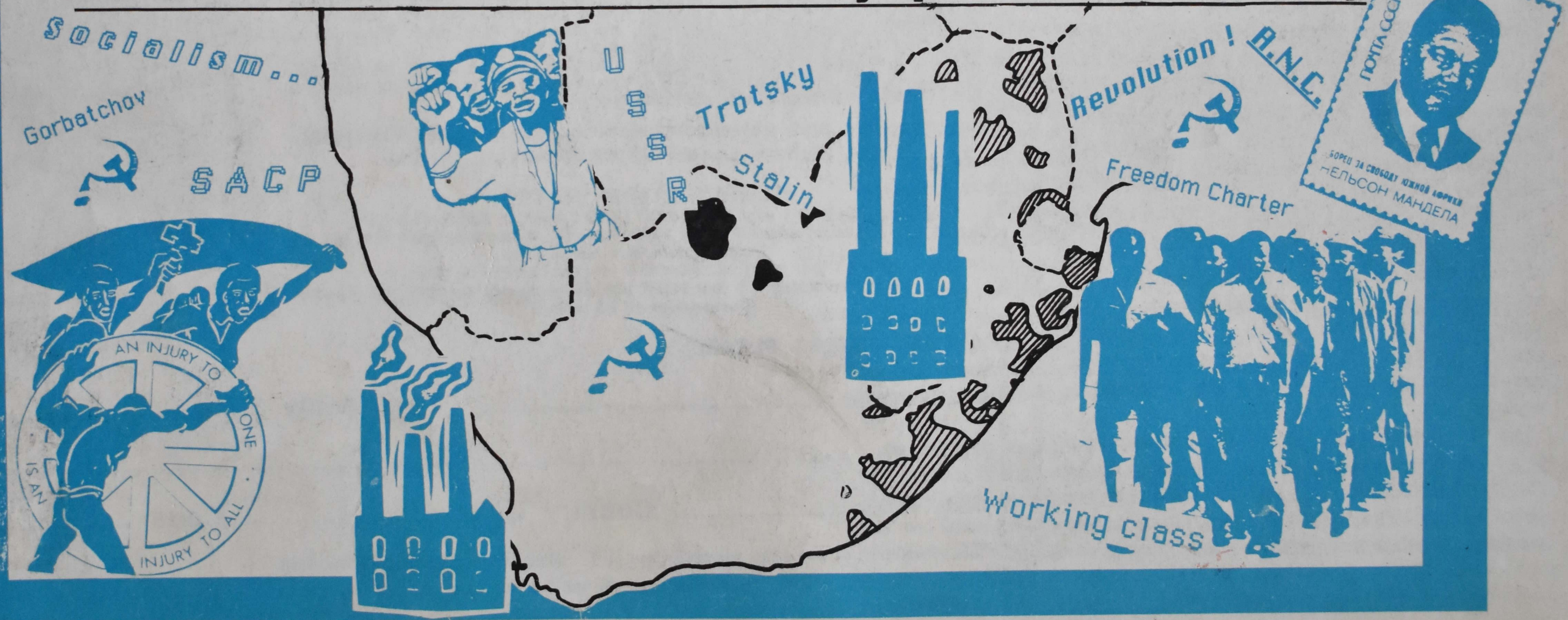


EDWIN MADUNAGU

International VIEWPOINT

SPECIAL ISSUE
SOUTH AFRICA
January 1989 • R.3, £1

Working class, party and revolution The South African Communist Party questions its history



CB2/191

the Latin American Stalinist current. A few years later, the Argentine CP also made a self-criticism in which it retreated on the crudest aspects of its stagist positions.

All this was made necessary by the objective strength of the rise of anti-capitalist workers' demands, by the effects of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. But this critical rethinking has not changed the course of history. The Salvadoran CP has remained a minor partner in the Farabundo Marti Front (FMLN) and the Argentine CP has split and is weakened. It is thus very difficult for these parties to go back on several decades of Stalinist tradition. One question leads to another, and from one thing to another — it is the whole history of their leadership which is put into question. The semi-self-criticisms just exacerbate the internal crisis.

Conclusion

It is going to appear more and more that it is not simply the question of the "revolution by stages" which is the only framework to these questions. Slovo is trying to make clear the new political "profile" of the CP within the Chartist current by putting the emphasis on the perspective of the struggle for socialism "without a Chinese wall". But the other question is related to the idea that the party (the SACP for Slovo) and the working class are two interchangeable elements: the party represents the class; the workers' vanguard will, by this very fact, identify with the party; the social hegemony of the class will take shape in the political hegemony of the party, and so on. As if the class delegated its *social* weight to the party, or as if the party "represented" the class in abstract. This is a false conception. It substitutes a mechanistic and manipulatory link for the dialectical link between the class and its vanguard (in the form of one or more revolutionary organizations).

This is why it is easy to be sectarian and divisive in the name of the unity of the party. Vertical, partial unity, put forward by the Chartist current in these last few years, cannot allow for the real unity of the workers' movement as such. It proceeds by exclusivity in the camp of the workers in the name of an incorrect *superimposition* of workers' unity



and broad democratic unity. But this can only be justified in letting it be understood that in the last analysis it is the CP which symbolizes the presence of the working class. Those who do not accept this schema will thus be themselves declared not only outside the united front, but objectively outside the working class. Thus the excommunication of the "petty bourgeois", "economistic" currents, trying to erect a class divide where in fact there are political disagreements.

The writings of the SACP which, since the beginning of the 1980s, have regularly come back to the question of stages, are an attempt to answer questions that have been forced on them by the real process of the social struggles in South Africa. From this point of view, the gradual evolution corresponds to the crisis of the political current to which the SACP belongs, the pro-Soviet communist current, forged in the Stalinist tradition. Its sectarianism has the same root, but it is a separate problem, with its own logic and its own function. The uninterrupted revolution Slovo talks about needs a party. But this party must be the product of its time. How it is to be built remains an open question, to be discussed. But a sectarian project cannot be the substitute for it.

It is impossible to both advocate the uninterrupted proletarian revolution, seeking to win over thousands of workers and young people who have gone through their own experiences in the last few years, and at the same time simply propose that they join the SACP. The developments in South Africa raise the question of a new historical cycle, new forms of organization and... a new programme. The revolutionary workers' party cannot be the result of a simple growth of the SACP.

Other left currents are also trying to find the road to building the party. Their efforts and their results show that Slovo's party does not have a monopoly on this concern and this work. The period to come will be rich in discussion and assessment of the last five years. Slovo's pamphlet allows us to note that, despite the classic anti-Trotskyist attacks made by his movement, reality seems to be pushing the general secretary of the SACP himself to say in his own fashion things that his organization would have cast out a few years ago as "Trotskyism". ★