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The Interests Of The Workers And Landless Peasants Shall Be Paramount

PROSPECTS AND PROMISES OF THE MOVEMENT FOR SOCIALISM

At its 2013 Special National Congress, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) resolved to establish a Movement for Socialism. Many anti-capitalist activists welcomed this initiative as the dawn of a new political landscape for the radical left; as a major force to overcome the crisis of political leadership that has been stifling the forward march of our struggle for socialism. An initiative that has attracted so much praise on the left should not escape our careful scrutiny to grasp its real significance for the labouring majority. This is the first in a series of articles to assess what this union-initiated political project means for contemporary class struggles. Two of its most prominent meetings over the last two years have revealed a lot about its promises and prospects. Future articles pay closer attention to debates around a political programme unfolding inside the MFS.

The Movement for Socialism (MFS) is a venture of leaders of NUMSA; a venture with the promise of culminating into a revolutionary socialist party under the democratic control of workers. Beyond the stated intentions and militant statements of these union leaders there are many unanswered questions about their political project. To begin with, every class conscious worker must know why the NUMSA leaders have embarked on this workers party project and how it stands to benefit our struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie and its vicious state machine. How far have they gone towards realising their aim and what does it mean for South Africa's socialist movement, characterised by a long and rich history as well as its plural composition?

The MFS has yet to be officially launched and it is unlikely to happen before the 2016 local government elections. Moreover, union leaders at the head of this party building project glibly talk about their socialist aspirations but this is yet to be spelled out in a consistent political programme. These delays have not prevented a wide range of activities from being carried out in its name with the NUMSA Central Committee retaining tight control over all affairs of the MFS. Its chief propaganda tool is a newspaper published in its name. This newspaper simply reproduces commentaries of NUMSA leaders on topical political questions. Thus far it has excluded coverage of analyses or proposals

of MFS political actions and the political significance of these activities for today's struggles.

Two widely publicised meetings had already taken place under its auspices. The first significant meeting assembled representatives of anti-capitalist parties and leftist intellectuals from different corners of the globe on South African soil. Debates at this event concentrated on how to advance the struggle for socialism in the context of 21st century capitalism. Lessons from battles for socialism in the 19th and 20th centuries were not dismissed or ignored but served as a preface to make sense of contemporary anti-capitalist resistance. It formed the backdrop for sharing experiences and learning about the construction of workers parties in different countries at different moments in history.

The history of the Brazilian Workers Party (or PT), sometimes put forward as an organisational model for working people fighting capitalist exploitation and oppression across the third world, became a standout talking point alongside the party formation strategies that emerged from anti-neoliberal revolutions in Bolivia and Venezuela. Zigzags in Europe's anti-austerity resistance, with special emphasis on the progress and reversals in Greece, also riveted the attention of participants in this debate.

Without a doubt this displays a progressive and laudable orientation towards working class internationalism. However, the official statements of the MFS are conspicuous for the silence on any linkage, formally or informally, with existing international socialist formations, such as the Fourth International for instance. For socialist internationalism has never been an academic exercise. It requires the organised unity of working people across the world to defeat capitalism on a ➔

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➔ world scale.

The second major meeting took place towards the end of 2015. NUMSA leaders presented this gathering with an ambitious agenda, which included a discussion about structuring a functional relationship with organisations represented at this meeting and crafting a political programme for the MFS. Attendance was limited to about a dozen socialist formations in South Africa, including political organisations that do not share the ideological past of almost all NUMSA leaders, and a handful of trade unionists at loggerheads with a faction of the COSATU bureaucracy.

The credentials of invited organisations were carefully screened, giving a lot of weight to the size of an organisation in their selection criteria. Reasons for this bias in picking which organisations to include or exclude from exploratory discussions about uniting a pluralist left and paving the way for a broad working class party premised on a programme for socialism deserve clarification. In view of the numerical weakness of the radical anti-capitalist forces today, it cannot serve any

progressive purpose to exclude non-sectarian currents from the MFS primarily because of its small membership.

If the MFS is to become a broad left political party in real life, then NUMSA leaders must resolve tensions around the full participation of other radical left formations in its structures. This gathering evidently made overtures towards this end; it took a tiny step from a secretive and inward-looking operation (which is often confused with a twisted view of 'democratic centralism') towards an open and democratic structure. Representatives from other left groups were allowed to join the 3 MFS task teams responsible for: coordinating public meetings and political education; publications and editorial matters; and drafting the programme based on submissions from participating organisations. Why did the NUMSA leaders take almost 2 years before co-opting individuals from fraternal leftist groups into larger MFS committees? How this arrangement will actually unfold in practice remains to be seen. It is in fact a vital test for any anti-capitalist left regroupment process. ●

COUNCILLORS' SALARIES: A NEW ELECTION BATTLEGROUND

In June 2015 the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) proposed that all ward councillors be paid R1.3 million per annum (R108 333.33 per month). This is in the region of the amount paid to members of parliament whose current salaries are pegged at R 1.03 million per annum (R85 833 per month). The reasoning behind this absurd proposal was that these individuals' work is similar to that of MPs. As has become clear for all to see, latter's job descriptions and performances do not even remotely justify the enormous salaries they get paid. This is indeed where government's cost-cutting measures must start. As part of an exercise in streamlining the municipal demarcation system, the number of municipalities in South Africa is also to be reduced from 278 to 267. Hence the new salary scales after the upcoming municipal elections will reflect the following mindboggling figures: depending on the size of a municipality, full time councillors will earn between R457 210 (R38 100.83 per month) and R832 197 (R69 349.75) annually, before deductions. The amounts for part time councillors will be between R 195 712 (R16 309.33) and R416 098 (R34 674.83). The salary of the state president amounts to a total package of R3.1 million p/a; one he clearly does not deserve. The head of SALGA, Xolile George earns R3.8 million p/a. Premiers' annual net salaries stand at just over R2 million. Those of members of provincial legislatures are R968 000 per annum. Mayors earn R102 500 per month.

Clearly the concept of democracy, of rule by the people, for the people, of the people means absolutely nothing for these political scoundrels. These figures are comparable with the salaries of

big business owners who live off the sweat and labour of the working class and peasantry. Worse still, these leeches defend and justify their greed and money-grabbing and in fact are demanding that they be paid more! The state of many municipalities as reflected in the most recent audit of municipal finances (for 2014 -2015) adds to this glorious political mess. Austerity obviously does not apply to these political vultures.

Statistics South Africa (StatSA) produced the following figures (March 2016) dealing with the average monthly earnings of South Africans in the formal sector of the economy. The amounts range from R17 517 to R210 204 per annum. This translates roughly into a lowly R1 459.75 to R17 517 per month. In addition, the percentage of social grants recipients rose from 12.7% in 2003 to 30.1% in 2015.

These facts raise all manner of questions regarding our public representatives; especially those at local government level. Since the 2006 LGEs, the Operation Khanyisa Movement (OKM) in Gauteng started using a system of recall and sharing of the income of their councillors for the benefit of the communities concerned as well as the councillor. This is a genuine example of how this deeply corrupt system can be exposed and used to claim back financial resources that rightfully belong in the communities concerned. What has however become more common is for political charlatans to use a party political ticket to self-enrichment via local government. They wish to emulate their leaders who have been feathering their nests for years on end. They battle one another in the name of internal party contestation and sectarian rivalry but conveniently ➔

➔ ignore the bigger picture of fighting for a progressive alternative system of governance. All they achieve in the end is to ignore the interests of the communities they should be representing. Some – with or without progressive political programmes – opt to stand as independents who mostly end up protecting their local turf instead of linking up to progressive national electoral initiatives.

Local government representatives must be held to a code of conduct by those in whose name they

occupy office. The present system, beset by careerism, corruption, financial mismanagement and an ever deepening legitimacy crisis is one in which many elected individuals end up representing no-one but themselves. Holding elected representatives to account will mean fighting for and demanding a different system of representation; one based on local assemblies being represented in a national Constituent Assembly tasked with the duty to draw up a new constitution. ●

APDUSA WESTERN CAPE YOUTH DAY PUBLIC MEETING

As part of its annual organisational activities the Western Cape branch of the APDUSA held a public Youth Day meeting on 15 June in Bishop Lavis, Cape Town. A student youth member of the organisation presented a short introduction on the 40th commemoration of the June 16 1976 events and subsequent developments. The introduction highlighted the need to clearly differentiate between ruler and ruled; between oppressor and oppressed; between exploiter and exploited. It reminded the audience of the level and extent of community deprivation, especially youth delinquency manifesting itself in drug abuse and gangsterism. The 2015 university student revolt and the accompanying #FeesMustFall campaign was cited as an important landmark in recent youth struggles. The introduction was preceded by a short video highlighting personal accounts of activists involved in the struggles of students and workers during the 1970s. The video – and subsequent discussion - encapsulated experiences of participants stating in clear terms that the education struggles in South Africa for a unified, progressive education system, is on-going.

The meeting's collective inputs revealed, restated and emphasised a number of stark social and political realities facing the youth today. These inputs also pointed the political way forward. The youth are being bombarded with the notion that “the struggle is over”; that they need an economic recovery for their situation to improve; that they must engage in self-help, entrepreneurial activity to lift them out of poverty; that vandalism parading as political radicalism is a constructive way of advancing the struggle for full economic and

political liberation; that individual self – effort will solve a societal problem involving millions, as well as solve the problems of the individual. In all, that there is no need for collective, progressive youth political activism. Youth are told that solutions to their problems reside elsewhere – not with themselves engaging with , and resolving issues in their own interests.

In this context we must remind ourselves that the 1976 youth opposed a political system, raising educational as well as political demands aimed at liberating South African society. Their efforts must therefore be appreciated, applauded and carried forth. By the same token, the political ideology of Black Consciousness must be critically interrogated. Today, official Youth Day activities focus on entertainment, not education. Through these and other measures, the youth is deliberately cut off from its own history. Present youth must therefore uncover and act on all the progressive historical gains made by their political forebears. A starting point, as raised in discussion, is to view the struggles of 1976 as a continuation of and a precursor to historically significant events such as the 1973 workers' strikes and the formation of FOSATU in 1979.

In counter posing the reactionary ideas and main neo-liberal political formations of today - from ANC to DA and EFF - the meeting at various points came up with contributions that focussed on youth actively seeking answers in the wealth of literature on the liberation struggle in South Africa. Attendees were invited to join the organisation and participate in its various activities. ●

THE MYTH OF THE FREEDOM CHARTER

It is apparently difficult to dispel the myth that the ANC's Freedom Charter has been what it purports to say – a Charter for Freedom. Many, on the left, right and centre, subscribe to the view that the ANC faithfully led the liberation struggle in South Africa and things only started to go wrong after the first, glorious era when it ruled under the baton of an heroic Nelson Mandela and his comrades who had sacrificed so much in its cause.

The record should be set straight as we have endeavoured to do in all our pronouncements. The

failures of the ANC are rooted in its perception of the goals of our national struggle. And so it came up with its Freedom Charter which is an ignominiously flawed document. In the first place it presented a set of promises to the oppressed population – “ There shall be, There shall be”, over and over again, as if the leadership of the ANC could guarantee the realisation of these promises. They were effectively telling the oppressed population to “just follow us and there shall be a glorious freedom rendered to all of you”. No leadership can ever make any such ➔

➡ guarantee or promise. It is bound to fail, even as the glorious, flowery and objectively deceitful promises of its latest National Development Plan are bound to fail. A determined and objective leadership rather calls upon the population to accept and adopt a set of programmatic DEMANDS as their OWN which THEY will strive and struggle for. In the final analysis, their success or failure in their endeavours depends on themselves and not simply the political leadership.

Secondly, at the outset, the Freedom Charter set a limit on the goals of the democratic revolution which has resulted in the never-ending target for the completion of its so-called National Democratic Revolution. These limits are completely expressed, firstly in the second point of the Freedom Charter:

“ALL NATIONAL GROUPS SHALL HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races. All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride”.

Here the ANC has accepted the existence of separate racial groups and nationalities as a permanent foundation of South African society. This has resulted in its acceptance and endorsement of a House of Traditional Leaders and outmoded tribal chieftainship and kingship which keeps the rural population in a system of undemocratic rightlessness. The tribal chiefs and kings and their ilk are in the meantime rewarded with rich pickings from the bourgeois system of tax collection. More seriously, in the execution of the ANC's program of Land Reform, they have been awarded tenure and control of vast tracts of land instead of these being given directly to the landless peasantry who are therefore compelled to exist under outmoded tribal strictures.

The ANC, through its Freedom Charter, has effectively denied the need for a single South African nationality, irrespective of race colour or creed. Indeed, the ANC denied the existence of a single human race, officially right up to its Kabwe conference in 1985, when it reluctantly conceded to dissolving the fraud of separate organisations for Black Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites. Today, we have a country bound to African Nationalism with its absurd, implied objectives of Africanities instead of Universities, as if we are apart and separate from the human race with all its historical achievements. Instead, we must look to a so-called African knowledge system instead of a universal knowledge system.

The Freedom Charter is supposedly, a “magnificent” document, coming a full twelve years after the radical 10 Point Programme of the Unity Movement – a set of DEMANDS and not promises, coupled with the policy of Non-collaboration with the oppressor and its institutions. This the ANC opportunistically avoided, participating in the fraudulent Native Representation Council and calling on people to vote for three White members of parliament to “represent” the African population. In

the end, the ANC conducted an “anti-apartheid struggle” as if our struggle was against the Afrikaner Nationalist version of oppression only and not against the complete system of racial segregation and class exploitation that existed long before the Afrikaner Nationalists came into power. The ANC relied on its opportunism of promises to the masses which was amply backed by the bourgeois press and media.

One can go on but it is not necessary to debunk the falsified goals of nationalisation of the mines as if nationalisation of any means of production or service is progressive and anti-bourgeois. Historically, we have seen bourgeois governments taking charge of vital industries such as the railways, electricity and water supplies, etc, all to make it simpler for their clients to prosecute their goals of naked profit. Simply to say that today, we are confronted with the Zuma regime and the perceived corruption that is contained within it. May it be observed that this was not by far, where this tendency stems from. When Nelson Mandela was released from prison he was a multi-millionaire. Nobody asked where the money came from, who gave it to him and what did they expect in return. While Mandela gave generously to charity and probably the ANC, that did not preclude him from buying a luxury home in Houghton after his home in Soweto was turned into a grand mansion on the pretext that he would have to host foreign dignitaries in a manner that was befitting. It was never used for that purpose. He also acquired a luxury home in Cape Town and finally died with an estate estimated to be about R42 million in worth. OR Tambo also acquired great personal wealth in exile and all his offspring are extremely well off.

Now along comes our latter day ANC leaders many of whom also want a share of the spoils. They adopt more blatant measures to achieve this end. They have simply followed that ANC luminary, Smuts Ngonyama, who stated in 2004: “I did not join the struggle to be poor”. Today, the lower echelons are shooting and killing one another in order to get onto the party electoral lists for the sake of the money they can potentially earn. Serving their constituencies is an exceedingly minor consideration.

While the ANC has consistently denied and continues to deny the existence of a scientifically established, single human race and persists in its recognition of a so-called Zulu kingdom, a Xhosa Kingdom (with sub-divisions) and all manner of heavily subsidised tribal kingdoms, for so long will South Africa wallow in the realms of historical backwardness and the maintenance of the old system of migratory labour and the serfdom of the rural, landless peasantry.

Today, the leadership of the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA), in its revolt against the slavish toadyism of the leadership of COSATU, still asks us to hold faith and belief in the Freedom Charter, a charter for tribalism and not in the least a charter for worker liberation. Where do we go from here? We do not now put forward the 10 Point Programme of the Unity Movement as an ➡

➔ alternative to the present day promotion of the Freedom Charter, while historically, it has every right to be so regarded. We recognise that with the fall of the rule of Afrikaner Nationalism, circumstances have changed. But the bourgeois revolution has still to be completed and a struggle beyond still remains.

In accordance with the logic of the 10 Point Programme and the policy of Non-Collaboration, we call for a new Constituent Assembly that is bound to

represent the interests of the working class and the landless peasantry as key to its intrinsic convention. It is a transitional demand, without which there can be no progress in the ongoing South African Liberatory struggle. If, in the present, there is any voice which can present a more progressive demand, then we will be in the forefront of efforts to promote it with all necessary vigour. ●

A NEW TRADE UNION FEDERATION

Some years ago it was a common idea amongst voices on the left that a progressive working class movement could only be realised once the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) broke free from the tripartite alliance with the ANC and the South African Communist Party. Therefore, some said that there should be active work in COSATU trade unions to educate workers as to this necessity. Others felt that a more fruitful route could be followed by meeting and working with workers, employed and unemployed, via civic and community based organisations. In the event, those who sought to propagate left wing politics in COSATU aligned unions eventually found themselves hounded out by the all pervading bureaucracy who branded them as ultra-leftists. The attempt to meet the working class via community based organisations also failed because of the inability to present the populace with a concrete, all-embracing political programme that could unite the multitude of issue-based protests.

We are now back to square one with renewed optimism that a working class break with the ANC is coming into being. Firstly, we had the circumstances surrounding the Marikana massacre in which a new union, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) achieved prominence, outstripping the COSATU aligned National Union of Mineworkers in militancy and quickly rivalling it in its membership. This was followed by the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) refusing to lend its financial and electoral support to the ANC under prevailing conditions, which led to the expulsion of NUMSA from COSATU. Similarly, the outspoken and militant sounding Zwelinzima Vavi, Secretary of COSATU, found himself summarily kicked out.

NUMSA announced that a new trade union federation was to be established in May this year. It is said that the federation would initially consist of nine unions, all disaffected with COSATU and the tripartite alliance. While NUMSA still claims allegiance to the Freedom Charter, it was not certain

whether unions such as AMCU (affiliated to the National Council of Trade Unions) and other independent unions such as the Commercial, Stevedoring and Agricultural Workers Union (CSAAWU) and the General Industries Workers Union of South Africa (GIWUSA) would be invited or welcomed.

Other questions remain to be answered. There are already four trade union federations in South Africa. Besides COSATU and NACTU (already mentioned) there is the Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA) and the Confederation of South African Worker's Unions (CONSAWU). Many will argue that the formation of another federation is not a healthy sign. Indeed, COSATU itself has claimed that it aims for "One Country, One Federation, One Industry, One Union". It is perhaps too early for this question to be answered clearly. On the other hand about 14 months ago NUMSA called for the establishment of a united front of unions and community based organisations. A number of organisations, of different shades across the country have rallied behind this call. There is as yet no formal structure and no well defined common goal. NUMSA has declared that political groupings are not welcome in this front. It now states the United Front will be formally established early this year. NUMSA has further argued for a Workers Party, no doubt aligned to the Freedom Charter with little or no room for other left-wing political forces.

While these new developments on the trade union front are indeed heartening it nevertheless means that the political left should be careful of tailing NUMSA. Up to now the Democratic Left Front has mainly been built around giving support to issue based struggles which has yielded limited success in strengthening its efforts. It becomes urgent that it develop a well defined structure with a clear political voice. A concrete political programme is the only basis on which it can campaign to forge the unity of the labouring masses in a common struggle. ●

ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS IN PERSPECTIVE

Julius Malema recently led a delegation of his Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) on a speaking tour of London. The hosts of the EFF in London

were research institutes and bourgeois think tanks. But they also probably had meetings with UK-based investors who have economic interests in South ➔

➡ Africa. A meeting with the British capitalists would not be out of the ordinary in light of Malema's engagements with the American Chamber of Business and the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry before the London trip. Yet the EFF has gained popularity as a political party which frequently speaks out against neoliberalism and worker exploitation.

A cursory reading of documents available from the EFF website and the fiery anti-capitalist speeches of its leaders reinforce this popular perception. But the contradictions in the politics and practices of the EFF run deep. Even though it upholds the Freedom Charter, it characterises itself as a party to the left of the ANC. (The ANC, in turn, claims that it is championing the implementation of the Freedom Charter inside parliament). The EFF rhetoric about advancing a radical interpretation of the Freedom Charter is flawed and hollow. What is the objective effect on our struggle when two separate parties with divergent strategies and tactics subscribe to the same political programme? To deceive and mislead the working class and its ally, the landless peasantry!

The lavish lifestyles of EFF leaders and unknown sources that finance the extravagant election campaigns of the party also contradict the socialist image it wishes to portray. More importantly, why would a party that claims to stand for the overthrow of capitalism care about clarifying its politics to bourgeois think tanks and overseas

capitalists?

In London, Malema rehashed the EFF call on capitalists to "invest in worker empowerment" and outlined how corporations can do so. Corporations must empower workers, according to the fist-pumping Commander-in-Chief, by offering workers a share in the companies employing them and implementing minimum wage schemes. Malema wagged his finger at companies failing to empower their workers, warning them that EFF will mobilize its forces to occupy their offices and workplaces.

Malema's main messages to his London audiences, particularly its demand for co-ownership between workers and capitalists, reveal what the EFF really stands for. This demand spreads the fallacious nonsense such as workers sharing in their own exploitation and forms of humane or welfare capitalism that run counter to the economic laws governing the system. Trade union bureaucrats, petit bourgeois opportunists, liberals and NGOs happily propagate these economic myths. Like them, the EFF exposes its failure to formulate anti-capitalist demands for advancing our fight for democratic eco-socialism.

Workers must seize control and exercise power over industries and place these under their democratic self-management. As a step towards this goal, a democratically elected Constituent Assembly is urgently needed to unite the struggles for political power of all sections of exploited and oppressed. ●

APDUSA POLITICAL SCHOOL 2016

APDUSA held its third biennial political school in East London, over the weekend of 26-28 March this year. About thirty participants attended, most of whom were young members from various parts of the country.

Our first political school, held in 2012, examined the contributions of the Unity Movement to the protracted struggles in South Africa. It is a struggle that continues despite the celebrations of freedom in 1992. In the next political school attention was given to the strengths and limitations of trade unions in the struggle for socialism. It was therefore fitting that the theme of this year's school was "Constructing Workers Parties to Seize and Hold Political Power."

It is a popular misconception amongst those on the left in South Africa that the road to socialism will proceed via working directly for the construction of a revolutionary workers' party. This is not the view elaborated at the APDUSA political school. It was shown that while the Unity Movement was influenced deeply by the compact "Worker's Party of South Africa", the path selected under the same influence was the prerequisite of building a unified nation as a necessary precursor for the construction of a socialist state. All involved in the liberatory struggle in South Africa were confronted with the necessary acceptance of the fact that what the

oppressed and exploited populace was facing was in the first place, a national struggle for national unity and an end to the enforced racial, ethnic or religious divisions in society.

The Unity Movement was the only organisation which actively propagated the view that as a priority, it was necessary to **build a nation**, while the African National Congress campaigned on the basis of opposite and contradictory lines as expressed in its Freedom Charter: that all "national groups" shall have equal rights, and that there shall be equal status for all national groups and races. Most tellingly it posited that all "national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride". Right up to the mid-eighties, the Congress Movement steadfastly maintained separate organisations for the perceived separate racial groups in the country, with precedence given to the authority of black Africans.

The school proceeded to elucidate attempts to construct revolutionary socialist movements and in particular, the latest thrust by NUMSA to construct a socialist orientated united front and also a proposed workers' party. The dangers and flaws of a trade union leading a political struggle was given due attention. There was a focus on the understanding of the meaning of political non-collaboration and economic collaboration. While a trade union, by ➡

➔ its nature, was bound to follow a process of collective bargaining, which in its essence is economic collaboration, it could not willy-nilly adopt the role of political leadership which would involve organisations beyond the trade union movement. Here there was a clear need for a clear-cut, unifying political programme which, by the same token, implied political non-collaboration with the oppressor. Those who blandly supported NUMSA's proposals were shown to be following an anarcho-syndicalist approach to struggle which is bound to fail.

Similar to the approach followed at our 2014 political school, our analysis of how to construct workers parties placed the South African experiences in an international historical perspective. Indeed, the fight for socialism necessitates that working people defeat capitalism and imperialism on a world scale. Uniting workers parties in different countries through an international party has thus always ranked high on the agendas of scientific socialists, from Marx and Engels, to Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky. The discussions uncovered how the tumultuous class wars internationally, marked by unanticipated turning points, shaped the rise and decline of the First, Second and Third Internationals.

Attention was given to not only consider the

SONA HERALDS MORE AUSTERITY MEASURES

The State of the Nation Address by Jacob Zuma, at the behest of the ANC collective, ushered a new wave of austerity measures that does not augur well for the working class in this epoch of neo-liberalism. Those that are lucky to have formal work will see the erosion of their income and the ±34% unemployed will suffer further intrusions on their basic human rights due to the cuts in social expenditure by the ruling party.

We all know that the capitalists will praise the "bold leadership" of the government, while the poor people will feel the bite of the further failure of the promise of "a good life for all". The rallying call of the president that all tiers of government must follow this direction will ensure that the little service delivery that the nation has received will be further reduced.

When the president alluded to the idea that public enterprises which are not performing, will be rationalised or phased out, we can be sure that the parastatals which are badly managed through cadre and crony deployment, will be privatised. This will be at a huge cost to the cash-strapped workers and their dependents. The president also mentioned that we need stable labour relations. We can be sure that

turbulent path of the Fourth International, but also the political practices and organisational tactics of the Bolshevik Party in the Russian revolutions. Coming to grips with contemporary attempts at constructing anti-capitalist parties in Latin America and Europe proved to be far more daunting but worthy of deeper on-going study as these also hold major lessons for the socialist movement in our country.

In conclusion, examining the essence of what was entailed in the building of a revolutionary workers party has direct relevance for our current political activities. In the present epoch this demands the necessity of building broad based anti-capitalist movements as a transitional goal.

The discussion was intense, with keen interest displayed by all participants. Many of the politically younger members voiced the view that the level of political education being covered was of a much higher standard than they had previously encountered anywhere. All agreed that the struggle depended as much on a clarity of ideas as on organisational, numerical strength.

In a subsequent review of the political school it was concluded that the organisation will definitely proceed with the programme as it is proving to be one of the most effective means of educating our youth as is needed most crucially at this time. ●

what this means is that they expect of COSATU, their alliance partner, to ensure that they deliver a docile workforce that must accept the onslaught of the bosses. The workers' hard-won concessions from these bosses will now be under attack.

We are being asked to be patriotic and supportive of a leadership which has mismanaged the country by slavishly following the ill-advised, neo-liberal policies of the bourgeois class. If not, we are accused of being counter-revolutionaries, opposing the so-called National Democratic Revolution. We are witnessing that the petit-bourgeois leadership of the Tripartite alliance will more and more be using the "scourge of racism" as the "new" struggle and to blame a minority for all the ills of bad governance. We are already witnessing the rise of national and tribal chauvinism to address many political and economic issues, all in the attempt to blind the labouring classes to the understanding that our struggle is a class struggle.

Comrades, the enemy of the workers and peasants is the capitalist class from whose rule we must free ourselves. ●

CAPITALISM REARS ITS UGLY HEAD ONCE AGAIN

De Beers Consolidated Mines has sold its remaining mines to Petra Diamonds and Ekapa, without consulting with workers and the National Union of Mine Workers. About 600 workers are

now facing a bleak future as a result of possible retrenchment. The reason advanced by DBCM is that it is not profitable for them to continue mining in the area and instead of closing the mine, they ➔

➡ have decided to sell it to smaller mining companies who have low cost operations. On the other hand NUM is crying foul and intends to challenge this deal which was concluded in 2015. It is really surprising that NUM was not aware of this process, taking into consideration the number of years that they have been involved in the mining sector. One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that they were party to it, but were instructed by the big capitalist bosses to keep quiet.

The march to De Beers headquarters in Kimberley was just another one of those futile exercises that the workers had to go through. What is the point of protesting a deal that is signed and sealed? In addition, this might be another way of directing the anger of the workers in the wrong direction, away from the real culprits and beneficiaries of the deal.

Petra Diamonds is no better than De Beers. They are also in the business to make super profits. Therefore they can only provide a bare minimum of a required number of vacancies. Other workers are the unfortunate casualties of the way of the mine owners maximise their profits.

The community of Greenpoint, which is very close to the Petra operations, belong to one of the oldest townships of Kimberley and it is facing a number of problems, including a high

unemployment rate, lack of development, bad infrastructure, substance abuse, teenage pregnancies; an endless list. The Corporate Social Investment strategy of Petra Diamonds seems to be non-existent and the community is accusing the company of hiring people from outside the Northern Cape Province. The protest march was led by the Frances Baard Business Forum, which claims that Petra Diamonds is not giving them opportunities and also not reinvesting any value into the community. They are demanding that the company give recognition to the Greenpoint Community Forum as the authentic representative of the people. Their demand includes other issues such as infrastructure improvements, youth development programmes, hiring of local people, community shareholding and to assist in social cohesion. At the centre of the dispute is the issue of the transformation of the procurement process.

These demands are in line with the reviewed mining charter, which set clear targets on categories such as capital goods, services and consumables. A spokesman for Petra Diamonds indicated that they have mechanisms in place to deal with community needs but these were not being implemented. The community has given the company seven days to respond to their demands. ●

THE IMPACT OF DROUGHT IN THE NORTHERN CAPE

The Northern Cape Province is the largest of all the nine Provinces of South Africa in terms of land mass, but has the smallest population. Its average rainfall is lower than that of all the other provinces. There has been no rainfall as was expected in the months of September to December. The Province was declared a drought disaster area in 2015, but to date the declaration has not yet been gazetted. The areas affected are Sutherland, in the Namakwa District, the entire Frances Baard District, Tsantsabane and Kgatelopele in Z. F. Mgcau District, Gamagara in John Taolo Gaitsewe District and Douglas and Campbell i Pixley Ka Seme District.

The impact of the drought was felt mostly by the emerging farmers who could not stock up on supplies as a result of not having the resources, thus being forced to sell their cattle to make ends meet and to alleviate the suffering of the animals. On the one hand farmers focussing on crop production could not prepare the land for planting, could not plant and therefore could not supply the supermarkets and this meant financial losses, while on the other hand, those focussing on cattle, sheep and goats struggled immensely with grazing land as well as water, resulting in animal deaths. This amounted to huge losses for farmers. The total number of livestock affected by the drought is estimated at more than 11000. At least 32 livestock losses were reported during this difficult period.

The drought has drastically hampered the

planting process of summer crops. Widespread rain is urgently needed for the crops that were planted as their yield potential will continue to deteriorate as the drought persists. Some farmers even went to the extent of saying South Africa is in a disaster in the maize belt. The farmers are not the only ones who are adversely affected by the drought. Consumers are hardest hit by the rising food prices. For instance, maize prices are 120% higher than a year ago, maize-meal prices are between 17% and 0% higher, yellow maize prices are up by 65%, eggs have gone up by 8%, chicken prices are up by 4%, beef is up by 5%, while dairy products are up by 2%. The fact that the province and the country is not producing enough to feed the population, means that we will soon be living more and more on imported goods, resulting in even much higher prices.

Farmers have been calling on the Department of Agriculture to step in and provide assistance in order to cushion their difficulties, but as usual, they took their own time. The assistance they brought to the farmers was too little and too late. That is, the situation could not be improved by their intervention, although it is reported that the contribution amounted to R23 million. The farmers do appreciate the assistance but expect more money to be channelled especially in the areas that are hardest hit by the drought.

Recent rainfall has done little to pull the Northern Cape Province out of the drought ➡

➡ danger zone. The drought status quo has not changed. To make matters worse the province has been experiencing a heat wave, which puts enormous pressure on the population to use more water for drinking and household use, including

gardens. The use of air conditioners and fans have also impacted on the amount of electricity being consumed by various communities and we know there is a shortage in power supply, hence the investigation into renewable energy sources. ●



From Around the World

THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN EUROPE

Refugees and migrants are crossing into Europe in numbers not seen since after World War Two. They are flowing in from countries in Western & South East Asia and Africa where there are armed conflicts, harsh living conditions and unemployment is rife. Unable to deal with the causes of the crisis, the authorities in Europe resort to expelling refugees, tightening border controls or closing borders.

The crisis began in 2015, with EU member states receiving over 1.2 million first time asylum applications that year. This was more than double the number received the previous year. The total number of forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2014 was almost 60 million, the highest level since World War Two. Two of the most traversed refugee and migrant routes to Europe are from Libya across the Mediterranean to Italy and from Turkey across the Aegean to Greece and South East Europe. Four countries, Germany, Hungary, Sweden and Austria received two thirds of the applications. More than half the asylum applicants came from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. These countries were either devastated by imperialist invasions in the first decade of this century or in the case of Syria, an ongoing civil war, where the population rose up in 2011 as part of the Arab Spring against the tyrannical dictatorship of Assad. Those refugees and migrants coming from African countries, mainly Eritrea, Somalia, Nigeria and South Sudan, were escaping from civil wars, conflicts with terrorists groups like Isis and from repression, poverty and the effects of climate change.

The conditions in the countries from where the migrants are being driven make the distinction between refugee and economic migrant look like an academic exercise. The majority of refugees in the world are hosted by peripheral countries. Most of the Syrian refugees (more than 4.5 million) are hosted by 5 countries, namely Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Apart from a tiny minority, most are barred from working in their host countries. Educational facilities for their children are poor and the majority live below the poverty line. These conditions drive refugees to seek asylum in other countries. Those attempting to travel to the EU

encounter the problem of not being able to secure air passage without visas, required in terms of the articles of the EU Schengen Convention. They have to resort to people traffickers. These traffickers, motivated by acquiring large profits, grossly overload ill-equipped and virtually unseaworthy ships with human cargo. The predictable consequences are the record number of deaths of refugees at sea. In April 2015 five boats carrying 2000 migrants to Europe sank in the Mediterranean with the death toll estimated at more than 1,200 people. These deaths occurred at a time when the Italian navy had to drastically cut down its sea rescue operations, because other EU countries had refused an appeal for more funds. The carnage continues at sea with up to 500 hundred refugees, mainly from Africa drowning in the Mediterranean this April.

The EU has again come under attack for scaling down rescue operations. The EU's attempt to negotiate sharing of refugees within the EU, has even by its own standards failed miserably. In September 2015 it was agreed that the EU share 120,000 refugees over a two year period with four countries, namely The Czech Republic, Romania, Croatia and Slovakia voting against the proposal. Four months after the agreement only 660 refugees have been resettled in the EU. Since January last year, 1.2 million refugees and migrants have landed on the southern shores of Europe.

Having failed to stem the tide of refugees, the EU has turned to Turkey, signing a new agreement with that country in March this year. The plan is to send all asylum seekers in Europe back to Turkey. In exchange, the EU has agreed for each refugee sent back, to accept a refugee from Turkey who has not tried to enter Europe illegally. The UN brands this agreement as illegal, because the asylum applications of refugees have not first been considered in Europe. Secondly, because collective deportations are taking place without regard for the individual rights of refugees. Turkey, even before the agreement, violated international law by deporting Syrian refugees back to Syria. There are also a number of reports of Turkey shooting refugees at the border. In Greece, the situation is dire in the detention centres the bankrupt government ➡

➡ has been forced to open by the EU. Babies in these centres have been deprived of adequate amounts of formula milk. Emboldened by the agreement reached with Turkey, EU leaders are now calling for refugees to be sent back to Libya, a country where there is no government in place and armed militias are attacking one another. Some of these same EU leaders are contemplating EU intervention in the country!

The stream of refugees escaping the bombing of civilian targets in Syria and the military conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, cannot be stopped by the EU and Turkey's refugee policies. The refugees continue to defy the EU's closed border policy, making the crossings to Greece and Italy. In spite of

the xenophobia whipped up by the EU governments and the far right against refugees, there have been many rallies in EU states against the policies of the EU governments. The demands made at these rallies are for safe passage of refugees from Southern Europe and their relocation to the rest of the EU. Convoys of aid are being sent to the refugee camps in Europe, where the living conditions are often abysmal. It is this solidarity that needs to be strengthened, to build the unity of the people of Europe, Asia and Africa fighting against the common enemy, global capitalism, which engages in imperialist wars and is responsible for the refugee crisis. ●

WAR ON CLIMATE INTENSIFIES

At the conclusion of the COP21 meeting in Paris in December last year, 195 countries signed an inadequate and non-binding climate change agreement. Grossly vague and misleading language accompanied the agreement in that it purports to provide a "framework for the avoidance of catastrophic climate change" and other similar deceptive phrases. In the lead-up to the conference many well supported anti-climate change protests took place all over the world and to a lesser extent in South Africa. In response to the lack of action taken by governments which are largely acting on behalf of Trans National Corporations and banks, these protests raised demands that are crucial in the struggle to address climate change. The labouring majority in South Africa have had their fair share of escalating food prices and water stressed situations, coming on top of energy shortages not so long ago.,

After the earth summit of 1992, held close to a ¼ of a century ago, main polluters such as Japan, China, the USA, Canada etc., are continuing to launch assaults on the world's population by exacerbating climate change. The recent signing of the Trans Pacific Pact (TPP) and the secrecy surrounding it, blatantly reveals the intentions of the international capitalist class regarding the continued rape, pillaging and destruction of ecosystems and the earth's biosphere. As for the climate negotiations since the Durban COP17 gathering, what is presented as progress is nothing but cheap diplomacy aimed at perpetuating and prolonging the outmoded system of capitalism. Ensuring profits is the main aim, with little concern for ecosystems and the welfare of billions of people whose lives depend on it.

It has been a tendency on the part of NGO and Trade Union leaders to become slaves to short term, immediate politics. The climate crisis, as one which is all-encompassing, compels us to incorporate it into our mainstream political operations and demands and to view the environmental crisis as one manifestation of the capitalist crisis engulfing the globe. Anything less than this will be no different to the ruling elite narrative of finding ad hoc, market based solutions. Many words have been spoken and

written about the "solutions" that "the market" can offer: mitigation through carbon credits trading, carbon sequestration and the like. More elaborate capitalist "solutions" will no doubt be forthcoming in the coming years. At the WEF, recently held in Davos, elaborate discussions were held on "Climate Business".

The acceptance of the idea of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) at the Paris conference, was aimed at arriving at and sealing an international agreement. However, after basic calculations were done, it was discovered that the aggregate "contributions" of all countries concerned would still result in a temperature rise of 2.7 degrees Celsius and not the "below 1.5 degrees or 2 degrees" that they supposedly aimed for.

Deciding on necessary regional targets instead of pretending that 195 governments will abide by their own targets would have been far more feasible. There are after all numerous economic blocs in the world consisting of countries with more or less similar levels of economic development. To make matters worse, many countries did not even submit any "intended nationally determined contributions" before the Paris meeting. Opting for "national" targets will essentially depend on the good intentions and ambitions of individual governments. Besides belonging to economic blocs, many countries are tied into multilateral agreements across a broad spectrum. Collaboration at this level would also be more practical than expecting capitalist governments to police themselves. This scheme, like many before has all the signs of a cop-out; a formula for inaction while putting up a grand display of intended actions.

South Africa

The SA government has been a very active participant in this web of deceit and lies perpetrated on the South African and the world's population at large. The inherent contradictions in the way climate change is tackled through the UN system is illustrated by the South African government's actions in this regard. It claims that since SA is a developing country, it should be permitted to pollute on an ➡

►ever increasing scale according to a specified timescale. As the 11th highest emitter of carbon per person in the world the agreement allows it to continue these destructive practices. It claims that the country's economic development is geared towards the "alleviation and eradication of poverty". In this regard it holds up the original New Growth Path of 2010 which morphed into the elaborate, unworkable National Development Plan (NDP) as the framework within which to achieve this. Its acceptance of the Paris Agreement's PPD (Peak, Plateau and Decline) trajectory regarding GHG emission levels, implies its supposed commitment to address climate change. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The government's continued, slavish adherence



Letters

REIGN OF TERROR STALKS TOWNSHIPS

For years now, a simmering war has been waging in our townships. Gang violence has been responsible for the killing and wounding of children and youth throughout. A comrade recently remarked that this violence serves as a tool of intimidation. It stops such communities from living their lives. These townships are plagued by so many ills: unemployment, poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, etc., etc. Drug addicts, to get their next fix, prey on family and friends. Gangs fight over turf and territory. Predators!!! Just drive through any town or township in SA – you'll see forts surrounded by metal fences and gates. These are all attempts to keep the predators at bay. The forts, however, are prisons. Sometimes, the predators live within these forts. One can only speculate that the gangs, in their fight for territory, use crude methods to create market share. After all, these are businesses – the Godfather syndrome!

Recently, in the run-up to the local government elections, similar scenes have been witnessed across the country, most notably, in ANC ranks. Allegedly, ten people standing for election or re-election as ward-councillors have been assassinated! Thuggery! Why would people that claim they would serve their respective communities be killed? This has happened, largely in KwaZulu-Natal. But there have been such attempts elsewhere in the country as well. In the vernacular languages – there is the impression that: "It is my turn to eat now." The Americans, the country – not the gang – have an apt phrase for this. Pork-belly politics. Some here in SA, have likened it to hogs having their turn at the trough.

Gangsterism, like warlordism, is comprehensible – yet clearly not acceptable in any society that regards itself as civilised. Gangsters are opportunists – there is no responsibility to the milieu in which they survive, unless it is to themselves. They pander and prey on the weak and destitute.

Below is an extract from an APDUSAN pamphlet:

Democracy: True Or False?

"Since 1990 the word democracy has been repeatedly and endlessly drummed into our minds

to carbon based energy sources (mostly coal) as well as propagating the nuclear option makes a mockery of moving to a "low carbon economy". Both at the level of government as well as organisations fighting this particular issue, the situation calls out for independent efforts to decisively move the struggle away from the imperialist, corporatist narrative. The gravity of the situation demands from the international organised working class and its allies to raise the climate question as a mainstream political question; one which affects them both directly and indirectly.

System Change, Not Climate Change

and consciousness, by the ruling capitalist class. They have used their exclusive control of the mass media with telling effect, to impress us with the virtues of democracy.

After decades of total exclusion from the decision-making institutions of Apartheid, that word was enough to set us dancing in the streets without stopping to ask them the true meaning of democracy. For their part they had no intention of letting the cat out of the bag. We failed to see that their interpretation of democracy limited itself to making a cross on a piece of paper once every five years.

They must have laughed themselves sick when on the 27th April 1994 they let us loose on the ballot boxes to herald the arrival of democracy. We did not even realise that we were not allowed to nominate the candidates for whom we were supposed to vote. Instead we were supposed to vote blindly for political parties which were at liberty to appoint ministers at their own discretion. We had no say in their appointment. So for us it was just a question of "like it or lump it". That in itself is contrary to the meaning of democracy. Truly, this is a case of "out of the frying pan into the fire". The only difference is that now we are at liberty to choose our oppressors."

What Is The Meaning Of The Word Democracy?

The dictionary defines democracy as a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people collectively – especially the common people. In short, a government of the people, by the people, for the people. Who constitutes the common people? It is the majority of society: the workers and peasants, who through their labour power create the wealth and necessities of life. When we therefore speak of a "government of the people" it means that that this majority must constitute the majority in government. "By the people" is a clear statement that the masses have the inalienable right to nominate and elect their own representatives from their own ranks to government. "For the people" is an unambiguous declaration that such a government must give priority to the interests and aspirations of the common people: the masses ►

➔ constituted by the workers and peasants.

Today, under what has been hailed as a new democratic South Africa, we realise that instead of improving, our abject material conditions are in fact rapidly deteriorating. How is this then possible under this new democracy? The answer to this is that there are two applications of democracy. One is a cleverly disguised distortion of democracy, called bourgeois democracy or capitalist ruling class democracy. The other is the genuine application of democracy: socialist democracy.

What we in SA have been fooled into accepting is bourgeois democracy. This brings us in line with the USA, Britain, Germany, France, Japan: all those nations commonly referred to as the “free market alliance”. The freedom which they are so ecstatic about is nothing more than a licence for the capitalist minority of the so-called ‘free world’ to oppress and exploit three-quarters of the

worlds’ population.”

The next– Local Government Elections are shortly due on 3 August 2016. Political parties are campaigning as if this is a national election. Representatives who are eventually elected at municipal level must ensure that their respective communities will enjoy municipal services. Why then the killings? Are some of them hoping to influence the awarding of tenders which would benefit them personally? Service and responsibility to communities should be the watchword. It also raises other questions. Unemployment stands at 26% of the economically active population by the limited standard of those seeking work. . Once, I, as an unemployed person vote – will my needs be seen to until I can get a job?

Concerned Voter

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.