and poor, freedom means freedom from capitalist exploitation and all forms of its barbarism and brutality. For the working class and poor, freedom means freedom from inequality; freedom from hunger; freedom from poverty; freedom from preventable diseases; freedom from homelessness; freedom from socially imposed ignorance; freedom from patriarchy, male domination of women; freedom from lack of access to the rights provided for in our country’s constitution by our democratic breakthrough just because one does not have money to exercise those rights. Freedom for the working class and poor means freedom from unjust social relations of production, including property relations that condemn the majority of our people to permanent wage slavery and reduce freedom to a mere illusion while a few enjoy themselves in luxury and comfort at the expense of the majority. This is why, comrades, we said the struggle continues while others said ‘Free at last’. There is a big difference between the two.

Comrade JS, as he was fondly known, was a product of the Communist Movement, which, though existing since 1848 when Marx and Engels wrote the Manifesto of the Communist Party, made its first major breakthrough with the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917, led by V.I. Lenin as part of the collective leadership of the Bolsheviks. This year we celebrate the centenary of that historic event, the single most important in the history of the struggle of humankind to move from a class society to a non-class society in which the exploitation of one person, class or nation by another is eliminated. We can say
with confidence that the liberation of Africa gained its impetus from the selfless revolutionary activity of Petrograd, Russia, on 25 October 1917.

It is true that counter-revolution and internal contradictions in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe set the movement back - badly - but it was not a permanent setback. We must understand that the world role played by the Soviet Union, its influence, did not die in 1991. Under Soviet government, the Soviet Union, a country the size of the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, moved out of the middle ages and into the modern era. Within this period of transformation, the Soviet Union took on the might of Nazi Germany - industrially the most advanced country in Europe at that time and defeated it in the most terrible war in history, the Second World War. Slovo took part in that war against Adolf Hitler’s forces of Fascist imperialism.

In 1919 Lenin, the leader of the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1923 established the Communist International to which all Communist Parties were affiliated. In 1927, a member of our Party from Cape Town, James La Guma proposed that South Africa should become a native republic with equal rights for all races. He took this proposal to the Communist International, which adopted the idea in 1928, and from 1929 it became Party policy in South Africa. The Communist Party was the first non-racial political organisation in South Africa, and based on this the first to call for a democratic republic with equal rights for all races.

It was the Soviet Union which gave arms and training to liberation movements of Southern Africa, MPLA in Angola, Frelimo in Mozambique, Zapu in Zimbabwe, Swapo in Namibia and the SACP-ANC in South Africa. Today we are joined by former combatants of the MK and the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army, the armed-wing of Zapu. They can testify to the massive support given by the Soviet Union and other countries that adopted socialism. It was not only military assistance; those countries provided training for medical doctors, engineers and administrators for future peaceful development. Meanwhile, Western imperialist powers such as the United States listed the whole of our struggle for liberation and social emancipation, the movement and its leaders as terrorist.

Let us take this opportunity to recognise that the Western imperialist regime change agenda has suffered a setback and dealt a blow by Russia in Syria. We reiterate our condemnation of the imperialist agenda that is also alive in our own country. Our fight and repulsion of this devious agenda should not make us chase our own shadows, become paranoid and treat every criticism with contempt and vilification. We must unite to defeat this imperialist agenda, the primary
source of our social slavery and economic exploitation. This is why we must also wage a relentless struggle against counterfeit anti-imperialism, a tendency basically characterised by the emergence of elitist groupings that commit wrongdoings and pigeonhole everyone who calls them to order and accuse them of being on the side of regime change or imperialism.

We should equally condemn the autocratic regime of al-Bashir in Sudan for the atrocities it is committing against its own people in the Blue Nile region, South Gordofan and Numba Mountains. The regime further denies the people basic human rights and condemns them to pariahs in their own country. The Al-Bashir government bombs the territory consistently and is also using chemical weapons indiscriminately against civilians. Further, it is denying over one million of its victims access to humanitarian aid.

As part of our focus in 2017 and beyond, we will be stepping up measures to take the African revolution forward. These include reinvigorating the African Left Networking Forum (ALNEF) and its efforts to build a continental revolutionary movement of the working class in Africa in alliance with progressive social forces.

Here on our home front, we condemn in the strongest terms possible the assassination of our people and comrades in Inchanga and other parts of KwaZulu-Natal. We reiterate our call for peace, while actively supporting the people’s right to self-defence.

Our continuing struggle is faced with a number of challenges on multiple fronts. Nevertheless there is hope for a better future. And that hope lies in:

Principled unity around a common programme to eliminate the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, complete the national democratic revolution, end class exploitation and build a prosperous, egalitarian society.

The national democratic revolution is the glue that binds together our revolutionary movement. That is why the unity of the alliance but principled and programmatic unity is important. We do not want unity with factions, no matter how powerful or resourced they may be, or their extent of capturing control of power in our movement and government. We in the Party will never be in alliance with a faction. We will only be in alliance with organised democratic formations of our people’s movement.

Comrades, for many decades a broad national democratic consensus has underpinned the multi-class and ideologically diverse character of the ANC, and of the Alliance - in which the ANC is the main mass democratic political organisation. Quite naturally, this national democratic consensus has not been entirely free of tension, different but
legitimate tendencies, and contrasting ideological currents. This consensus has now eroded dramatically, and over the recent past with the emergence of a reckless, lumpen demagoguery, and a conservative populism within the ranks of our movement. This is obviously changing the harmonious co-existence and accepted levels of contradictions. It is transforming non-antagonistic contradictions into antagonistic contradictions on a negative slope to degeneration.

Factionalism has also become deeply entrenched, contributing greatly to the erosion of our broad democratic consensus and the confidence of the masses in the ANC. There are factions of the aspirant and emerging bourgeoisie in our broad movement who are fighting each other for the control of power and resources, such as deployments and appointments in state institutions and state-owned enterprises, contracts, tenders, mining licences, control of public procurement including that of state-owned enterprises, as well as other opportunities. There is no ideological difference between the bitterly contending factions. All of them are pushing private accumulation of wealth on a capitalist basis.

But there is a huge ideological difference between all the factions on the one hand and on the other hand the Communist Party, the working class and allied progressive forces. The Communist Party having no interests separate from those of the working class, is fighting for the socialisation of the means of production and wealth distribution. We are fighting against the use of nationally owned assets to feed private corporate and individual interests and families of political leaders.

In contradiction, the factions we are talking about are organised syndicates intent on using any means legal or illegal for the enrichment of the parasitic bourgeoisie and the development of oligarchies. They are using public opportunities to dispense patronage and consolidate political support, and are in turn linked to corruption and the looting of public resources. This is driven, in particular, but not only, by a network of the corporately captured bedfellows. Most notably those in planetary orbit around the Guptas have been spectacularly crude in their brazen smash and grab private wealth accumulation operations. That the Guptas have become South Africa’s top black billionaires in 2016 shows how toxic are the networks of corporate state capture - in the midst of high levels of persisting inequality, unemployment and poverty.

According to the Business Times Rich List report covered by the Sunday Times and further by the Sowetan Live on 11 December 2016, Atul Gupta, the most prominent of the three Gupta brothers, became the seventh richest South African with a net wealth valued at R10-billion. It is inconceivable that this massive private accumulation of wealth has come about without payments based on, and...
the role played by the capture of contracts, tenders and mining or other licenses from state institutions and entities, and as widely reported also by unscrupulous means. This toxic trajectory can only be defended by those who have been captured or aspire to be captured so that they can benefit from related patronage networks.

Corporate capture of key parts of the state and of key personalities has resulted over the past two years in extremely worrying developments, including indications of a shadowy parallel state that operates outside of cabinet discipline and beyond answerability to Parliament or even the formal structures of the ANC, let alone the broad South African public. Along with this there has emerged a tendency to defend the corporate capturers while neglecting the masses of our people, including former MK combatants, and their conditions.

When we exposed the Guptas, their backers said: “What about the Ruperts and Oppenheimers?” We said, and still say, the Guptas, the Ruperts, the Oppenheimers and the rest of both domestic and imperial monopoly capital are the strategic adversaries of the majority of the our people - the workers and the poor. The SACP is the only political organisation in South Africa that has consistently campaigned against the oligopolies, monopolies and the parasites.

Historically and continuously after 1994 the SACP has led campaigns for the transformation of the banks and the financial sector as a whole - unlike those who woke up to smell the coffee only after financial institutions cut their long standing, mutually beneficial ties with the Guptas. We have consistently campaigned against corporate capture of the SABC by a private company - MultiChoice, a subsidiary of Naspers, the mouthpiece of the Broederbond, the ideological vanguard organisation of apartheid. Yet an illegal SABC COO claimed to be the champion of transformation, although it was he who signed a contract conveying strategic national assets, the SABC archives, and associated public programming control, to the still existing economic forces of apartheid.

These things, if left unchallenged, will continue to erode our broad national democratic consensus. By fighting these battles we are actually assisting the ANC to regain lost ground. We are saving our own movement. A failure to succeed will have serious implications, and will require a new programme. It is the factionalists and cheerleaders of corporate capture and corruption who, if not defeated, will continue to dig the grave of the ANC and destroy the Alliance. They have run berserk at the time when the whole of our movement is in dire need of principled unity around a common programme to move our national democratic revolution on to a second, more radical phase, towards a national democratic economy.

Sharpening contradictions

The erosion of our national democratic consensus has coincided with sharpening contradictions marking the beginning of the end of the compromises of the 1990s. The hard fact of the early 1990s is that the objective conditions and interacting national and international balance of forces were configured in such a way that we could not achieve all the goals of our struggle at a stroke. Based on a negotiated settlement we thus secured our transition to the current
democratic dispensation without simultaneously achieving economic democratisation, particularly ownership and wealth distribution. It was while others at the negotiations were secretly pushing the idea of the sunset clauses which contained the compromises that Slovo had the courage to open up the proposal for what became an open, and heated, but eventually useful debate within the ANC and the ANC-headed Alliance. This finally broke the deadlock and paved the way to our April 1994 democratic breakthrough based on the principle that the struggle had to continue.

It was very clear at that time that the forces that held economic control in our country, both domestic and imperial monopoly capital, would remain strategically opposed to the objectives of our liberation struggle, the national democratic revolution and any further advance to a socialist transition. Using the economy, they indeed became part of the structurally hardwired opposition to the democratically elected government - particularly to the role it should be playing to drive democratic economic transformation. In this way, liberalism was to become the ideology of conservatism for racist domestic forces that to this day seek to preserve White privilege, as well as for imperialist forces who seek to deepen their economic stranglehold on the neck of our country.

It should therefore come as no surprise to those familiar with the materialist conception history and dialectics that the compromises that became necessary in the early 1990s have reached the beginning of their end. By their very nature compromises are never permanent. This is what Slovo appreciated as a strategist and tactician of our struggle. Rather than believing that the dislodging of apartheid was the end of the struggle and that people were "Free at last", he believed that the struggle had to continue under new conditions facilitated by the establishment of democracy and its further development - itself as a struggle. Slovo understood that it was under democracy and not apartheid that our struggle stood a better chance to continue uninterruptedly towards realising all its goals. It was in this context that our national liberation movement, as headed organisationally by the ANC, ascended to government.

But then in 1996, two years after our April 1994 democratic breakthrough and one year after Slovo’s death, the economic policy called Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) was undemocratically adopted in government and imposed on society. This marked the beginning of the erosion of our broad democratic consensus. Inevitably our Alliance was plunged into disagreements over economic policy immediately after it was made clear that the
Gear policy was cast in stone and non-negotiable. This created tension within the Alliance for a long period of time.

The SACP mobilised for economic policy change. COSATU was a reliable ally in this struggle. It was through this unity of the socialist axis of our Alliance that we were able to push back plans for a wholesale privatisation of state-owned enterprises. Principled and programmatic unity in the ranks of the working class, and among organised workers, remains very important if the interests and aims of the workers and poor are to be met. It is also critical that we organise the unorganised workers. This is our message to organised workers in general and COSATU and its affiliates in particular on this occasion.

It was working class unity that ensured that social redistribution based on the ideas of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) continued, nonetheless constrained by conservative fiscal policy of Gear. Further, Gear did not advance radical economic transformation. It devastated the working class through its neoliberal shock therapy that occasioned mass retrenchments and firm closures thus de-industrialising our economy. The opposing directions of social redistribution on the one hand, and a lack of radical economic transformation on the other hand, have now reached a critical point.

The lack of radical economic transformation that was imposed under Gear in 1996 has reached a point where it clearly undermines continued efforts at social redistribution, particularly any further work to expand on our post-1994 social redistributive achievements, such as access healthcare, education, clean water and electricity, decent housing, ensuring a comprehensive social security and radically reducing class, racial and gender inequality, unemployment and poverty. While entrenched class inequality as further articulated along the lines of race, gender and geography persists and further widens within race groups, public resources are struggling to keep pace with the expanding demands of the people in need or those who cannot afford the ever rising cost of living.

How should we respond to this situation?

The first task is to seriously re-assert our revolutionary moral compass and our values and restore the democratic hegemony of the ANC-headed democratic forces. To be serious in doing so we must sort out organisational abuses and excesses and create new boundaries for compliance, discipline, decisive correction and even punishment.

We must dismantle all factions starting with the so-called premier league faction.

We must rollout a decisive life style audit across all leadership levels starting with the national leadership as agreed by the Alliance Political Council.

We must continue to, and intensify our fight against corporate capture both within the ranks of our movement and the state, looting of public resources, corruption and patronage and clean the state.

We must stop the corruption of membership files including bulk buying of membership and associated tendencies such as the tendency of members of other members, the commodification and abuse of the ANC and its structures that are used as a resource and voting fodder of largely corrupt syndicates of congresspreneurs.
We must deal with the tendency of entitlement and impunity of leadership.

We cannot allow the energy those revolutionaries like Slovo expended in building our movement, and the efforts we spent campaigning for the main mass political organisation of the movement to win elections, to be abused by elitist groupings that serve private corporate, family and individual interests. It does not matter who is part of those elitist groupings, what their historical credentials and current positions are - they must be held to account and if necessary removed from public positions, prosecuted and imprisoned. No individual is bigger or better than the people as a whole and the revolution.

This is why our theme for this year, and for state power, is: Build mass power, selflessly serve the people exceptionally!

What does this mean?

First of all, the people, the majority of whom is the working class, must take their rightful position as the Number One Arm of the State.

We need a new national development plan which organically involves the people both in its formation and implementation. It is now three years and three months that the ANC-headed Alliance agreed to review the National Development Plan (NDP) in its current form in line with the genuine reservations expressed by the SACP and Cosatu on its economic policy content. The fact that the review has not taken place to this day means that there is a problem. This year, 2017 is the year of policy within our movement. The SACP will be convening its 14th National Congress in July, while the ANC will be convening its 54th National Conference in December.

Our Party Congress will be inspired by the centenary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, and will discuss our NEW position to the outdated elements of our ANC-headed Alliance and the question of state power. While we believe that the Alliance remains strategically important, its modus operandi is certainly outdated. It is this outdated modus operandi that has presided over successive National Alliance Summit declarations, agreements and resolutions not being implemented. This includes the ongoing failure to review the NDP.

There certainly has to be a revolution in the manner in which the Alliance is configured. One thing that must be made clear is that the ANC is not in alliance with itself. The Alliance is made up by independent formations each with its historical mission and programme. This must be reflected in its programmatic platform to state power. If we cannot work together taking into account not just one view but the views of all of us as Alliance partners then we are as good as no alliance at all.

Most importantly, working class leadership will be central in reconfiguring the alliance and in taking forward our national democratic revolution to its logical conclusion to lay the basis for the indispensable advance to socialism. As we have seen, this will not happen in a library, laboratory, or in a board room. It will emerge from the real theatre of social change - that is class struggle.

In 2012 for instance there was an important shift in policy thinking following the eruption of international capitalist crisis of 2008. This is where the Alliance´s shared perspective of the need to move our democratic transition onto a second, more radical phase was endorsed by the ANC. And let us make this point; the SACP and Cosatu have long been calling for a radical shift forward in the national democratic revolution. But since 2012 the phrase second, more radical phase of our democratic transition remained an empty shell even after the ANC adopted it. To use another old saying the phrase remained “Talk is cheap”. The NDP in its current form predates the perspective of the second radical phase. As a result, it is not responsive to and does not advance the most important strategic task of the second radical phase - i.e. radical economic transformation. There was never policy articulation and implementation of the second radical phase. Only the SACP has made an attempt to work out the details, but there was no appetite elsewhere.
In 2030 when the term of office of the NDP in its current form ends we will be 36 years in our democratic transition. At that time we should be far advanced with the second, more radical phase of our democratic transition than what the NDP in its current form says. We cannot wait until then to review it. As things stand, there is no radical economic transformation in the NDP. This must change, if not in the meetings of the Alliance then in the struggle!

Revolutionaries should know that we cannot postpone hunger, sickness, poverty, homelessness and other urgent social problems. So we need to act fast and address these matters.

Other policy weaknesses and structural faults continue, and this must change as well. The national democratic revolution must change everything that needs to be changed. This is what will reaffirm its character as a revolution.

Transform the financial sector to serve the people!

The financial sector is regulated by over 200 laws that have nothing to do with ensuring that the sector becomes transformed to serve the people. We need a simplified legal framework governing the banks and the financial sector as a whole, BUT in a manner that ensures transparency and transformation towards meeting the objectives of the national democratic revolution. This is one of the reasons why this year Nedlac (or National Economic Development and Labour Council) MUST convene the second financial sector summit. There can be no radical economic transformation without transforming the financial sector.

As part of the process to drive financial sector transformation, the state must move decisively and create a state-owned bank and transform the Post Bank to serve a developmental mandate based on the needs of the people, particularly the workers and poor. The regulations that stand in the way of this change must be changed.

Further, the current paradigm of the banks, in collaboration with corrupted or incompetent court officials and property companies uncaringly, unscrupulously and in many instances also illegally evicting our people from their homes is uncalled for. South Africa has the highest number of people who are evicted from their homes, by this nexus, outside of a war situation. The evictions have reached a point where they are as much or more than apartheid forced removals. The state cannot just fold its arms and lie idle while our people are being brutalised like this. This includes instances where a family has obtained a bond to buy a house and for reasons beyond their control they lose their job or their insurance deserts them as it frequently happens. Those who obtain bonds to buy a house are still subjected to the slave mortgage system of 20 years, but those who buy cars are given a short-term period of only a few years. This must come to an end. The 20 year mortgage sentence of compound interest on houses must end.
State power and its exercise in the context of revolutionary alliance. State power is not for its own sake or for the sake of elitist groupings. The same applies to presidential prerogatives.

The prerogative rights as enshrined in the constitution is bestowed to a sitting President to exercise in his/her leadership of our republic. From the movement’s side, given that we do not have a Presidential system it is quite fair to opine that it does not literally belong to the President as an individual. Ours is a party-based system. That is why all our Presidents were campaigned for by our movement and won elections because of the collective support of the movement. The President MUST therefore be seen exercising the prerogatives in the context of party mandate. The same applies to premiers and mayors, and anyone who holds office mandated or deployed by our movement. The abuse of prerogatives to target those who disagree with wrongdoing must be dealt a decisive blow.

Prerogative must be seen as a tool that belongs to the revolution. The President or anyone holding office on behalf of or deployed by our movement must take care of prerogative rights, exercise its power with caution and restraint. He must use it to unite, enhance and strengthen the revolution, not to destroy it. He must refrain from ever abusing it. He must never use it as a tool for patronage and factional purposes, not even to the members of the Cabinet because those are not his group of associates or friends but a revolutionary collective assembled to serve the people. He must guard it jealously even from his family, his friends, cronies, lackeys and business associates if he has any. The reason why state power is the central question of any revolution is so that it can be used to serve the class interests of the majority of the people, which is none other than the workers and poor. State power must lift the poor out of poverty. State power must create access to productive work for all to lead a decent life. State power must systemically reduce and ultimately eliminate inequality - it must not serve as an instrument to propel some family, or corporate capturers to become billionaires within a sea of poverty. This is one of the reasons why our forthcoming Party Congress will focus on the question of policy change and state power. The Congress will examine the Alliance as it is presently configured and the role of the SACP as a Party of the Working Class and Socialism.

As we pay tribute to Slovo, we call on you, comrades present here today, and all revolutionaries to go all out to strengthen our Party and uphold its independence, to build the ANC, consolidate our revolution and selflessly serve our people exceptionally!

Long live the revolutionary memory of Joe Slovo, long live!
Long live the Alliance, long live!
Long live the SACP, long live!
Forward to Socialism, forward!
Down with Capitalism, down!