



GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-COVID19 ECONOMIC FALLACIES

President Cyril Ramaphosa finally released his government's anti-Covid19 economic response plan which promises to 'forge a new economy in a new global reality'. Two weeks after Ramaphosa's statement, Finance Minister Tito Mboweni amplified the response plan's austerity dictates in the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS).

The Finance Minister advertised their response to the socio-economic slump (or stagnation as they define it) as a consensus-driven Plan, a product of a 'social compact and consulting the social partners through NEDLAC'. Rooted in this devotion to class compromise, these ANC functionaries of the neoliberal state appeal to every member of society to 'do everything in our power to implement it'. But the 30-odd page 'Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan' was not written for workers and peasants to uproot the capitalist exploitation of human labour and destruction of our planet. On the contrary, versions of the Plan aimed at a mass audience propagandise the mysticism that envelops bourgeois Economics clichés. Its jargon is aimed at fostering faith in capitalism, an outmoded way of organising our societies.

Normalising an Abnormal System

State technocrats and consultants who wrote this Plan, sprinkled the word "new" on almost every page – similar to 'recovery' and 'reconstruction'. These functionaries peddle the myth of restoring a "new normality" coupled with a "permanent and decisive break with our past". This rhetoric about old and new normal is fallacious because it is premised on the falsehood that capitalism is a normal type of society. Capitalism violates all the principles of a normal society. An increasingly anachronistic mode of organising society, capitalism normalises an abnormal concentration of society's productive means and barbaric social relations. These systemic abnormalities manifest in peasant land dispossession, placing profits before human needs, a wealthy minority legally stealing the benefits of social labour, faster ecological devastation and so on.

Despite the deeply flawed claims of apologists for capitalism, it is impossible to hide the irrationality and waste of economic activities undertaken for profit accumulation. The system is not only addicted to

carbon-intensive growth but also a lucrative war-industry-complex. Anarchic and generalised overproduction multiply this waste, drowning the world in longer recessions and depressions more frequently at irreversible costs to the labouring majority.

Superficial comparisons of their anti-Covid19 economic responses with older government plans (like GEAR and NDP-2030) reveal the repetition of clichés and state bureaucratic speak. In fact, the 'Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan' abuse the Covid19 disaster to recycle and repackage old (and failed) schemes to safeguard capitalism. But this obfuscating optimism is unable to hide the sprawling socioeconomic wasteland that the coronavirus pandemic has unmasked and aggravated.

The rising squalor and inequalities in South Africa predate the coronavirus pandemic. Covid19 multiplied the misery and highlighted its naked brutality. Authors of the Plan register these glaring symptoms of the socio-economic disaster, but their subservience to bourgeois economic ideology render them impotent to uproot the real causes of this widespread devastation, human suffering and death. Pinpointing the root causes would logically compel them to demand nothing but the end of the capitalist mode of production; a logic which negates the Plan's 'there-is-no-alternative' intent and mantra. Such are the insoluble contradictions that plague their latest anti-recession response promises. These contradictions, coupled with the savage ideology on which it is premised, condemn the Plan to the fate of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), that fraud from the Mandela-era which is now buried and forgotten.

An Anti-Capitalist Socio-Economic Plan is Urgent Ramaphosa's anti-Covid19 economic

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► responses repeat, for the umpteenth time over more than a quarter century, ‘priority interventions’ against mounting sovereign debt, infrastructure and energy crises. These crises are not new, but they have grown more acute in the last 20-odd years as expert advisers to the ANC government readily concede. But neither the parliamentary parties nor their bourgeois experts have any solution that serve the interests of the labouring majority. Nothing but an anti-capitalist socio-economic plan that places the interests of the workers and landless peasants first is needed.

It is clear that the ANC and dominant parties in government reject the urgency for socialising infrastructure construction under an anti-capitalist economic plan. This is not only crucial to overcome the dire shortages of hospitals and public schools but also for safe and efficient rail transit for mass public commuting (particularly metro rail systems) and so forth. An anti-capitalist infrastructure expansion plan must include a progressive public works programme with full representation of the unemployed in its management. With costs of the ambitious infrastructure development programme in the order of R2,3 trillion and total budget at R1,5 trillion, where will the money for constructing the needed infrastructure come from? Yearly public sector infrastructure spending has in fact fallen from R250 billion to R183 billion, excluding infrastructure cost inflation. As it was in the case of world cup stadiums, a handful of big construction corporations will be the chief beneficiaries - probably with a few BEE deals as sweeteners – of this infrastructure development scheme.

Similar to the case of water, society’s quality of life depends upon reliable sources of clean and safe energy. Renewable energy under the democratic control and management of workers offer the best

solution for South Africa’s energy crisis. By contrast, the latest crisis response Plan firmly believes and boldly advocates that South Africa’s future energy security cannot be realised but through nuclear power, privatisation and commodification. Eskom operates under the leadership of corporate bosses from the private sector to announce blackouts (“load-shedding”) and fast-track this state-owned entity’s legal and functional unbundling (a euphemism for privatisation).

Scrapping the debt coupled with charging lenders and debt-rating corporations for defrauding poor countries and liquidating these fraudsters are absent from the ‘Economic Recovery and Reconstruction’ plan. Successive downgrades to junk-debt status have inflated the cost of borrowing for South Africa, shoving the country to the cliff-edge of a ‘sovereign debt crisis’. Collusion among looters that control the debt industry is rampant and is aimed at squeezing wealth from poor countries for the enrichment of finance capitalists. Total state debt as a share of GDP already stands at 63% and is expected to leap to 82% next year. The cost of servicing the debt (interest payments) is the third largest spending item on the books of the state, consuming 5% of the budget. This debt burden has emerged as the fastest growing expenditure item in the national budget, growing more than 3 times faster than state investment in economic development.

The dispossessed, exploited and oppressed have paid and continue to be saddled with irreversible costs for not ridding humanity of capitalism. Replacing capitalism with a democratic eco-socialist way of organising society is long overdue. We have nothing to lose from realising this historical necessity. ●

‘SAVING LIVES AND PROTECTING LIVELIHOODS’: DECODING CATCHPHRASES

Many catchphrases have become popular in the wake of the Covid19 crisis. ‘Saving lives and protecting livelihoods’ ranks high on the list. South African government officials have embraced it, taking their cue from President Cyril Ramaphosa and echoing UN agencies like the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Reasons for decoding this new stream of catchphrases are wide-ranging. Catchphrase decoding is ultimately about winning the battle for political ideas. It represents a decisive battleground to defeat misguided political influences in progressive struggles and to consistently advance the programmatic demands and aspirations of anti-capitalist movements.

What does ‘saving lives’ mean when more than 25,000 people have died as a direct result of

Covid19 in South Africa? What the death tally excludes, reports from hospitals and mortuaries reveal, is the surge in “excess deaths” which are more than double the official Covid19-related mortality count.

How does the tail-end of the anti-pandemic catchphrase, ‘protecting livelihoods’, compare with what is happening in reality? In what ways have the state protected the livelihoods of workers and peasants since the onset of this health, economic and social disaster? The pandemic crises, engulfing society like wildfires, are destroying the livelihoods of the most destitute social classes in our society. Instead of protecting livelihoods, the state has been complicit in the brutal assault on the oppressed and exploited who have been forced to fend ►

➡ for themselves in order not to become another nameless victim of the crisis.

Onslaught On Oppressed And Exploited

The promise to 'protect livelihoods' features in almost every anti-pandemic announcement of the government. When the armed forces were given the freedom to impose a reign of terror on township residents during the lockdown, 'protecting livelihoods' was the justification. This same double-dealing has been encrypted into government's Solidarity Fund, Temporary Employer Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) and Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Plan – to only mention their much vaunted 'livelihood protection' projects. All are premised on Section 25 of South Africa's Constitution: protect investors and profiteers (capitalists) first and foremost! Throughout the pandemic the billionaires who control this country's wealth have exponentially multiplied their wealth, similar to capitalists elsewhere. This rapaciousness is global headline news according to one British online newspaper: 'Ten billionaires reap \$400bn boost to wealth during pandemic' (The Guardian, 19 December 2020). Without shame the wealthiest classes have been exploiting the pandemic to grow wealthier at the expense of the rest of society.

Workers who produce society's wealth with their labour power have been reduced to beggars as a careful look at the livelihoods' protection programmes reveals. Ramaphosa's Solidarity Fund, to begin with, has set aside a derisory pittance to cushion the oppressed and exploited majority against the harshest blows of the economic slump. But it is not enough to fault it just on its woefully insufficient budget. What makes their Solidarity Fund a farce is the foundational principle which governs it: assistance to people in dire need depends on 'crumbs' (donations) that the class with insatiable greed (the capitalists!) throws away. Since its launch in late March 2020, the value of the Solidarity Fund has reached slightly more than R3,2bn (<https://solidarityfund.co.za/>), which is miniscule when compared with the paltry R70bn in their scandal-ridden Economic Stimulus Package earmarked to support employed and unemployed victims of the socioeconomic disaster. Government's start-up donation to the Solidarity Fund was R50 million, with two of South Africa's wealthiest families (Oppenheimer and Rupert 'corporate philanthropy') jointly donating a maximum of R1bn with instructions on how government should spend it.

The Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme takes these emboldened attacks on workers to shocking levels of ruthlessness. Three

months after closing 'non-essential sectors of the economy', workers forced into unemployment continued to battle to claim some wage support from a labour relations monstrosity, the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), set up against them. One local newspaper summarised the horrors workers have been enduring: "Workers who have been put on leave, laid off temporarily or whose employers can't afford to pay full salaries are entitled to the Covid-19 Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme pay-outs. The delays in the payments of the UIF have also angered unions, who blame employers for dragging their feet in assisting employees." (Mail & Guardian, 26 June 2020)

Pitched as an employment-oriented crisis response, their "Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Plan" (ER&RP) stands diametrically opposed to what the oppressed and exploited need to survive during this deep and long recession. Like other plans concocted from the same bankrupt ideology, the ER&RP paves the way to acute hardships in the months ahead. As part of its "employment stimulus to create jobs and support livelihoods" a Social Employment Fund is to be set up at an unknown future date. With millions of the workforce dumped into joblessness, the ER&RP targets the creation of '800,000 job opportunities'. How different is a 'job opportunity' from the wage slavery of labour brokers? This runs counter to guaranteed employment at a living wage, which is what the unemployed and employed need now! Instead, government merely hopes to allocate 'R100 billion over three years through public and social employment'. "Nothing is guaranteed", their arrogant Finance Minister rants, as everything will be subjected to 'reduced fiscal space (meaning austerity) and revenue leakages (meaning rampant corruption)'.

Politics Of Anti-Capitalist United Action

Resistance has erupted on multiple fronts, invariably to stem the further depression of the living standards of workers. Without any wage incomes, families are struggling to secure enough to eat from unreliable food relief agencies, all heavily dependent on private donors. In addition to the battles for food, resisting housing evictions gained momentum alongside protests around healthcare (PPEs; community health worker rights; etc), education and police brutality.

With isolated exceptions, progressive organisations struggle to maintain themselves let alone mount organisationally coordinated fight-backs against the misinformation, impoverishment and repression. Well-resourced trade unions and NGOs not totally disoriented ➡

➡ by the crisis, stood at the forefront of fragmented and sporadic protests. Trade unions battled formidable obstacles to operate and recruit more members. Company bosses, for instance, used anti-Covid19 physical distance strictures as a pretext to prevent union organisers from carrying out their standard economic defence of rank-and-file members. In a rare display of united action around reformist demands, trade unions staged a one-day stay-away in early October, handing memoranda to provincial politicians. However, organised mobilisation with an anti-systemic vision was completely absent from this strike. Self-styled leftist NGOs engaged in charity campaigns typical of liberal do-gooders yet parade

themselves as the political leaders of social movements in the absence of an anti-capitalist force with a revolutionary programme.

Among the strategic political questions that these defensive struggles pose, two stand out. First, how can ad hoc single-issue revolts grow into a social revolution against the entire system? Second, how can unity on a principled political basis be constructed? Answering these questions calls for a transitional programme bound together with a unifying political demand. It also calls for the oppressed and exploited, organised in their own organisations, including a principled political organisation, to seize political power ●

SUPPORT AND SOLIDARITY TO STRIKING CLOVER WORKERS

APDUSA salutes you in your courageous action to strike against a ruthless and rapacious capitalist class and one of its members (Clover SA) that operates on a national and international scale. Workers across the world will take inspiration from your action which comes at a time of Covid-19 restrictions that force us to fight with our hands 'tied behind our backs'. Numerous protest actions were and are being undertaken by organised labour formations and poor communities during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. These actions show that the spirit of organised resistance in working class ranks is well alive and growing. Your action has further broken the shackles the ruling elite in SA has opportunistically placed on the labouring majority and its political allies. Apdusa supports Giwusa in its battles against retrenchments, casualisation and outsourcing, with its associated negative impacts on workers' living standards and working conditions. We agree that these onslaughts by the ruling class must be resisted through united actions of unions and progressive forces. Our collective actions have to expose the machinations of the state and the capitalist class, starting in forums such as Nedlac, against the working class. Apdusa

says that the interests, the democratic demands and aspirations of the workers and peasants shall be paramount. This includes the demand for the democratisation of the workplace; of workers, through their democratically elected organisations deciding on the organisation of production at factories. The demand for the socialisation of Clover factories and distribution outlets based on the principles of democratic workers' control, must be raised high as part of a set of politically progressive demands. The strike against Clover SA is one battle the workers and peasants of South Africa must rally around and lend support to. Workers in community organisations, social movements, educational bodies and political organisations are hereby called on to strengthen social solidarity in defence of the interests of the labouring majority.

**Forward to victory for the Clover workers!
Forward to building principled unity!**

COVID19 CRISES AND FRAUD IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Covid19 crisis has already exposed some of capitalism's most heinous crimes against humanity and our planet; horrors that continue to mount but that the capitalists and their guardians mystify without shame.

Gaping health and education inequalities, for instance, are but the symptoms of a social system set on dumping humanity into barbarism. Covid19 has not just laid bare the scale of squalor afflicting the labouring majority but also multiplied the suffering of tens of millions of workers and peasants. Rising mass protests

against the hardships that this pandemic is aggravating have been criminalised with governments instructing their armed forces to crush these revolts with savage violence.

South Africa has failed to escape the devastation of the Covid19 pandemic. Contrary to the optimistic spin that government and its handpicked scientific apologists have been peddling, the country has surged into the league of severely ravaged coronavirus epicentres. Months before the onset of localised transmissions of this infectious disease, ➡

➤ the Ramaphosa administration was floundering in its efforts to block the spread of SARS-Cov-2 in hospitals, shopping malls, police stations and prisons. Uncontrollable infections in poor communities, especially in schools, fuelled by dilapidated infrastructure, exposed the hollowness of their 'disaster response' policies and regulations. What more evidence do we need about the scale of destruction to public healthcare and education – invariably imposed on the exploited and impoverished majority – due to decades of neoliberal austerity?

At best, conflicting statements of the 'National Covid19 Command Council (NCCC)' and disparate ministries epitomise their disastrous, chaotic and misguided knee-jerk guidelines. Ministers regularly contradict each other on Covid19 measures, with some embarrassing Ramaphosa through their violations of physical distancing rules and movement restrictions while boasting of their exploits via social media. Competitors of the ANC inside national and provincial parliaments have seized on this colossal mess to score political points against the ANC. However, these rivals, particularly the Democratic Alliance governing the Western Cape, are incapable of solving this crisis in the interests of the labouring majority.

'Ramapreneurism': Plunder Covid19 Tenders

As their catastrophic mismanagement of this health, socio-ecological and economic disaster teeter along, corruption scandals in Covid19 procurement tenders exploded in media headlines. Thus, 'covidpreneurs', a sub-species of tender tycoons or 'tenderpreneurs', shot to popularity overnight, determined to enrich themselves from the disaster, who got caught out in this looting and what is its broader political significance.

To date, the headline scandals involve mainly high-profile members of the ANC and/or their families. Looters featuring in the headlines range from the Gauteng Health MEC to the spokesperson in the presidency to the sons of the ANC Secretary General. The malfeasance includes inflating the prices of substandard Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplied to public hospitals and Covid19 community information campaigns. Commentators with insider information say that the headlines just reveal the tip of the corruption iceberg.

One of President Ramaphosa's sons, infamous for his involvement in the Bosasa scandal, is another Covid19-profitier through a deal with First National Bank. This standout protégé of 'Ramapreneurism' and his business partner "recruited waste pickers and car guards to spray taxi commuters with disinfectants before

boarding taxis. But by the end of May, the pair identified that spraying people in the taxi rank alone was not enough and have now opted for Covid-19 compliant technology in taxis instead." (*Business Insider*, 27 July 2020) Junior Ramaphosa ignominiously touts the installation of highly questionable plastic ventilator spacers in taxi windows for better airflow inside the taxi as an innovation!

Whitewashing Indelible Looting

In early August, after the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting, the Secretary General issued the umpteenth condemnation of all forms of corruption. Outraged and embarrassed by the latest corruption scandals, this NEC statement once again commits the party to fight "corruption through prevention and punishment". Supposedly a resolute declaration of 'war on corruption involving its own members', this claptrap is a hallmark of ANC duplicity. It evades the urgency to uproot corruption and its underlying causes. Instead, allegations will be investigated through powerless and compromised 'integrity and ethics' committees. None of the known fraudsters, steadfastly defending their right to a 'fair hearing', will be expelled or asked to resign from the ANC. The NEC statement merely regurgitates an old cliché: "those who loot public resources must face the might of the law."

Government officials caught red-handed in this theft have been suspended, insisting that they are innocent until proven guilty. Upon admission of guilt, the disgraced member might issue a public apology for bringing the ANC into disrepute and looting the derisory fiscal allocation to combat Covid19.

Plundering the paltry health budget through fraudulent Covid19 tenders is generally seen as morally disgusting. Diehard liberals, cheerleaders of a social system based on theft and plunder, would usually shout loudest that corruption is a moral crime. But it is short-sighted and deceptive to reduce the abuse of a government position for self-enrichment to a moral problem. The liberals reason as if capitalism works according to 'sacred morals'. Capitalism has no abstract morality, forcing its liberal guardians to protect the system through a violation of their own moral commands: lies and obfuscation. So much for the limits and contradictions of bourgeois morality!

No matter how catchy the anti-corruption rhetoric of the ANC integrity sideshows, Zondo Commissions or liberal moralists, none offers a working class solution to the Covid19 fraud. This populist chorus, on the contrary, seeks to ➤

➡ deflect and suppress a working class alternative from emerging as the Covid19 tender scandals and others unfold. Any genuine alternative must begin with a fundamental question: why has the rot become so widespread and irreversible within the ANC?

The rot arises from the ANC's ideology to further the aspirations of the black middle class. This aspirant black bourgeoisie leading the ANC wants to be giant capitalists; a logic which compels them to accumulate private wealth by any means necessary. Founded upon political double-dealing, it is therefore not surprising why the Ramaphosa-Mboweni brand of entrepreneurship differs only cosmetically from the Zuma-Gupta, EFF-VBS or Miamane-Steinhoff

debacles.

Indeed, the ineptness of the ANC to hide its corrupt activities does not mean that other bourgeois parties are not defrauding the state through privatisation and other self-enrichment crimes. Each corruption scandal further brings into the public eye the fact that criminality, expected from underworld gangsters, is the norm among corporate bosses and its state functionaries. It shows that capitalism is incapable of hiding its crimes against humanity. Capitalism has become an anachronistic mode of social organisation and its victims must replace it with democratic ecosocialism. ●

CLOSING OR OPENING OF SCHOOLS – IT'S A QUESTION OF FIGHTING FOR POWER

Bronagh Hammond has carved a special place for herself in the ranks of official government spokespersons whose jobs mostly involve obfuscation of issues with the purpose of misleading the general public. Arrogant political posturing is their tool of the trade. This communications director for the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), which has declared war on educators and students and parents, is on record as saying that community opposition and the accompanying protests against WCED policies are “legally contestable, disruptive, not authorised by the powers that be, non-procedural and unlawful”. These responses (as reported in the Cape Argus of 28 July 2020) are of a petty bureaucrat who shamelessly hides behind laws and regulations that are rightfully being opposed and contested by many school communities across the county; specifically in the Western Cape. She maintains that organised groups who oppose their policies do not have the authority to close schools, or run schools in ways contrary to WCED diktats. The WCED hides its maladministration and incompetence behind comparisons with the equally deplorable school governance in the rest of the country. The disaster which is the DBE is wreaking havoc on South Africa's scholars and their working class and peasant communities. We are therefore compelled to not only fight the Covid19 pandemic but a government hell-bent on safeguarding minority interests.

Ms Hammond and her ilk should be exposed for who they are and what they represent. What they call ‘disruption’ and rupturing of their supposedly well-run education system, is in fact long overdue. Instead of practicing democratic school governance, they go around looking for scapegoats to blame for preventing “a return to normality”. In the spirit of further resistance to this cabal of political misfits we propose actions to raise the level and scope of resistance to

their anti-working class plans.

- Schools can serve alternative, progressive and practical purposes during times of enforced closure. Schools do not belong to the DBE; they belong to the communities where they exist. Many schools have progressive SGBs. Where these do not exist – given their limited powers - then parent – teacher cooperation when taking action will advance the democratic control of the schools. Our communities must therefore, in this situation of crisis, insist on their right to use the schools for purposes that go beyond the disrupted academic programme. Our organised power – if properly wielded – cannot be countered by the state who merely pay lip service to community involvement in the running of the schools! Our demands should include control over the financial resources that schools require. Democratically established school governing structures run by the communities, for the communities is crucial.
- We have witnessed recent examples where government decrees were countered by protests with a progressive character. Parents closed schools in specific communities accompanied by progressive demands; principals and SGBs took a stand against provincial education departments by not acquiescing to their decrees and diktats. Teachers and parents insisted on what they consider to be just demands for progressive education; these progressive demands and the victories that follow in their wake, point to communities taking control of social processes in their own interests; against that of the privileged minority. Our struggles ➡

- must be aimed at empowering the people against these privileged minorities.
- We therefore need to demand of ourselves – and put into motion- workable plans of actions; plans that can be executed under current, restrictive conditions: where possible, teacher trade unions or committees should run social and political awareness programmes at schools for the entire school community. Do teachers who are members of these unions know their own organisation’s history? Do teachers care enough about the political education of their students? Do students ask hard questions as to the current crisis and their futures? NGOs that are involved in education, media as well as left political forces should run educational programmes on South Africa’s educational history at schools. We need to, as a matter of urgency, understand why we are in this social and economic crisis that we are. SGBs should invite progressive organisations to enlighten them on their visions of a better world for the working class and our children. After all, the SGBs must justify their reasons for existence over and above their official, state endorsed mandate. Progressive left organisations

should share political perspectives on socialist democracy as well as experiences of the international working class with South Africans – all in the spirit of international solidarity. Local anti – Covid-19 struggles will certainly draw inspiration from similar struggles elsewhere in the world; struggles we all can learn from in the process of building a democratic, socialist future on the back of a crisis-ridden capitalist system.

- We reject this oppressive state with its minority, capitalist class rule. We must therefore develop independent programmes of activities that are in the interests of working class and peasant communities and their schools. Without it, no serious power contestation can occur.

WE DEMAND THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF OUR SCHOOLS!

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE MUST BE OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE!

FULL POWER TO THE WORKING CLASS TO RUN THEIR CHILDRENS’ SCHOOLS!



From Around the World

A Fascist Appeal: Donald Trump’s 2020 Electoral Campaign

The US elections is once again presenting the electorate with a choice between the procapitalist liberal (Democratic Party) or procapitalist the rightwing (Republican Party) faction of the ruling class. Donald Trump’s election as president in 2016 brought the otherwise marginal Nazi- fascist wing of the Republican Party to the centre of bourgeois politics. Many on the left are debating whether to characterize Trump as fascist or a case of Bonapartism (a mediocre strong man/leader). Trump needs to be situated in the interrelation of the potential of a social phenomenon and when it is realized. Global capitalism’s prolonged social crisis is propelling a movement towards fascism.

The ideological and political mass appeal, combining the ideology of racism and anti-capitalist rhetoric is a key characteristic of fascism. As the social crisis deepens Trump, holding state power, is redoubling his party’s fascist mass appeal. The battle of ideas to curtail and neutralize fascism’s political appeal is consequential. More so during this 2020 US election

cycle and its aftermath. This important task cannot be left to the Democratic Party. Instead of challenging fascist agitation head on the Democratic Party’s presidential candidate Joe Biden and vice-presidential pick Kamala Harris is shifting politically to the right, with the hope of gaining moderate conservative voters.

Donald Trump’s electoral campaign launch at the 2020 Republican National Convention was unmistakably a fascist ideological and political appeal. Herrenvolk ideology, national chauvinism, militarism and racist scapegoating were openly touted. Fox news the cable television channel is operating as their 24-hour rightwing fascist Joseph Goebbels like propaganda machinery. It is within this mass appeal that fascism has the potential to spread and be actualized. In a crisis ridden capitalist society where human alienation is deep and wide, fascism offers a political home to those alienated, food insecure, homeless, suffering and without any prospect of a future

In his fourth of July speech Trump declared “We ➤

► are now in the process of defeating the radical left, the Marxist, the anarchist, the agitators, the looters and people who in many instances have absolutely no clue what they are doing”. While attacking the ‘radical’ left and the anti-fascist forces Trump is openly embracing and defending the far-right Nazi-fascist organizations and individuals. These Nazi-fascist militias has been rallied by Trump against anti-fascist and those protesting against police brutality. Nazi-Fascist militias have heeded his dog whistle by going to areas where protest and resistance is swelling to defend private property and their “cities”.

In Portland a rightwing 17-year-old armed with an AR 15 assault rifle responded to the call of a militia and went to a BLM protest where he eventually killed two protesters and injuring another. Afterwards still armed he walked towards the police without being questioned or arrested. The boundaries between police and militias are increasingly blurred with law enforcement often siding with the rightwing militias. Unsurprising, The Guardian (27 August, US edition) reported since

2000 rightwing white supremacist infiltrated police departments and other law enforcement agencies. In an attempt to quell the protest across American cities Trump a self-proclaimed ‘law and order’ candidate unleashed the military and federal agents, abducting protestors from the street and using military technologies.

Confronting Donald Trump’s Nazi-fascist electoral campaign is a life and death issue for the labouring classes and oppressed in the US and globally. Physical preparedness for self-protection against the potential and real existing threat of fascist violence and terror is equally vital. Now is not the time for “cowardice, baseness and perfidy”, instead we need united action, the committed work of organization and political education to defeat the threat of fascism. Ultimately, we need a United Front of the oppressed and exploited layers of society and the different left currents with a clear political programme to fight against fascism.●

UPRISING, LABOUR STRIKES AND THE CRISIS OF THE US LEFT

The COVID- 19 pandemic have exposed, amongst others, two interrelate things. First capitalism has exhausted itself as an economic system, incapable of providing in the basic needs of humanity and rapidly destroying our planet. Second the sustained uprising and protest against police violence revealed the crisis of leadership of the US revolutionary left, always trailing behind the masses.

The COVID -19 pandemic social crisis that have gripped the US laboring classes and oppressed layers of society, are pushing the Federal government increasingly towards an authoritarian mode of rule. Historically, for capitalism to resolve a debilitating crisis it tends to move toward totalitarian rule, in some cases to outright fascist or Nazi rule. In response to this acute crisis a new wave of strikes and social protest unfolded reaching its high point during the coronavirus pandemic. Strike rates and social protest are considered important indicators of mass radicalization.

The condition of the laboring classes is teetering on the edge of a catastrophe. So far in the US the Johns Hopkins University’s Coronavirus Resource Center reported 194, 836 COVID-19 deaths. In terms of infections and deaths, strikingly, the pandemic is disproportionately devastating black, indigenous and Latinx laboring classes. This is further compounded by job and wage losses worsening and prolonging an existing housing crisis. It is

estimated approximately 40 million US citizens could face eviction due to a lack of rent payment. As of July 2020, nearly 50 million Americans have filed for unemployment insurance with an unemployment rate swinging around 11.4% and 14% between March and July 2020 respectively.

Amid the crisis tech giants Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, Google, Facebook and Tesla Inc, reported some windfall profits. The New York times reported their market value surpassed a trillion dollars, with Apple valued at \$ 2 trillion, making it higher than the GDP of Brazil, Canada, Russia and South Korea.

Since the start of COVID 19 the Payday Report recorded 1000 labor strikes. Although from a low base these strikes signify a growing clamoring for fundamental change against capitalist barbarism. Amazon workers for example known to work under the most inhumane working conditions led some Amazon warehouse workers to engage in a nationwide protest. New York City public-school teachers, the largest school district in the US threatened to go on strike against the unsafe reopening of public schools forcing the Mayor and others to reach an agreement with the teachers.

The brutal murder of George Floyd by the police in the city of Minneapolis sparked a national uprising against the brazen police violence in working class communities across the US. Labor strikes in support of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest was an important ►

► feature of the uprising. Unionized bus drivers of Minneapolis for example, refused to drive protesters arrested by the police to jail facilities or to transport police officers. What the BLM protest have systematically exposed is how the state and political elites is policing a deep social crisis in working class communities in the most violent and despotic manner, akin to a militarized neocolonial force. Men and women including children are wantonly murdered or seriously injured by the police for the most minor violations and offences. Unsurprising, the protest erupted in working class neighbourhoods calling for sweeping changes. Some of these demands are unable to be met under capitalism. The laboring classes are the only revolutionary force that can take the American society out of the current crisis.

A section of the radical left, mistakenly, dismiss these protests as simply identity politics. At the same time the black petty bourgeois 'leadership' beholden to the capitalist Democratic Party have been trying everything to break the radical impulse of the protest. Their singular objective is to maintain the system and channel the rage of the laboring classes against the capitalist system into election fodder. If anything, it is this decadent class, the prizefighters for

capital, that has reduced the uprising to a simple matter of identity politics and racism, concealing the fact that racism is tied to exploitation and cannot be resolved under capitalism. Nevertheless, an important demand of the protest is to defund or abolish the police. To place these demands and new experiences in its proper context requires the full weight of our theoretical and historical tradition to bare on the current conjuncture. In this period the steadfast application of the critical and scientific method of transitional demands is surely needed. In this light the demand for the defunding or abolishing of the police provides a bridge to connect the immediate demands as it emanates from the uprising and the programme for Eco-socialist revolutionary change. Moreover, the global resonance of the US uprising signaled the ever importance of internationalism and solidarity.

As the wildfires rages across the west coast ravaging already 1.2 million hectares of land caused by drought, record high temperatures and high winds and the uninterrupted protest for more than 100 days in cities like Portland, the struggle for worldwide eco-socialist democracy is a necessity. ●

BOLIVIA: MOVIMIENTO AL SOCIALISMO (MAS) ELECTORAL VICTORY OVERTURNS RIGHT-WING COUP D'ÉTAT

As a calamitous 2020 was drawing to a close, Bolivia inaugurated a new head of state following recent presidential elections. Luis Alberto 'Lucho' Acre, the presidential candidate of the *Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS)*, has taken over the presidency in Bolivia with David Choquehuanca as his vice president.

Early forecasts of private polling agencies strongly favoured a run-off election between Luis Acre and Carlos Mesa, an ex-president who was the candidate for the Citizen Community Alliance, one of several right-wing contestants in the 2020 presidential race (*Financial Times*, 15 October 2020). Contrary to what pollsters had predicted, the MAS (or Movement Toward Socialism) presidential candidates won 55,1% of the vote in the first round. Only 28.8% of Bolivians voted for Mesa, a representative of the old racist oligarchy. With a margin exceeding 25-percentage points, the Acre-Choquehuanca platform thus secured a decisive victory. Given the record voter turnout of 88.4%, this electoral landslide hands the MAS a powerful mandate to speed up a progressive social revolution in Bolivia.

This social revolution proves particularly urgent against the backdrop of the November 2019 *coup d'état*, the worsening economic crisis and the

coronavirus pandemic ravaging the country. Architects of the coup included "right-leaning business leaders in Santa Cruz" and Christian-fundamentalist politicians with the backing of the armed forces and the endorsement of the Washington-sponsored Organisation of American States (*Time Magazine*, 20 October 2020). The military forced Evo Morales to resign from the presidency. Morales obtained asylum in Mexico and shortly thereafter found refuge in Argentina. A conservative catholic senator of the Democratic Social Movement, Jeanine Áñez Chavez, declared herself Bolivia's interim president. Needless to say, Áñez with her trigger-happy Interior Minister, Arturo Murillo, gleefully executed the programme of the coup plotters. The *New York Times* described it as "a staunchly right-wing caretaker government" which "has persecuted the former president's supporters (MAS activists), stifled dissent and worked to cement its hold on power." (*New York Times*, 7 June 2020).

The coup regime postponed new presidential elections twice whilst unleashing a violent crackdown on workers and peasants that constitute the social base of the MAS. Armed forces and fascist gangs have been massacring oppressed and exploited protesters. In the Cochabamba massacre, for example, ►

➡ 9 coca growers were murdered, plus seriously injuring more than 100 people. The La Paz offices of the main trade union federation, the Bolivian Workers' Center (COB), was bombed in August. Shortly after the October 2020 elections, Orlando Gutiérrez, executive secretary of the Union Federation for Bolivian Mining Workers (FSTMB) and an active MAS supporter, was murdered.

With Covid-19 infections spreading in Bolivia, Añez's abolition of Cuban medical missions in Bolivia and deportation of Cuban doctors in effect made healthcare inaccessible to the poorest classes in the pandemic. Their enthusiastic backing of Juan Guaidó, the political upstart who failed to execute a coup in Venezuela, confirms the regional orientation of the right-wing offensive to crush the anti-neoliberal radicalisation sweeping across Latin America.

NATIONAL STRIKES IN INDONESIA RETURN

The 2020 Trade and Development Report released by the United Nations paints a gloomy picture for the laboring classes, estimating that worldwide more than 500 million jobs might be under threat and at least 100 million will be permanently lost. Against this reality the UN cautions governments against a new round of austerity measures, instead it calls for a dubious 'global recovery plan'.

Notwithstanding this forewarning, Indonesia president Joko Widodo in October 2020 introduced a new austerity law attacking labour, gender and environmental rights of the laboring classes. A key aim of the new law is to shift the burden of the crisis caused by capitalism onto the shoulders of the laboring classes and oppressed groups. Widodo, the first non-military leader, was re-elected in 2019 on a platform of uprooting corruption, implementing land reforms, revamping public services and infrastructure, increase the provision of affordable housing and a broad project of modernization all within a neoliberal capitalist framework.

Heartless and true to the logic of capitalism this law is approved during a global COVID 19 pandemic and a deepening social crisis in Indonesia. In Southeast Asia, Indonesia, has the highest number of recorded COVID 19 cases and deaths. Moreover, the economy of Indonesia has been hard hit by the pandemic resulting in a shrinking economy where almost six million workers became unemployed, adding to the existing unemployed pool.

The introduction of the new law triggered a nationwide protest and labour strike drawing millions of workers into the streets against this draconian legislation and the ongoing multiple ravages of neoliberal capitalism. The Omnibus job creation law were introduced as part of a coronavirus stimulus package. Under the pretext of stimulating the economy by attracting foreign investment, the stimulus Bill is giving free reign to local and global capital to engage in the super exploitation of workers and the further destruction of the environment. As one of the young leaders of the factory strikes explains, "The president is paying back the financiers who

renewal of the MAS leadership in party structures that directly participated in mobilising anti-coup resistance. This reactivates the historic integration of MAS with Bolivia's anti-neoliberal insurgency, inspiring an eco-socialist basis to unite mass struggles and fortifying its revolutionary leadership in the unfolding class war.

In the meanwhile, Evo Morales has returned to Bolivia and his relationship to the Acre presidency has been widely discussed. President Acre, the ex-economy minister under Morales, told a journalist after his inauguration: "This is my government. Comrade Evo is the MAS president and that will be his role ... But I will lead the government." (*The Guardian*, 8 November 2020). ●

helped him win the election, not ordinary people who voted for him." (NY Times, 8 October 2020)

The implementation of this austerity neoliberal law will result in the lengthening of the work week, elimination of reproductive rights (maternity, menstrual etc.) of women workers and undermining the existing labour rights of workers. Under the new bill the working week can be extended from five to six days, cutting the wages of workers at a whim and permanent workers can be replaced by part time workers. The new law is an attack on labour, women and the environment in the most barbaric way. Amidst a global economic and environmental crisis, the capitalist class continues its onslaught that will aggravate the ongoing destruction of the rainforest for palm oil plantations. Indonesia produces more than 80% of global palm oil, with Europe being an important importer of palm oil for cosmetics and foodstuffs. Environmental scientists point out that the world's rain forests are a vital source of concentrating carbon emissions and slowing climate change. This vital natural resource has been systematically eroded through deforestation. The new law will likely result in an increase in burning to clear the land for palm oil plantations in the interest of corporations. While the European Commission is flaunting its Green Deal, this is likely to be at a great cost to the environment and labour conditions in countries like Indonesia. It is this assault by the state and corporations that necessitated the trade union movement call for anti-neoliberal protest and a national strike.

Thousands of workers joined the national strike, with one estimate placing them at one million participating in the daily walkouts. In real time the labouring classes as a whole and the trade union movement synchronized land, labour and ecological issues as a basis of everyday political struggle. These three interrelated problems cannot be solved within capitalism.

Nevertheless, the Indonesian national strike point to the indivisibility of land, labour and ecological struggles and the importance of an eco-socialist ➡

► transitional programme. This provides us with a valuable lesson and key development in struggle of labouring classes worldwide. First, the COVID 19 pandemic should not mean the suspension of class struggle, rather it should be a call to principled action against the attack of ruling classes. Second the return of the national or mass strike is a decisive instrument

in the hands of the labouring classes against the assault of the capitalist class, particularly during this period of deep social crisis. Ultimately national strikes need to be transformed into insurrectional general strikes for the seizure of power by and in the interests of the workers and peasants. ●

Tribute

Edna Saloojee (nee Wilcox)

Edna Wilcox was born in Cape Town in 1925, the third in line of a family of four sisters and four brothers. Edna, as an individual and as part of the Unity Movement (UMSA) political traditions, made a telling contribution to the South African liberation struggle. She, together with her sister Gwendolyn Wilcox performed exceptionally well at high school (passing matric with distinction) and actively participated in the political issues of the day. Edna became an expert/professional shorthand typist secretary after completing high school. After taking up residence in District Six with her sister Joyce, her political involvement became more earnest and focussed. The two sisters teamed up with Benita Teper and together they succeeded in persuading the Cape Malay Choir Board to boycott the 1952 Van Riebeeck festival celebrations. Edna became well known across the country for her serious involvement and commitment as a member of The Society of Young Africa (SOYA). After moving to Johannesburg she continued her involvement in SOYA as well as partnering with Abdulhay Saloojee.

When APDUSA was established in 1961 all family members joined, becoming active members. This resulted in Edna, Gwendolyn and her brother Alfred all being banned for 5 years in 1964. The banning orders were re-imposed in 1969. While Abdulhay was not banned, he was harassed by the Special Branch mainly because of his political work and also because he had built a highly successful medical practice in Soweto which, according to totally independent sources, had a patient list of over 100 000. Abdulhay was denied a passport on two occasions when he

received scholarships to continue his medical studies in England. With Edna's second banning order the couple decided to leave South Africa via exit permits.

In London Edna became associated with the Defence and Aid organisation and after her sister (Gwendolyn) and two brothers (Robert and Alfred) were arrested in 1971 she campaigned actively in their support besides providing much appreciated financial support for her family members.

After the passing of her husband Abdulhay, Edna decided to return to South Africa to spend the rest of her life with her family here. Upon her arrival, one of the first things she did was to set about the establishment of the Abdulhay Ahmed Trust to promote the examination of democracy and what it really means to all. The Trust has conducted three successful lecture meetings, addressed by prominent international speakers. The series of lecture meetings series will continue after the coronary virus pandemic is finally controlled.

In the remaining period of her life, as a member of the Western Cape branch of APDUSA she participated in organisational activities to the extent that her advanced age allowed her. Edna remained acutely aware of national and international affairs and would contribute actively in branch meetings she attended at her own residence. She earned the respect of younger APDUSA members for her steadfast and principled political beliefs and actions throughout her political career.

Her legacy lives on.

APDUSA

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Despite the gain of political rights for all, the compromise of 1992 has not fulfilled the democratic aspirations of the labouring majority and they continue to suffer in conditions of abject poverty and subjugation to the will of the rich who command the economic resources of the country. In the ongoing struggle we therefore demand:

- The convening of a democratically elected **Constituent Assembly**, charged with the task of drawing up a new constitution, governed by the interests of the oppressed and exploited working class and peasantry, based on the demand for full, unfettered political rights for all with majority rule in a unitary state, the removal of all artificially created regional political boundaries, the liquidation of all special minority rights and privileges which militate against the interests of the majority. The Constituent Assembly must have full powers to discharge these duties, untrammelled by any directions and constraints designed to serve self-interested minorities.
- A resolution of the **land question** in accordance with the needs of those who work and live off the land. This means the destruction of all existing tribal and feudal relations in the rural areas and the nationalisation of the land, without compensation. A new division of the land and its management, which excludes forced collectivisation, the payment of rent and the expropriation of small peasant farmers, must be undertaken by committees that are democratically elected by and answerable to the people.
- The **expropriation** of all major industries, banks and institutions of credit and their management by the state and representatives of the workers in the interests of the population as a whole.
- The revision of labour legislation for the liquidation of all discrimination against the worker. This also means:
 - The **right to work**, which must be implemented both via the institution of necessary adjustments to the length of the working week to provide employment for all, without a reduction in wages, as well as by the institution of a progressive **public works program** with the full representation of the unemployed in its management.
 - The fixing of a living **minimum wage** as well as a sliding scale to compensate for any price increases.
 - The unconditional right to **strike** which includes the right of occupation of the workplace.
 - Free and **compulsory education** for all up to matric with free books for the needy.
 - Free **health services** for the needy.
- A single, progressive **tax system**, the abolition of vat and all indirect taxes that fall so heavily on the poor.
- The elected representatives of the people, at organisational level or in the local, regional or national political institutions of state, must be fully **accountable** to those who elect them and they must be fully bound by the demands and aspirations of the working class and its allies, the landless peasantry.

APDUSA calls for the self-organisation and united independent struggle of the labouring masses. We believe that the struggle can only advance decisively via the greatest ideological and organisational unity between the workers in the urban centres and the peasants in the rural areas under the leadership of the working class. The democratic demands and aspirations of the oppressed workers and peasants shall be paramount.

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Our website is currently offline. It has become dated and is under reconstruction to strengthen it against hacking and to improve its usability. The website should be live within the next few weeks.