

# How Cuba stood with Africa

In mourning the death of Fidel Castro we also honour his country's contribution to the continent's wars of liberation



Analysis

MAITE NKOANA-MASHABANE

LAST week South Africa joined the world in celebrating the life of one of the great heroes of the 20th century, former president Fidel Castro, who passed away, aged 90, on November 25.

Castro left his mark on history as a renowned internationalist and anti-imperialist, who selflessly supported the struggles of the oppressed and the exploited.

He stood in solidarity with liberation movements in Africa, supporting our struggle for independence and the international campaign to isolate the apartheid regime.

Relations between South Africa and Cuba are significant. They were forged in the common struggle against apartheid and colonialism on the African continent.

The victory of the Cuban People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) forces, fighting side by side with liberation forces against apartheid's South African Defence Force at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale in southern Angola in 1988 paved the way for the independence of Namibia in 1990.

South Africa's first democratically elected president, Nelson Mandela, acknowledged that the Cuban military victory at Cuito Cuanavale marked "the turning point for the liberation of our continent, and of my people, from the scourge of apartheid".

Following South Africa's democratic transition, South Africa and Cuba established formal diplomatic relations in 1994 and opened resident embassies in Pretoria (1994) and Havana (1995), respectively.

In 2009, Castro was honoured by South Africa on two occasions, namely the Order of the Companions of OR Tambo, as well as the Ubuntu award by the National Heritage Council.

In South Africa's hour of bereavement, when former president Mandela passed away on December 5, 2013, Cuba sent a high-level delegation to the country, presided over by President Raul Castro, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba.

The bestowal of the Order of Jose Marti on President Jacob Zuma in 2009 during his state visit to Cuba reflected the depth of friendship and ties between the two countries.

The same honour had previously been bestowed on presidents Mandela and Thabo Mbeki during their respective state visits to Cuba. In 2012, South Africa bestowed the Order of OR Tambo on the Cuban Communist Party veteran and internationalist Prof Jorge Risquet for his sterling contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle and the international peace negotiations that followed after the ceasefire agreement in Angola.

The pre-1994 support given for the liberation of South Africa included the education of South African students.

Many South Africans carried Cuban pas-



ASHES TO ASHES: The death of former Cuban president Fidel Castro was felt deeply by many Africans, as the late leader contributed both militarily and diplomatically to many liberation struggles on the African continent. PICTURE:AFP

ports to facilitate international travel.

Cuba has, therefore, been the backbone of South Africa's liberation despite its many own challenges. After 1994, Cuba was one of the first to offer material and human resource support.

The success of South Africa's political bilateral and multilateral relations can, therefore, be measured in the extent of the numerous development programmes, cooperation projects as well as the strong political and social solidarity and support that exist between our two countries and peoples.

Cuba has become an established strategic partner for South Africa in the Latin American region and within multilateral forums.

Cultural and historical ties, as well as shared struggles and common aspirations, create the basis for a strong bond of solidarity between Cuba and South Africa and the continent of Africa.

The past 22 years of diplomatic relations between South Africa and Cuba have been marked by robust and constructive interactions at both bilateral and multilateral level.

In addition, Cuba has enjoyed the unequivocal

## Key points

» Last week, South Africa joined the world in mourning and celebrating the life of one of the great heroes of the 20th century, former president Fidel Castro, who passed away, aged 90, on November 25

» Comrade president Fidel Castro has left his mark on history as a renowned internationalist and anti-imperialist, who selflessly supported the struggles of the oppressed and the exploited

» He stood in solidarity with liberation movements in Africa, supporting our struggle for liberation and independence

» Relations between South Africa and Cuba are historic

support of South Africa at the UN General Assembly, where South Africa voted in favour of a call to lift the US-imposed economic blockade against Cuba.

There are over 30 signed bilateral agree-

ments in place between the two countries, covering vast areas of cooperation; for example, education, science and technology, agriculture, health services, housing and water and sanitation.

Cooperation is highest in the areas of health, human settlements and public works.

The year 2016 marks the 20th anniversary of the arrival of the first group of Cuban doctors in South Africa.

Under the auspices of the 2012 Agreement on Cooperation in the Fields of Public Health and Medical Sciences, almost 3000 South African students are receiving medical training in Cuba.

Meanwhile, 36 Cuban engineers are working in South Africa under the auspices of the South Africa-Cuba Agreement on Cooperation in the Fields of Water Resource Management and Water Supply, signed on September 9, 2013. We in South Africa must endeavour to take forward the ideals that Castro espoused: internationalism, freedom, equality, justice and a better and more just world.

Maite Nkoana-Mashabane is the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation

# Elephants face grave danger as decimation on rise



Analysis

DON PINNOCK

WORLD famous Kruger National Park is being blindsided by its attachment to Mozambique's Parque Nacional de Limpopo on its eastern boundary and Charlie the elephant is its latest victim.

He died in a hail of bullets just metres across the southern Kruger/Mozambique boundary only weeks after having a tracking collar attached.

Until then, Charlie was a good-news story and ambassador for a transborder conservation programme organised by Elephants Alive, Save the Elephants and the Conservation Action Trust (CAT).

"We first spotted Charlie from about 700 foot up over the arid Mozambique savannah," Jacqueline Lahoud, who was part of the collaring team, wrote, adding: "And it was love at first sight. A majestic African elephant bull approaching his prime with strikingly handsome tusks."

The last point, it turned out, was the problem. Charlie was the first of 40 elephants to be collared by researchers attempting to track elephant movements in and around Parque Nacional de Limpopo (PNL), the Mozambican section of the huge Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) administered by the Peace Parks Foundation.

The aim was to understand the area's "fear landscape", how elephants navigate within risky human-created areas.

And in that area the risks are great. A recent census in Mozambique's PNL ecosystem found that, within the past five years, the population had more than halved with only 1254 elephants remaining.

The death of Charlie at the hand of ivory poachers is a synecdoche for a much larger problem. The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park straddles the borders of Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

It connects some of the most established wildlife areas in southern Africa into a 37 000km<sup>2</sup> conservation area (the size of the Netherlands).

A second phase was planned to expand it to nearly 100 000km<sup>2</sup>, but poaching, poor administration and bureaucratic snarl-ups have made this increasingly unlikely.

Kruger Park has been involved in an ongoing shooting war with poachers who have killed thousands of rhinos, while in Mozambique, Tanzania and Kenya elephants are being plundered in staggeringly high numbers.

In September, Michelle Henley of Elephants Alive flew the northern sections of the PNL and found no elephants.

"It was a huge shock and a wake-up call," she said.

"Part of the problem is that Kruger has consolidated its forces to the south to curb rhino poaching, leaving the central and north open to elephant poaching.

"When we found the elephants in the south, where we collared Charlie, they were huddled together rather than spread out and highly aggressive, indicating raised fear levels.

"Just before we arrived, the Peace Parks technical adviser had flown the southern part of the PNL and found 66 elephants and 53 carcasses.

"We're looking at a rapidly declining population. Poaching in PNL is definitely out of control and elephants are now being killed right on the Kruger border. It will soon be happening in the park itself."

According to Henley, the off-take from elephant poaching in Africa is much higher than the natural reproductive rate and of grave concern.

Thirty years ago most of the continent's elephants were in central and east Africa. Today the greatest percentage is in the southern African states which now have over half the continent's population. That's mainly because of massive poaching and decimation in east Africa.

The Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park is the last holdout of a free, relatively unfenced elephant population and Kruger is where 78% of South Africa's elephants live. But the elephant contagion is now definitely heading south.

"We're the final stronghold of African elephants and poachers know that," Henley said.

"That's why we've had a 53% decline right on our borders in the past five years. In the past 12 months, 68 elephants were poached in Kruger, the most they've ever had since the 1980s. So elephant poaching is now a South African problem.

"Kruger's our treasurebox," Henley said, "and, right now, poachers are stealing our jewels.

"Elephants are an example to us of a moral society. They revere the old and adore the young. It's something we humans are fast losing.

"And by taking out the old tuskers we're crippling the wisdom of the species. We should be very concerned."

Supplied by the Conservation Action Trust. Don Pinnock is a writer and author

# Court ruling strikes a blow at monopolies



Analysis

SIZWE PAMLA

THE judgment handed down by the Constitutional Court on November 25 in the matter of Masstores vs Pick n Pay has validated Cosatu's assertion that monopolies and cartels are stifling economic growth and impeding job creation in South Africa.

In this matter, Hyprop, the owner of the Capegate shopping centre and landlord, had entered into lease agreements with Pick n Pay and Shoprite and granted these retailers exclusive rights to trade in food items as supermarkets. However, Masstores, trading as Game, undertook not to trade as a general food supermarket in the shopping centre, unless there was no general food supermarket trading there.

Later Game started operating as a general supermarket – contrary to its contract with the landlord. Pick n Pay went to court and sought to stop Game from operating its supermarket on the basis that this interfered with its exclusive contractual right to trade as a supermarket in the shopping complex.

In essence, Pick n Pay sought to protect its exclusive right to trade in terms of its lease agreement with landlord.

The court found the exclusive right to trade was in conflict with the objective of free competition and prohibition against unlimited monopolies and that competition cannot be unlawful. Further, that these exclusive trading rights make the competitive field uneven.

This is a welcome judgment that hopefully represents a small step in breaking up the domination of the SA economy by a few retailers. These big retailers have used their contractual powers in the form of exclusive trading rights to push out small businesses resulting in job losses.

However, the judgment will not be a solution to the increasing concentration of market power of the big retailers such as Spar, Game,



NO TO CARTELS: The practice by large retailers of pushing out small grocery stores from shopping malls is particularly odious and should be outlawed by the competition authorities says the writer. PICTURE:ISTOCK

Makro, Checkers, Pick n Pay.

These so called anchor tenants in shopping malls have been given a free pass to suppress competition for a long time.

This is pure alliance capitalism that is punishing both workers and consumers. Cosatu is anxiously awaiting the outcome of the grocery retail sector market inquiry by the Competition Commission. One of the outcomes of the inquiry should be to restrict further expansion of big retailers by legislatively requiring accommodation of small retailers in shopping malls.

One of the objectives of the inquiry will be to examine the effects (both negative and positive) of the long term exclusive lease agreements entered into between property

developers and supermarket chains and the role of financiers in these agreements on competition in the grocery retail sector.

The practice of pushing out small business in big shopping malls in favour of large retailers should be disallowed by laws. Otherwise this practice will destroy jobs and entrench concentration in the retail market.

StatisticsSA data shows that South Africa's jobless rate rose to a record of 27.1% in the third quarter – and should prove as a call to action for government to do something about this alliance capitalism strangling our economy.

Cosatu continues to argue that in order to address unemployment, we need to address the legacy of concentration and domination of

the economy by a few monopolies. There is little space for SA small firms to create jobs for the 9 million unemployed workers because the economy is dominated by cartels.

This is in addition to high administered prices such electricity, transport costs, non-availability of cheap finance and contractionary macroeconomic policies, which stifle the impact of industrial policy.

The fact that South Africa has the highest jobless rate of more than 60 emerging and developed countries, according to Bloomberg and that South Africa has the highest unemployment rate since 2003, should trigger alarm bells and great concern.

Sizwe Pamla is national spokesperson of Congress of South African Trade Unions