The March (1985) by South African artist Norman Kaplan (see pages 22-23), who said: "Throughout South Africa during the 1980s, youth and students courageously led marches in support of the liberation struggle, despite the brutal reaction from the apartheid state. During this period of intense struggle, I got the best review I've ever had when an apartheid judge in a trial of ANC underground activists called my cartoons demonstrating urban guerrilla tactics "dangerous and subversive."

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Rolihlahla Mandela (Nelson was the name given to him by the white teachers at the church school he first attended) was rightly honoured in December 2013 following his death after a long period of ill-health, writes Steven Walker. What was striking in the worldwide publicity around his death and the commemoration and celebration of his achievements was the absence of certain simple facts. First, he was a life-long member of the South African Communist Party with socialism informing all of his pre-imprisonment days as a freedom fighter. It should also not be forgotten that Mandela was qualified as a lawyer.

There was a high level of hypocrisy and re-writing of history by certain politicians around the world who seized upon his death to try to bathe in his reflected glory. Everybody wanted a piece of Mandela as his last days beckoned. Politicians from the developed world wanted a photo-opportunity to associate themselves with him. They represented countries that supported apartheid and broke United Nations’ sanctions, undermining efforts to persuade the South African white State to stop segregation and discriminating against non-white citizens. The apartheid regime took their lessons from the United States of America where historically it had been found that slavery, segregation and discrimination could somehow be wrapped in a legal constitution that laughably talked of ‘all men being equal... and inalienable rights’.

Breaking sanctions imposed under international law was lucrative business and delayed the liberation of the black majority of South Africans. For example, the South African Air Force used Puma helicopters, C160 transport planes and Impala strike aircraft in 1969 against freedom fighters in South Africa and in neighbouring Angola where Mandela and others ruling South Africa. While Mandela was imprisoned on Robben Island for 26 years incommunicado, the ANC and communists never stopped fighting apartheid. The leader of the South African Communist Party, Joe Slovo, helped Mandela found the MK and as a lawyer defended him in the 1964 court trial. It is fitting that Mandela should be recognised as a symbol of resistance and fortitude in the liberation struggle. His socialist ideology and the contribution of communists in overthrowing white minority rulers using sabotage and armed conflict. What the coverage of Mandela’s death in the mainstream media overlooked was the fact that Mandela was a communist. In a tribute to ‘a true revolutionary’, the South African Communist Party issued this statement on its’ website after his death:

At his arrest in August 1962, Nelson Mandela was not only a member of the then underground South African Communist Party, but was also a member of our Party’s Central Committee. To us as South African communists, Comrade Mandela shall forever symbolise the monumental contribution of the South African Communist Party in our liberation struggle. The contribution of communists in the struggle to achieve the South African freedom has very few parallels in the history of our country. After his release from prison in 1990, Comrade Madiba became a great and close friend of the communists till his last days.’

As President of South Africa, Mandela addressed the South African Communist Party on its 75th anniversary, referring to its ‘alliance’ with the African National Congress and others ruling South Africa. While Mandela was imprisoned on Robben Island for 26 years incommunicado, the ANC and communists never stopped fighting apartheid. The leader of the South African Communist Party, Joe Slovo, helped Mandela found the MK and as a lawyer defended him in the 1964 court trial. It is fitting that Mandela should be recognised as a symbol of resistance and fortitude in the liberation struggle. His socialist ideology and the contribution of communists in overthrowing white minority rule, deserves more recognition than has to date been reported.