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The Interests Of The Workers And Landless Peasants Shall Be Paramount

SOUTH AFRICA'S MILITARY CAMPAIGNS IN AFRICA

South Africa's recent military involvement in the Central African Republic brought back images of the September 1998 invasion of Lesotho by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). It entered the country, killed Lesotho citizens and defence force members, secured strategic economic points in the country and left – with the capital Maseru in ruins. Ten South African soldiers were killed. The CAR intervention furthermore reminded South Africans of the SANDF and its incursions into Angola, Lesotho and other African countries before 1994; the same secrecy, the same egg-dancing around the real reasons for these military actions is again on the agenda. All the talk of parliamentary oversight over military engagements on the continent is not worth the paper it's written on. The difference this time round is that the military escapades are undertaken by a democratically elected government. Who is the enemy or the adversaries that the SADF says it must fight? The SANDF (SA Army) on its website (www.dod.gov.za) maintains that "future adversaries are likely to think and act in an asymmetric manner". Any rebel or oppositionist group fighting what the SA government considers being a legitimate government is therefore fair game. Spokesmen for the SA Army are extremely boastful when it comes to them being warned about the folly of these military excursions. They equate and confuse the military strength of the SADF with guaranteed success on the battlefield. South Africa's heightened military profile on the continent is occurring at a time when the USA, France and the UK are systematically using their so-called 'war on terror' as an excuse to entrench their military presence in a wide range of countries in Africa and the Middle East. Tied to this is the destructive role of South African and international weapons manufacturers/traders (Denel, BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin etc) in continued and new African conflicts. These corporations are raking in billions in profit from imperialist wars of destruction in Africa. The South African government appears to be firmly set on joining these wars. A role for the SA government in this scheme of military operations is being assigned to it by international alliances and

multilateral forums like the AU, the UNO-SC and NATO.

The arguments for military intervention are flimsy. The Minister of Defence states that it is done "in support of peace and stability" on the continent. A decade or more of UN peacekeeping through MONUSCO in the eastern DRC has resulted neither in peace, nor stability. The envisaged 3000 plus intervention brigade to be made up of South African, Tanzanian and Malawi troops has been armed with a UN resolution entitling it to pursue an aggressive military campaign against, amongst others, the M23 rebel group and the population living in the areas they control. This UN resolution (resolution 2098) sets a dangerous precedent in that future UN missions can for all intents and purposes become offensive undertakings aimed at enforcing the political agenda of the dominant military powers. It does appear as if the intervention brigade was established as a replacement for, or as a precursor to the planned African Union Rapid Deployment/Standby Force. Mainstream media has reported exhaustively on the scramble for minerals and other resources in which governments, proxy forces and business interests are heavily involved in eastern DRC. The same case has been made with regard to the CAR. In the case of the CAR, the SANDF was apparently invited by the ousted president Bozize to assist with military training and logistical support for its own military. The Seleka rebels who ousted the Bozize government demanded of the South Africans that they leave the country. The SA government refused. Fourteen South Africa soldiers were subsequently killed. More soldiers are to be sent into combat situations in territories like eastern DRC with which they are unfamiliar. South Africa's expanded military involvement in Africa – as an active aggressor – is bound to create more enemies and feed the anti- South African sentiment which is fairly widespread across the continent. ➔

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➤ These interventions- like the ones before - have the effect of offering protection to political elites, not to protect civilians (the July 1995 Srebrenica massacre involving Dutch UN peacekeepers which resulted in the slaughter of eight thousands civilians should be borne in mind). This protection allows

them to plunder at will. On top of all of these developments, the arms deal investigation has hardly helped in shedding light on the secret, murky world of business and political elites exploiting the natural wealth of the continent – at the expense of the African workers and peasants. ●

AGANG SA: THE BIRTH OF YET ANOTHER DEAD-END BOURGEOIS PARTY

The fundamental political struggle in South Africa is that between the political forces advancing and representing the interests of the working class and landless peasant majority on the one hand, and those representing the bourgeoisie, on the other. It is in the latter camp that a new party like Agang SA finds itself. Agang SA will be operating as an exclusive parliamentary party, feverishly canvassing for votes and engaging in futile exercises to genuinely represent its supporters in the corridors of local, regional and national government. It will loudly proclaim that it is fighting elections in the name of the poor. In reality many will only be seeking to carve out political careers for themselves at the expense of the poor. It should be noted that Agang SA is drawing heavily upon business people and elements of the petit bourgeoisie to constitute its national leadership. This tendency to seek out and build political careers as bourgeois party representatives holds for all parliamentary parties; parties funded to the hilt by big business and other big-moneyed vested interests. These parties are all agreed on defending the anti-worker and anti-poor South African constitution with all which that implies. On top of this they get funding from the public purse as well; money that could be spent on urgent social needs.

Agang, through its leader Ramphela Mamphela, says that it will be fighting for a corruption-free SA government. This struggle of Agang is aimed at rooting out all the thieves and scoundrels who do not abide by the rules and regulations of the capitalist system. She, like others, neglects to add that the system's corruption includes the fact that the system is incapable of not being corrupt: it is a system designed to harm and destroy people. It is therefore not strange that there is a strong similarity between the standard political, economic and social aims of the UDM, COPE, the DA and others. Besides this, Agang SA says it will be fighting for reforms in the electoral system, with an emphasis on fighting against the parliamentary list system – instead, propagating an alternative constituency based system.

Their sole focus is reform of a corrupt system. This is equal to putting a plaster over a festering

wound. Its policies and aims are meant to serve “all South Africans” and show few differences from that of the Democratic Alliance. There is no reference to its fundamental class orientation – precisely because this helps in fooling people into believing that the party represents all South Africans equally. This belief is politically incorrect and historically inaccurate.

Agang SA, the UDM and the DA have been having behind the scenes talks on forming election coalition pacts. Their policies in government will not be much different from that of the ANC. South Africans are led to believe that being treated to verbal showdowns and skirmishes between political personalities like Ramphela, Helen Zille, Jacob Zuma and others, is what political leadership entails. These individuals display few differences from the so-called celebrities found in the entertainment industry: all image, no substance. They are elevated in the media as “bigger than life” leaders exactly because there is little else that they can in reality offer the poor. The masses are expected to believe and support their empty political rhetoric. The parliamentary opposition will accuse the ruling party of “lacking political will” – whatever that means; the ANC in turn, will accuse them of “not offering any alternatives”, and of being small insignificant parties. This is what bourgeois politics in South Africa amounts to. It smacks of insulting the public who are forced to swallow this garbage on a daily basis. There is little that is meaningful for the poor majority in what these people are saying and doing. They are forever fabricating new explanations and excuses as to why fundamental problems of housing, land hunger and unemployment can't be solved. In the meanwhile, their paymasters remain in the shadows, pumping millions of rands into the party machinery of these parties.

Agang SA has been on a listening campaign to find out how much the majority labouring classes in South Africa are oppressed and exploited. It announced that it will be producing an election manifesto in November 2013. Workers and peasants need to organisationally oppose these with demands of their own. The democratic demands of the workers and peasants remain paramount. ●

YOUTH DAY 2013 – BESMIRCHING A PROUD TRADITION

Apdusa Western Cape held an open discussion on 16 June, Youth Day as part of the commemoration of the heroic youth struggles of the late 1970s. The introduction and discussion raised important issues insofar as the current and future role of South African youth is concerned.

Youth in their millions have systematically been denied access to the resources of the country. This reality has been duplicated with regard to the access to the country's wealth denied to their parents, elders and the working class and its allies generally. The youth find themselves in a state of near despair, sensing that there is and will be little by way of a meaningful life for them. The levels of drug abuse, poor education, indulgence in destructive social practices like gangsterism, crass materialism and superficial adherence to discredited ideologies are some of the symptoms of this uncertain existence. The scourge of joblessness adds to this dire situation. Those in charge of the country offer entrepreneurship, handouts from the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), pitiful social grants, volunteerism and NGO-ism to the youth. These solutions offered to youth are no solutions. Neither will they in the fullness of time be real solutions. The same goes for the clamour for youth to focus on their formal studies, pass well, get a good job and

then proceed to live productive lives. Tens of thousands of graduates walking the street put a lie to this.

In the face of all of these challenges and developments, South African youth have been involved in local struggles around housing, ablution facilities, quality education and access to tertiary education, amongst others. Internationally youth have been in the forefront of struggles for political and social change in Egypt, Turkey, Chile, Brazil as well as in Greece, Spain and Portugal. However, a weakness that has been evident in many of the recent uprisings has been the predominance of NGOs in the leadership.

In all of these struggles one fact emerges strongly: that in order to secure their future, youth will have to embrace an alternative political narrative; an alternative to the bourgeois narrative which praises individualism, political “dumbing down” of youth and a continuation of the bourgeois-capitalist system which entrenches youth social regression. This alternative is to consider and embrace the struggle for socialist-democracy – here in South Africa and elsewhere. In so doing the proud legacy of the heroic 1976 youth struggles can be preserved for future generations. ●

THE SHAM OF DEMOCRACY IN THE RURAL AREAS

With democracy almost 20 years old; there is still great uncertainty in vast regions of the rural areas. With the advent of democracy everybody around the country had great expectations and many were really waiting to be blessed with this novelty. A priority would have been getting to all these areas either for delivery of services or levelling the impassable terrain for easy and proper communication. If one cannot reach rural settlements then the whole idea of development and governance grinds to a standstill with serious repercussions for the whole community and ultimately to the society as a whole.

One can cite living examples of what a sham our democracy is in so many ways. A Poultry Project at the Qombolo Administrative Area in the district of Tsomo urgently ordered a steel container from LLQ Containers in East London. The company timeously delivered the R29000 container which was to serve as an office and storage at the site of the project, only to be confronted with the reality that there was no thoroughfare for crossing the small Qombolo stream. They were compelled to offload this valuable structure on the veld about one kilometre from its destination. Members of the project had the great task of guarding the container from vandalism for eight months. This was bought from the government

funds. Where is the urgency in such flippant behaviour and risking of money which was a government grant?

In another instance the municipality is erecting toilet slabs in the same areas. They also cannot reach the locations in the bundus and they resort to the same “solution” of off-loading these concrete slabs on the same veld. Let us not ignore the fact that these are also expensive structures which cannot be delivered to their real site except with the correct transport (horse and trailer). As a result some are damaged and they lay waste on the veld.

Some schools have no classrooms; their structures were blown away by strong winds long ago. Teachers conduct their classes in the scorching sun and cold weather in the open. During rainy days there will be no classes since all pupils will congregate in the only shelter with the teachers. These are structures that are constructed with ordinary mud and are easily blown away. During examination period, these school kids sit under leaking roofs with drops pattering on their examination pads. God knows how they could work for better results to at least compare with children in Johannesburg or Cape Town for example. An absurd scenario is that of a teacher carrying an umbrella while writing on a black board that is ➡

➡ standing on bricks; kids also cluster under umbrellas. In some instances one textbook is used by five children. Textbooks have not been delivered in April. How do such kids get down to proper work in class under such conditions?

Most of this is a result of bad roads, but officials from the government visit these areas in big 4x4s which easily negotiate the very bad tracks and they are aware of the situations. They will only advise you to approach the mayor and his or her functionaries who are too arrogant for words. A small wonder that these are supposed to be representatives of the areas and people do not know them.

That is the type of democracy we have in the rural areas which is the same picture of many decades ago. People in these areas merely hear or see on TV and radio if there is democracy in their

country of their birth. People in the urban areas do benefit somewhat but from democracy but this does not take into account the heavy taxes that are paid by the rural inhabitants. Everything on the rural scenario is nothing but a sham of reality. When people move into the cities for better options they are regarded as refugees in the country of their birth. People are expected to smile and help the government that is so useless to them. The facts mentioned above are but the tip of the iceberg. Conditions in hospitals and the other service areas are very improperly availed to the communities in these areas. This is in spite of the shouts that we are in democracy, while others now will say that the past oppressive regimes were better in service delivery despite their segregated nature. ●

RONALD (RONNIE) BRITTEN

It is our honour to pay tribute to the life's work of Ronnie Britten, who passed away in England on 30 June at the age of 84 years. He was one of the most outstanding stalwarts in the struggle for liberation in South Africa. Already at a young age, while a student at the University of Cape Town, Ronnie was an active member of the then Non-European Unity Movement, later to be renamed the Unity Movement of South Africa. After graduating and achieving his teaching diploma, Ronnie could only obtain a post in the Karoo town of Middelburg. Undeterred he organised for the Teachers League of South Africa there and in surrounding areas. He later gained a teaching post at Luckoff High School in Stellenbosch, not too distant from his home town, Paarl, where he taught for the rest of his stay in South Africa. He was a diligent and committed teacher who, like others in the TLSA refused to teach the inferior brand of education which the ruling powers had designated for the Blacks. He taught the truth of oppression and urged all his students to play a positive role in the society into which they were born.

He also became active in the Society of Young Africa and when APDUSA (The African People's Democratic Union of Southern Africa) was established in 1960/1961 Ronnie became an indefatigable member in the Boland district, organising in an array of towns - Paarl, Wellington, Stellenbosch, Strand, Franschoek and Pniel. The Boland branch, which drew its membership from all these areas, became a key component of the APDUSA and Ronnie, as the leading light in the area was elected to the Head Unity Committee of the Unity Movement.

By 1963 the entire liberatory movement was subjected to the worst forms of repression with bannings and the imprisonment of thousands. At this stage members of the senior leadership were sent out of the country to continue and further the struggle in exile. By the end of 1964 Ronnie too was forced to leave the country to evade arrest. After a brief stay in Lusaka, Zambia, he was sent by the leadership to represent the movement in Accra, Ghana. His role there was unfortunately short-lived, interrupted by the military coup which deposed Kwame Nkrumah and his government which had been sympathetic to the cause and approach of the UMSA. Forced to leave, Ronnie made his way to England to link up the UMSA support group there. He and his wife Crystal settled in Hemel Hempstead. Here he became the chief conduit of communication between the organisation in exile and at home in South Africa. He was further responsible for the posting of all Unity Movement materials, including the complete writings of I.B. Tabata in an archive at the University of Cape Town.

With his residence in Hemel Hempstead, now being for an undetermined time, Ronnie once again returned to teaching. He became an active member of The National Union of Teachers, resisting the debasement of education under the Thatcherites.

Although based in England, Ronnie made it his duty to attend the annual conferences of UMSA in Zimbabwe. Later as the ruling regime in South Africa felt it opportune to ease up on its now increasingly ineffective policy of repression, Ronnie was the first of those who had been in exile to visit South Africa again in July 1990, where he delivered a key address to the first national conference of the APDUSA to be held after many years. Shortly thereafter he and his wife returned to settle in Cape Town from where Ronnie continued to contribute in building the organisation nationally. He was truly tireless and argued that one should never shun an organisational task that was necessary but seemed to be too difficult, in favour of a lesser and easier role.

Having been out of South Africa for almost 30 years, Ronnie found that for personal reasons his stay in South Africa could not be sustained and he returned to Hemel Hempstead, England, where he spent the rest of his days. His has been a contribution to the liberatory struggle that is largely unsung in South Africa but it is a contribution that cannot and will not be erased from our history. We salute Ronnie, a hero of our time.

BARACK OBAMA'S VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA

At the end of June this year, the US president, Barack Obama paid a visit to South Africa, Tanzania and Senegal. On the occasion, the Muslim Lawyers Association in South Africa lodged a 600 plus pages complaint with the South African National Prosecuting Authority in which the crimes of Obama, as commander-in-chief of the US military, was listed. Nothing further has been heard of this complaint.

In terms of the Rome Statute, which is an official document of the International Criminal Court – a UN body – and which has approximately 130 countries as signatories, these are legitimate charges. They include extra-judicial killings, extra-territorial killings, war crimes, murder and genocide. Obama's predecessor George Bush as well as the UK Prime ministers Tony Blair and David Cameron are – in terms of the provisions of the Rome Statute - equally liable for prosecution. Notwithstanding these realities, these leaders are continuing with their murderous attacks on civilians in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and lately in a number of African countries like Somalia and Mali. They justify it in the name of their 'war on terror', which for many innocent civilians have become a 'war of terror'.

Obama conducted his campaign for the presidency as a candidate who wanted to bring an end to the wars the US was involved in at the time. However, his presidency has subsequently been one of permanent war; of eternal war in which the idea of 'full spectrum dominance' has turned the entire world into a real or potential battlefield for the US military. In these plans the use of unmanned drone attacks feature strongly. Hundreds of Afghan and Pakistanis citizens have been and are being killed through these drone strikes. On the domestic front tens of millions of US citizens find themselves shut out of social welfare programmes; poverty levels in the country are on the rise. Barely a year ago the Occupy Movement bore the brunt of a vicious clampdown by the US police. Trade union members, social activists and their supporters were beaten up, arrested and their right to protest severely curtailed (see *The Apdusan*, Volume 17 No 3). The latest scandal dealing with the spying by the National Security Agency on US citizens is hardly democratic. The democratic freedoms of millions are under threat from the very people who are claiming to defend them. Globally, the emergence of security and surveillance systems aimed at controlling and defeating revolutionary and protest movements must be opposed. ●

MARIKANA, THE FARM WORKERS REBELLION AND RAPE

The brutal rape and killing of seventeen year old Anene Booysen in Bredasdorp on Saturday 2 February evoked a national outcry. This terrible deed also achieved extensive coverage in the international media. Then we saw all manner of politicians hastening to Bredasdorp to make public statements condemning this heinous crime. This was followed by a number of protest demonstrations, vigils and memorial meetings across the country. All of this may seem strange since aggravated rape is certainly not at all uncommon in South Africa. The country has for a long time had the notoriety of being known as the rape centre of the world, outstripping even the worst other country for the number of rapes per annum by an enormous margin. Following so shortly on the outcry of horror at the diabolical Marikana massacre and the brave and unrelenting stand of the Lonmin mine workers, then the Western Cape farm workers rebellion against slave wages, one is led to consider whether this is yet another sign that the people of South Africa are reaching the end of their tether, having waited despairingly on the government to act decisively to improve the quality of life in the country. In many cases it has become evident that in cases such as this latest horror, people are taking the law into their own hands, while we hear sanctimonious protests from an ineffective police force that such deeds cannot be allowed.

Besides daily reports of rape there have been other incidents in the country such as the vicious killing of lesbians and the assault of young women wearing mini skirts. We have heard of complaints against the police for showing a distinct lack of

interest in pursuing rape charges to the point of insulting the victims. We also saw the senseless disbandment of the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) units a few years ago. Recently reinstated, there is now a flurry of activity to make these units effective.

Many such crimes and others can be attributed to the widespread and growing dependence on drugs such as crystal methamphetamine or tik. Yet the South African law enforcement system has a surprisingly lenient approach to drug dealing. A drug dealer is directly responsible for destroying countless lives, murder, prostitution, disease and the perpetration of an enormous number of other criminal acts by drug dependents in order to feed their sick habit. In this country the maximum sentence for a convicted drug dealer is 25 years imprisonment, but this sentence is seldom applied. We quote from a statement on the website of the Counselling Information Centre (www.blaauwberg.net) on drug addiction and crime: "*Supt Das Neves shares the opinion of many that legislation isn't strict enough. According to him the legislation in Malaysia and Japan is very strict, and that is one of the reasons why they have such a low crime rate. It's difficult to draw comparisons because every case must be judged on its own merits: a person in New York can be sentenced to 40 years in jail for possession of 1 kg cocaine. A member of SANAB Pretoria said a 20-year-old local was sentenced to 12 years for being in possession of 3 kg cocaine.*" SANAB – The South African Narcotics Bureau, was disbanded in 2004. ➔

➡ There is absolutely no excuse for law enforcement laxity and inefficiency in cases such as these. While the government may argue about limited funds and the need to balance the budget, people are becoming singularly unimpressed, while billions of rands of state funds slip through the cracks, feeding blatant corruption. It is yet another sign that it is part of a broader political question of government for the people or government for the politicians in charge. Hence, it is a question of the necessity for full political consciousness being raised

in the minds of the populace. Either we have a system that is attuned to the real and practical needs of the majority or we have a system that has become and remains one that is attuned to the privileges of a minority. It is time that left wing political forces adopt a realistic and progressive role. Instead of jumping in liberalistic horror and outrage from one incident to another there should be a concentration on advocating a precise, comprehensive political program for fundamental change ●



From Around the World

THE CAPITALIST WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM AT DAVOS

The 43rd meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) was held in Davos, Switzerland on 23-27 January this year. The history and aims of the WEF are readily accessible from its website. It began life in 1971 as the European Management Forum in 1971 in Davos, Switzerland. Its motto is “committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political and academic leaders to shape global, regional and industry agendas”. In applying academic analysis to the business world, its founder Karl Schwab developed “stakeholder theory”. This theory holds that companies serve not only shareholders but all the “stakeholders” of their organisation. This means all the social groups connected directly or indirectly to the enterprise, employees, customers, suppliers, the state and society in which the enterprise is active. The questions that have to be asked are, which class or classes the forum serves and how it fulfils its tasks.

Delegates attending the WEF are there by invitation only. The average cost for each individual’s attendance is Rand 358,400 (\$40,000). This year 2,600 delegates representing 100 countries were invited, ranging from business leaders, heads of state, bankers, politicians, selected journalists, intellectuals and philanthropists. South Africa sent its largest delegation, 126 representatives accompanied by 9 ministers. The cost to the taxpayer is to say the least huge, most of it in foreign currency. The delegation included the ministers of Finance, Trade, Labour, Communications as well as the minister in charge of the National Planning Commission and the President, Jacob Zuma. The business tycoons who attended, included the CEOs of Nedbank, Absa, JSE, chairman of Anglo Gold, Ashanti and chairmen of state owned industries, Telkom and Transnet. As the WEF is thick on the ground with the rich and powerful and those who represent them politically, it is not surprising that the discussions there centred on the interests of the dominant classes, who control world affairs and the

global economy.

The main concern of the five day 43rd WEF was the sluggish global economic recovery, specifically as regards the US economic doldrums and Europe’s continuing struggle to save the euro and overcome the financial and economic crisis (Ben Schreiner, Monthly Review, Jan. 13). Business leaders at Davos sounded more optimistic, but poor growth, high youth unemployment in the advanced countries and impoverishment of the peripheral countries persist. Although there was much hype at Davos that banks had started repaying some of the cheap money they had borrowed from the ECB, evidence for this claim was lacking. One forum entitled “De-Risking Africa” dealt with “mitigating investment risk in Africa” and included two African presidents on the panel, South Africa’s Zuma and Nigeria’s Goodluck Jonathan. The moderator of the discussion asked how Africa’s leaders could ensure economic growth on the continent. Her concern was whether African leaders collectively entrenched democratic rights on the continent. Zuma, dealing with the strikes on the mines and the aftermath, laid the blame for the upheaval at one of the mining companies, which had negotiated with the “wrong union” and undermined the collective bargaining system. He did not discuss the role of the state and police in the Marikana massacre and assured the audience that all “stakeholders” had now got together around the table and that calm was descending on the labour scene.

The banks remain in deep trouble as the Dutch government’s nationalisation of the fourth biggest bank in Holland, showed. There have been plenty of speeches and debates at Davos on the global financial economic crisis, particularly since it began in 2008. However, observers of the WEF are sceptical that any definitive consensus or positive action can be expected after the participants leave Davos. As the Economist correspondent put it, “The brainstorming, deal making and schmoozing is ➡

➡over for another year". What is to be expected, judging by past experience of WEF conferences is that certain analyses, cum predictions will prove to be deficient in credibility. Examples from the past are: in 2011, IMF chief Christine Lagarde, then French finance minister said "I think the euro zone has turned the corner. Let's not short Europe and let's not short the euro zone". The people of Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland are in their daily lives

having to fight against the harsh austerity measures imposed on them by the troika. In South Africa, the mineworkers and farm workers continue to resist the draconian regimes under which they are forced to work. It is their voices and those of their brothers and sisters all over the world fighting against the capitalist system, which increasingly will be heard.

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THE ARAB SPRING TWO YEARS ON

The Arab Spring continues to occupy world attention two years after its emergence. Egypt, in terms of its history, the size of its population, institutions and culture, remains at the centre of the uprisings. The elections held after the downfall of Mubarak brought the once outlawed Muslim Brotherhood into government and its candidate, Mohammed Morsi elected president. The drawing up of the constitution, which was rushed through by a constituent assembly dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), was boycotted by liberals and the left wing. The constitution is not acceptable to them or the mass movement of emancipation, which overthrew the dictatorial regime, because it jeopardises basic human rights. It favours the Islamists and fails to uphold the rights of the religious minorities like the Christians, who make up about 10% of the population. It does not protect the rights of women, entrenching domestic oppression. The turnout at the referendum on the constitution was estimated at 30% and was marred by abuses. The state media claimed that 63% of those who voted, supported the charter. The constitution has deeply polarised the country.

The Muslim Brotherhood enjoys support from layers of the rural and urban poor as well as the urban middle class. Many of its leaders are rich businessmen and it is pro-capitalist. The government is implementing a neoliberal programme, supporting continued privatisation, promoting outsourcing of labour and the reliance on loans from the IMF. Furthermore, many of the ministers in the cabinet appointed by the Morsi regime were close allies of Mubarak. The government is facing mounting opposition to its authoritarian behaviour in imposing its rule. It raised taxes on a wide range of consumer goods, including cigarettes, oil, beer, cement and fertiliser. Its attempts to suppress resistance to its policies, led to the deaths of seven protesters and forced it to cancel the tax rises. This triggered the delay in December last year of a \$4.8 billion IMF loan to the government, agreed to a month earlier. The planned tax rises had been seen as vital for the loan to go ahead.

The protests escalated and spread from central Cairo to other big cities, Port Said, Suez and Ismailia. Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in defiance of a curfew, denouncing Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood. The immediate trigger was the sentencing to death of 21 fans of Port Said's football club, Al-Masry for their role in Egypt's worst

ever soccer violence last year. More than 30 people were killed, following protests at the sentence. The head of the army has warned that continuing unrest may soon cause the collapse of the Egyptian state.

The effects of the policies of neoliberalism, accentuated by the impact of the global economic crisis, have produced mass unemployment and impoverishment. The class struggle is unfolding. In September 2011 "a wave of militant strikes by teachers, doctors and workers in public transport, sugar refineries and the postal sector workers signalled a deepening struggle by workers that began to link political and economic questions" (*A Hanieh "The Revolution Continues" – Socialist Resistance, Vol 70*). Teachers on strike for higher wages demanded more investment in schools, while doctors fought for improved health care and better hospitals. The role of the MB in these strikes was to try to call them off. The strikes have continued to grow since the election of Morsi, with the workers attacking him for failing to do anything to improve the conditions under which they live. There is no sign of a let up to the struggle and the streets of Cairo and other big cities continue to be occupied by protesters.

Turning from Egypt to neighbouring Tunisia, which lit the spark for the Arab spring to begin, there is a deepening ferment in the country. The Tunisian people have lost their fear of the dictatorship and have been challenging the government emerging from the October 2011 elections. This government is dominated by the Islamists in the Ennahda party with two secular parties in coalition and has failed to consider the demands of the people, which led to the outbreak of the revolution. Disagreements in the drawing up of a constitution have not been resolved. There has been a reconstitution of the workers and social movement against a neoliberal regime which is backed by the US, the EU and Qatar. While the people have won freedom of speech and restrictions on organisation have been lifted, the government seeks to tighten its grip on the press, the administration of justice and to restrict democratic space. There is increasing unemployment and impoverishment of the people.

In the forefront of growing resistance to the regime is the Popular Front (PF). It is a broad based movement of workers and social movements. The independent trade unions organised in the UGTT, because of their past and present roles in the resistance struggle, occupy a central position in ➡

➡ the PF. The murder of a leader of the PF, Chokri Belaid has sparked a crisis in the country, A general strike was called on the day of his funeral, which was attended by tens of thousands of people. His assassin has not been caught. The opposition say that the Ennadhha is too permissive of the unprovoked violence, which is spreading in the country. Following the murder of Belaid, the prime minister announced his intention to form an interim non-partisan government of technocrats to run the country until elections can be held. What will follow this period of transition is uncertain. There is no sign however of a halt to the Arab spring either here or in Egypt.

* Since this article was written the Morsi-Muslim Brotherhood regime has been deposed by the military following sustained public, mass protests by those who believed that Morsi had betrayed his mandate to restore democracy to Egypt along secular lines. The overthrow of the Morsi regime has been branded by some as a military coup. These same voices were silent when Mubarak was dislodged with the tacit backing of the military. Whatever the case may be these events clearly demonstrate the failure of bourgeois democracy as a solution to the nation's problems. The objective of national unity remains a prerequisite in a struggle for socialist democracy that is the only way forward. ●

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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If you have been interested in any of the articles contained in this newsletter then it should be worthwhile to visit our website at www.apdusa.org.za for the latest postings. While the website is still under construction it already holds an array of archival material that is relevant to the ongoing struggle in South Africa.