



THE

APDUSAN

Vol. 17 No 1
April 2011

AFRICAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC UNION
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Interests Of The Workers And Landless Peasants Shall Be Paramount

A VOTE FOR PROGRESS?

APDUSA calls on voters to vote for progress in the forthcoming local government elections. This will mean voting for genuine progressive demands coming from communities, aimed at taking the struggle for socialist democracy forward. It also means voting for candidates who, if they get elected can articulate and fight for these demands in the structures of government. Failing this, any voter can state his or her demands on the ballot paper. Calling for people not to vote effectively means abdicating the power of one's vote to the ruling elite. It amounts to withdrawal from political engagement with the working class and its allies. The ruling class is being given free reign. It calls on voters to become passive onlookers while their dignity and right to a decent life get grounded into the dust on a daily basis. It allows political space for all sorts of political creatures, tribalists, opportunists, charlatans and rightwing elements to spread their political poison throughout the land.

The dire unemployment situation, unhappiness with candidates and other reasons do not change the fact that communities can build their own organised power on the basis of their own, independent political demands. These demands cannot be those that the DA, the ANC and other bourgeois parties' leadership propagate. Their demands are always premised on a string of promises that are soon pushed to the side. The demands of the poor majority cannot be reconciled with their demands.

Wasting one's vote in this election will mean giving a blank cheque to the ruling elite to continue with their system of privilege and domination. A vote for progress means identifying these parties and their political programmes as being opposed to that of the working class majority. APDUSA believes that there is a growing need for the independent political demands of the workers and landless peasants to be raised ever higher. We say that these, as set out in the set of transitional demands, must be the basis for organisation and for voting.

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The coming local government election forces South African citizens to reflect on the gains of the past 17 years of democracy. We have witnessed violent protest across the country of people who are fed up with poor or non-service delivery by the elected politicians. We were promised that we would receive basic services guaranteed by the Constitution. In towns and informal settlements the unhappiness due to a lack of jobs, decent houses, decent schools and above all decent service delivery prompted violent explosions against local municipalities.

According to a South African Association of Civil Engineering report "The quality and reliability of basic infrastructure serving the majority of our citizens is poor and, in many places getting worse. Urgent attention is required to stabilise and improve these." We are witnessing the neglect and deterioration of all bulk infrastructure across the whole country. We are experiencing poor service delivery in hospitals and clinics where people spend days waiting for medical treatment. Schools are dilapidated without being maintained by the government. The maintenance of road infrastructure is non-existent. Coupled with a poor rail system, the workers are being punished for poor financial and management systems. This can be attributed to cadre deployment where political loyalists are rewarded.

We have witnessed that local government councillors are the absent servants of their communities. Now we are once again being hoodwinked by these politicians who are making empty promises of a better life for all - "together we can do more". This means that for the next five years communities will once again be waiting for ➡

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➔ these empty promises to materialise. We will again be reporting malfunctioning or non-existent service delivery by these councillors who will promise that they will investigate the matter and this investigation will again take another five years.

The councillors in all these cases are implementing a neo-liberal agenda, with the evidence of shoddy RDP houses, potholes and increased rates, taxes and electricity bills. We are also witnessing an increase in toll roads and schools that are expected to pay for basic services. More people are put onto the indigent list and then forced

to survive with a minimum amount of water fixed by notorious water meters.

Comrades it is our duty to guard against opportunist politicians in positions, who enter government to benefit from access to state resources with the sole purpose of enriching themselves. It is our duty to organise ourselves to enable us to hold councillors accountable, with the right to recall.

FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION GIVING PEOPLE CONTROL OVER COUNCILLORS TO PROVIDE PROPER AND EFFICIENT SERVICES.

THE PROMISE OF JOBS FOR ALL

According to the government's "New Growth Path" the aim is to create 5 million new jobs by 2020. In other words, about 500 000 jobs per annum. Given the government's commitment to neo-liberalism, the question is whether this is at all possible. While permanent jobs in agriculture have suffered a steady decline with an increase in relatively unprotected part time, casual labour, there has only been a mild increase in recent months in employment in the non-agricultural formal sector of the economy. Most of the jobs created were in the services and trade sectors while mining, manufacture and construction continue to suffer job losses. Even establishment economist, Kevin Lings of Stanlib expressed pessimism: "Over the past year, the formal sector has gained 93000 jobs, which is still well below the long-term goal of creating 5-million jobs in 10 years; or approximately 500000 net new jobs a year," (Business Day Online, 23/03/2011). With South Africa still suffering the effects of the international capitalist recession it is highly unlikely that the government can achieve its lofty targets.

After sustained pressure by the bourgeoisie the ANC approach to job creation appears to be wobbling, with various contradictory utterances being heard. We were firstly told some time ago that by Trevor Manuel that it was not the government's task to create jobs. That responsibility, he said, belonged to the business world. But now that government has accepted some responsibility we have had the ANC General Secretary announce that to create "decent" jobs was to put the cart before the

A POLITICAL UNITED FRONT AGAINST NEO-LIBERAL AND CAPITALIST BARBARISM

Statement issued by APDUSA on the national launch of the Conference of the Democratic Left, now known as the Democratic Left Front.

APDUSA is a national political organization which was established in 1962. We promote and struggle for the self-organization of workers and landless peasants on the basis of a unified set of transitional demands for democratic socialism. This

horse. In other words the task was to create jobs, decent or not. This caused an outcry from Cosatu who insisted on the demand for decent jobs. This dispute between Cosatu and the ANC has been patched up for now. Yet the dilemma for the ANC-led government has not gone away, with the impending changes to labour legislation being strongly criticized by the business world. Thrown in its face is the situation of Chinese owned factories in KZN. About 160 factories in the Newcastle area, employing 180000 people at horribly low wage have threatened to relocate to Swaziland or Lesotho if they are compelled to comply with minimum wage levels set by the National Bargaining Council. We have only to wait and see what happens.

Yet the government could do far more in job creation by stopping and reversing privatisation of public services and embarking on a large scale public works program with workers and the unemployed in its management. Coupled with the promotion and support for worker cooperatives and a thorough going solution to the agrarian problem, such measures would go a long way to create decent, permanent and secure jobs for the unemployed. But with its slavish compliance to the wishes of the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, these are measures that the government is very reluctant to undertake. So we are probably back to low paid, short term, casual "job opportunities" and it appears that 5 million new jobs in 10 years is just another empty promise. ●

is a programme for working people to seize political power as a first step to build a new society free from capitalist exploitation, ecological destruction, privileging minorities, corruption and all forms of discrimination. Our programme connects ongoing workplace battles with community protests and the fight for land and thus develops an indivisible outlook to struggle. It demands, for example, that the agrarian question must be resolved in the interests of those working and living on the land. Workers control and management of core spheres of the economy is a crucial bridge to move beyond crisis-ridden capitalism. To unite growing mass ➔

➔ resistance to neo-liberalism on a common political basis we demand a democratically elected Constituent Assembly free from bureaucratic impositions and the protection of capitalist interests.

Neo-Liberal Transition

The political defeat of the supremacist minority regime inaugurated what has been described as South Africa's 'elite transition'. Capitalists and state bureaucrats have enriched themselves, and shamelessly continue to do so, at the expense of the majority in society. Even trade union bureaucrats, who are staunch defenders of the tripartite alliance, boldly asserted in 2010 that state policies have nurtured a 'predatory elite' over the last 15 years (since 1994). This is not to deny or downplay political gains we have achieved as a result of apartheid's death. Irrational laws that upheld white *Baasskap* have been scrapped and every adult South African currently enjoys the unqualified right to vote in parliamentary elections. Rights and freedoms that we have today, even though these might be limited, constitute victories for the broad liberation movement that inspire hope and confidence for ongoing battles. And every progressive reform deserves to be defended against relentless and ferocious attacks to reverse them.

In the decades leading up to 1994, South Africa's liberation movement fought for the full franchise to give the oppressed majority a decisive political voice in government. The lack of this basic bourgeois democratic freedom galvanized the black population into political action; it crucially helped to unite disparate battles on a common political basis. Today, the outright rejection to use our right to vote as a weapon to advance anti-capitalist struggles would be a grave mistake. Yet bourgeois electoral politics is fraught with pitfalls and we must guard against falling victim to it. Instead of casting a ballot every few years for a capitalist party ('the lesser evil') to deceive and repress us, participation in elections must be used to demolish illusions in bourgeois parliamentary politics.

Present day struggles demand that a broad leftist party rooted in the organizations and struggles of the working majority and guided by anti-capitalist political objectives must be forged - not an apparatus to exclusively contest elections which inevitably paves the way to political careerism and opportunism. However, building a mass-based party of the labouring classes against neo-liberal and capitalist barbarism is bound to be complex and protracted as attempts over the last 2 decades have been agonizingly unsuccessful.

The Constitution and Economic Policies

Almost 20 years after the end of apartheid South Africa ranks among the most unequal societies in the world coupled with persistently high joblessness and

poverty. These are symptoms of a deep structural socio-economic crisis worsened by post-1994 economic policies- including black economic empowerment and neo-liberalism. The Growth Employment And Redistribution (GEAR) plan remains the core template of post-apartheid socio-economic policies. Government adopted it in 1996 as a non-negotiable framework and maintains that there is no alternative to GEAR. This neo-liberal policy dictates that the state intervenes in economic affairs to serve the needs of capitalist investors at the expense of working people. Its prescriptions such as privatisation of social services, corporate tax breaks, fiscal austerity and labour market flexibility mercilessly attack the living standards of the poor. ASGISA and the New Growth Path (plus the Industrial Policy Action Plan- IPAP 2), far from charting an anti-neoliberal break with GEAR, effectively reinforce and intensify its onslaught on working people. These so-called developmental plans are recycled blueprints copied from imperialist agencies such as the World Bank and IMF to enrich wealthy investors whilst impoverishing the poor.

Today's supreme law of our country, the 1996 Constitution, was negotiated through compromises among the elite and excluded the political voices of the oppressed and exploited majority. Whilst the Constitution repealed a few elements of racist minority rule and equalizes the right to vote, it firmly secures and entrenches the political power of the wealthy and elite. Social justice in this set-up is rooted in liberal or moneyed democracy; access to justice rests on an individual's ability to pay. In fact, this Constitution is a major political barrier which works against the interests of the rural and urban labouring classes. Its notorious property rights clause protects capitalist property, including old landownership inequalities. It fails to guarantee every worker the right to work. It makes the delivery of basic social services dependent on neo-liberal economic policies. It imposes the rule of divisive tribal authorities which are inherently undemocratic and repressive.

A Political United Front

Current struggles of the oppressed and exploited in our country are not guided, as in the past, by clear political objectives. The predominant ideology being injected into the struggles of both unionised workers and localised communities, dubbed "social movements", is nothing more than social reformism, which largely denies a purpose for any political orientation other than the goal of putting pressure on the agencies of the ruling class for reform within the bounds and the acceptance of bourgeois democracy.

We reject the notion peddled in the new social movements that revolutionary consciousness can arise spontaneously from the ranks of the ➔

➡ downtrodden labouring masses in their basic struggle for survival. We recognise that this notion is itself an expression of a particular ideology. It is an ideology that is promoted by some NGOs who have no requirement to define, articulate and promote the fundamental political needs of the oppressed and exploited classes beyond the stipulations of their funders. It is moreover, an ideology which only serves to stifle the development of the political consciousness of the labouring classes. NGOs can by themselves offer no clear, revolutionary counter to the ideological propaganda that emanates from the ruling class itself. We can expect nothing different from the trade union bureaucracy and other political reformists who attempt to hide their collaboration with the bourgeois class behind vague references to civil society and pseudo-socialism.

Liberal social reformism, under the cover of its new language, is a phenomenon confronting us both nationally and internationally. It constitutes a serious obstruction in the international anti-capitalist movement of which we are a part. An alternative must be developed as a matter of necessity. Without a revolutionary political program, that originates from scientific and theoretical analysis, tested, corrected and refined in the process of practical engagement, the struggles of the masses are doomed to defeat. On this basis, a revolutionary role for

radical political groupings cannot be denied or excluded.

The need exists to galvanise organizations of the left in a united front with full autonomy and to support all progressive struggles of the population. This is to eliminate ad hocism and at the same time to develop class consciousness. The aim is to ensure that all struggles are guided by a common political programme that strives towards goals in the interests of the masses.

We, of the APDUSA say a united front based on a common political objective is the most viable vehicle to advance our struggles towards broader goals. Such a political united front, coupled with a programme of transitional demands, will propel us to work towards a mass based workers party as a long-term objective. This party's fundamental task will be to set up the mechanism for a Constituent Assembly to address all issues which Bourgeois parties cannot do. The major questions are the resolution of the national question and the destruction of the capitalist system that is currently foisted upon us. It would be this party that will contest the balance of forces and use its united strength to achieve these objectives. ●

CRISIS OF CIVILIZATION CONFERENCE

A South African non-governmental organization, the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC), and a global network, the 'Peoples Dialogue' joined forces to host a 'Crisis of Civilization' conference in October 2010. This event took place outside Johannesburg and was attended by roughly 100 activists from civil society groups and leftist academics predominantly from Latin America and Africa. Radical left political organizations were not invited yet many participants claimed membership of some leftist political current.

The event attracted limited mainstream media coverage: SAFM's after-eight debate hosted a panel of speakers on the first morning of the conference. But this publicity was a far cry from that bestowed on COSATU's Civil Society Conference - which triggered a public spat among tripartite alliance leaders because it excluded the ANC and other political organizations.

The 'Crisis of Civilization' conference debates ranged from the multi-dimensionality of ongoing global crises to anti-capitalist alternatives to building the global justice movement. Discussions on the first day shed light on the multiple dimensions of 21st century capitalist crises and grassroots encounters with these crises- manifested in severe hardship for the majority of the world population. Modern capitalism threatens human civilization through economic crises, ecological crises and corporate driven resource wars. Insightful analyses unpacked

the forms, makeup and human costs of these disasters.

The necessity to develop and build anti-capitalist alternatives was the main thematic focus of day two. Debates revisited the experiences of states in Latin America that have broken free from neo-liberal capitalism - with special emphasis on Venezuela and ALBA. In a sense these advances represent transitional alternatives to overcome crises while also clarifying the vision of what ought to displace capitalism. Activists cited President Hugo Chavez's 'socialism of the 21st century' as a giant step forward for humanity. Democratic eco-socialism must be the goal. De-growth, some forcefully argued, ought to be an anti-capitalist rallying cry to shift humanity away from consumerism and crises of capitalist overproduction. Right to work campaigns must form a core element in the programme to mobilize the unemployed. Workers control was also discussed against the backdrop of the Mineline factory takeover in Joburg - a first for post-apartheid South Africa.

The last day focused on preparing for upcoming global protests to build a militant, global movement for social justice that is proactive rather than reactive. Heated debates unfolded around the 2011 World Social Forum (hosted in Senegal in February) and UN-sponsored COP 17 climate talks planned for December 2011 in Durban. Disagreements among South African activists ➡

➡ frustrated one informal debate on expanding African participation in the World Social Forum. Viewpoints were sharply divided on three old questions: firstly the issue of how the WSF has traditionally banned leftwing political parties, secondly the weight of COSATU in the WSF International Council, and thirdly, the absence of a South African Social Forum and how to construct one. Naturally, this NGO-sponsored forum failed to arrive at concrete solutions to these tricky questions that have plagued South African activists for many years. A concluding session of the conference adopted a non-binding declaration to intensify anti-capitalist resistance on all fronts.

The captivating theme of the conference undoubtedly drew inspiration from the 'socialism or barbarism' idea popularly associated with Rosa Luxemburg, a Polish revolutionary Marxist murdered

in 1919. Luxemburg had coined this rallying cry in the context of the First World War. It was not an apocalyptic forecast on the imminent death of the capitalist system. On the contrary, Luxemburg solidly understood social realities and the tides of history- a highly trained historical materialist. She actively participated in the revolutionary movement of that era against the destructive imperialist war and agitated for the overthrow of capitalism. The 1917 socialist revolution in economically backward and war-ravaged Russia marked a crucial breakthrough for this vision to build a better society free from capitalist barbarism. Today, almost a century after the October 1917 socialist revolution, it would be a grave mistake to ignore lessons from this historical experience for anti-capitalist movements. ●

THE FAILURE OF AGRARIAN REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA - PART 3

South Africa needs an anti-capitalist agrarian reform plan to meet the needs and demands of the poor majority in the countryside. However, as demonstrated in the first article in this series, the post-apartheid state has stubbornly pursued neo-liberal land reform. Land reform grounded in the 1996 Constitution and neo-liberal macroeconomic policy (GEAR) has failed and continue to work against farm workers and landless peasants. Even the ANC's 2007 Polokwane resolutions, concealed behind layers of populist rhetoric, offer no radical break from government's unworkable agrarian policies. This concluding article dissects the promised reforms of the Zuma-administration. It answers the following question: How far does the agrarian reform agenda of the 2009-2014 cabinet go to meet the needs of the poorest classes in our countryside?

What new agrarian reform plans?

President Jacob Zuma established a Ministry of Rural Development and Land Reform in 2009 to fast-track agrarian change and rural transformation. This action, ANC spokespersons argue, was the first decisive step to implement one of the party's key election promises, which in turn, flows from its 2007 Polokwane resolutions.

The Rural Development ministry (DRDLR), headed by Mr Gugile Nkwinti, has drafted a Green Paper on 'Agrarian Transformation, Rural Development and Land Reform' which evidently opens a new direction in post-apartheid agrarian reform. Cabinet must still approve this document for public comment which is part of the bureaucratic rituals to develop it into an enforceable law. No precise timetable exists as to when government might lift its tight lid on the substance of the draft Green Paper. After cabinet approval, public consultations will be staged to give this new land policy some legitimacy. But lobbyists and legal experts that serve the interests of agricultural capital are set to dominate such consultations because they are well-organized and able to buy political influence. In the mean time, there has been widespread consultation with farmland investors and agricultural capitalists to reassure them that the Green Paper does not and will not threaten their

constitutionally safeguarded property rights. Similar special measures to protect the interests of the landowning elite undermined the post-1994 land reform, enlarging the gulf between wealthy landowners and the landless.

The fundamental test for the new agrarian proposals ought to begin with two questions: What is the class bias of the Zuma-administration's 'agrarian reform' agenda? How far do these revisions go to meet the needs of farm workers and land-hungry peasants- the poor majority in the countryside?

As the Zuma cabinet approaches the halfway mark of its five-year term in office, more information is trickling into the public domain that sheds light on the administration's strategic vision on agrarian and rural development. A presidential statement on the decisions of the July 2010 cabinet lekgotla openly promotes capitalist agriculture which rests on worker exploitation while paying lip service to human needs.

The Green Paper, the rural development Minister told parliament in early 2010, would consolidate all land-related laws and culminate in a new land policy framework. Its core purpose would be to achieve equitable land access and sustainable land use. Speaking at a workshop to evaluate and rethink the controversial farm equity schemes in November ➡

➔2010, Minister Nkwinti added that the Green Paper would also introduce new proposals on strategic partnerships (such as co-management, mentorship and share equity arrangements) between farm workers and established capitalist farmers.

Farm workers stand to benefit little, if at all, from land policies in the pipeline. Government's 2010 summit on vulnerable workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing heard evidence of widespread violation of laws designed to protect farm dwellers' rights. From the viewpoint of farm workers and rural development NGOs, both the Labour Tenants Act (LTA) and the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA) have failed to counter the relentless attacks of the farming-for-profit system on livelihoods. The draft Land Tenure Security Act currently before parliament ostensibly consolidates and closes the loopholes in the LTA and ESTA. Its objectives include harmonious farm relations and enhanced tenure security for farm dwellers. It calls for setting up agri-villages but these could develop into 'cheap labour reserves'.

On the one hand the Green Paper has to confront questions about who should be allowed to own what quantity and quality of land. Inseparably tied to this is the concern over mechanisms government might use to transfer land to targeted black beneficiaries. Whilst the Green Paper is under wraps, a statement in the DRDLR Strategic Plan is indicative of the cutting-edge reflections on alternative land ownership models underway:

"The questions of land ceilings and ownership, land uses, land availability and the cost of land have been raised. Other pertinent questions relate to the forms of ownership.... To facilitate this discussion, the Department is proposing two options: all productive land will become a national asset and a quitrent land tenure system either with perpetual or

limited rights is envisaged. This may require an amendment to Section 25 of the Constitution.... Option two will focus on a review of current tenure policies and legislation in order to maintain the current free-hold title system but within the ambit of a land ceilings framework linked to categorization of farmers." [DRDLR Strategic Plan 2010-2013, page 11]

Official messages on the Green Paper are silent on the need to eliminate agrarian inequities in the former Bantustans. Yet it implicitly lurks behind Minister Nkwinti's frequent references to 'land and culture', with imposing overtones of tribalism which the ANC refuses to condemn as divisive. It is intriguing why land disputes in the Bantustans are excluded from the draft Land Tenure Security Bill mentioned above. As is common knowledge, the Bantustans have been designed as overcrowded reservoirs of cheap labour to feed capitalist development in South Africa. Today poor peasants across these villages struggle to survive from plots of marginal land allocated by autocratic tribal authorities.

Government aimed to use the Communal Land Rights Act (CLRA) to regulate 'land tenure rights under traditional authorities'. Then in May 2010, following a decisive legal challenge spearheaded by the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) on behalf of rural development NGOs, the CLRA was ruled unconstitutional. For the CLRA would have legalized the concentration of land allocation rights in the hands of undemocratic tribal authorities rather than the landless majority in these localities. Overturning land-based inequities in the Bantustans must be an inseparable element in a holistic solution to South Africa's agrarian problem. ●

Obituary

MONTFORD MZOLI MABUTO

Monty, as he was well known, or simply, Mabuto, passed away on Friday 8 April. He was 79 years of age. Originally from the former Transkei, he was resident in Langa, Cape Town, when he became a member of the Society of Young Africa in the early 1950s. Here he was not only active in organizing for the liberatory movement but also educating himself in the tenets of principled struggle. He joined Apdusa when it was established in 1961 and became an enthusiastic worker in its ranks. In the dark years of the mid 1960s, when many freedom fighters were fleeing into exile, while others succumbed to extreme police pressure, Mabuto was one who kept the flame of liberation burning at home until in 1971, he was arrested with hundreds of other Apdusa members for supporting a campaign to send prospective fighters across the border for military and political training. He stood trial with eleven others and was eventually sentenced to five years imprisonment, most of which was endured on Robben Island. After his release he was banished to the former Transkei where he had to eke out an existence. But during the 1980s he again played a valuable role in rebuilding the Apdusa in the Eastern Cape. Mabuto gave everything for the liberatory struggle and never hankered after self aggrandisement. He will be remembered as one of the selfless cadres of our time. We salute a fallen hero.

Review

The Coca Cola Case

A recently released documentary film should be of interest to everyone and workers everywhere in particular. It relates firstly, the experiences of Colombian workers who had to endure the horrific experience of the widespread assassinations of trade unionists, fighting for worker dignity and humane working and living conditions, at the hands of Colombian paramilitary forces. These forces acted with the active connivance of the Coca Cola company. Their cause was eventually taken up by an American human rights legal team who, recognising the impossibility of finding legal redress in Colombia, managed to file a case against Coca Cola under the Alien Tort Claims Act in America. Their case against Coca Cola related to murder, abduction and torture committed in Colombia and Guatemala. The case ran for many years, with Coca

Cola finally making a number of critical admissions, but still seeking a way out for itself that would conceal the extreme magnitude of the crimes it had caused to be perpetrated. For instance, in three consecutive years the newly elected president of the trade union in Colombia was killed. But still, Coca Cola would only offer a pay-out if everything was kept quiet. The workers refused and the legal team went on to introduce further worker rights violations by Coca Cola elsewhere, especially in Turkey. The case is still unresolved.

This video is a moving lesson in the determination of workers in Colombia to organize themselves against ghastly odds and still hold out. It also poses questions as to the limitations of fighting for worker rights and justice on legal grounds alone.

The video is obtainable from various sites on the internet. As a line in an internet advertisement states: "You'll never look at a can of Coke the same way after seeing this documentary film." ●



From Around the World

ARAB REVOLUTIONARY UPHEAVALS

Four months of continuous upheavals in northern Africa and Middle East/Gulf countries have created conditions for the advancement of varying popular struggles that are pregnant with possibilities. Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria have to varying degrees been shaken by popular, people driven revolts that thus far have had different outcomes. These struggles are ongoing and protracted. Elements of self organization as part of the path to the seizing of power have manifested itself. These heroic battles have inspired workers and oppressed populations across the world to pay close attention to unfolding developments.

Historically, these neo-colonial governments became entangled in the net of neo-liberal capitalism, adopting policies that inevitably lead to repression and the denial of democratic liberties. The revolts that occurred in response to food shortages, high unemployment (the result of IMF/World Bank structural adjustment policies) and the denial of democratic rights have galvanized millions of ordinary people into political action. The youth, organized workers, unorganised workers, professionals, women and the like have taken up the struggle for political freedoms. Politically the backgrounds of the revolting masses ranged from leftists, liberals, Islamists and the like. They overcame decades of autocratic rule by dictators and self serving minorities. We salute them.

The forces of deception, repression and counter revolution have responded to these upheavals

through the adoption of a range of strategies and tactics. This they have been forced to do in the face of a relentless spreading of opposition to repression in the regions concerned. Apart from the countries mentioned, struggles have been ongoing in Sudan, Djibouti and Jordan. Mainstream media reporting on these struggles have been less prominent. The political impotence of regional organizations like the AU, the Arab League and the Gulf Coordinating Council has been starkly revealed. Their attachment to the imperialist dominated organisations like NATO and the UNSC was yet again revealed. These imperialist controlled organizations are using all the diplomatic and coercive powers at their disposal to turn back the tide. The ruling classes in some of the countries shaken by political upheaval tried their utmost to cling to power by promising meaningless reforms. However, the prominent demands that emerged from the uprisings were and are of a very uncompromising nature. The more the ruling elites attempted to cling to power the more this added fuel to the revolutionary fires. These are ongoing battles in a war against imperialism for the creation of a new society.

The winning of democratic liberties in some of the countries allow the forces fighting for socialist democracy to organize for the political advancement of these struggles. This implies that there is an objective political need for regional and continental collaboration in the advancement of this struggle. ●

FRENCH WORKERS STRIKE AGAINST SARKOZY'S AUSTERITY MEASURES

There were a series of one day strikes in France post September, last year against President Sarkozy's austerity measures and mobilisations against his pensions reform bill earlier in May. The strikes commenced with a 24 hour national strike, which disrupted flight and rail services, closed schools and involved more than 2 million people. Sarkozy has been weakened by a summer of political and financial scandal. Unions called the strike to derail his pensions reform bill, which raises the retirement age from 60 to 62 and the age of full entitlement from 65 to 67. The government is also looking to find 100 billion euros of savings in three years and is planning cuts in the civil sector. Some secondary school teachers went on strike protesting against plans to cut 7,000 jobs in education. Since the rescue plan announced at the emergency meeting of the European Central Bank and the IMF in May of this year, to shore up the Greek and other weaker economies of the eurozone, the EU governments have announced plans for budgetary austerity. The EU governments are implementing the austerity measures to get the working class to pay for the financial and economic crisis caused by the bankers

The strikes in France gathered momentum in October, an estimated 3.5 million people coming out on the streets on the 12th October. There were disruptions to the transport system with flights cancelled, train services scrapped and lorry drivers blocking roads. School children and university students continued to play a prominent part in the demonstrations. One youth interviewed said "This reform concerns us more than anyone else.....Youth unemployment in France is already at 24%. If people are made to work longer, it will be even harder for us to find work." The actions of the students were felt across the country, leaving 379 schools blocked or disrupted to varying degrees. Of all the sectors that were disrupted by the union's strategy of rolling strikes, it was the action in the fuel sector that most rattled the government. With 12 oil refineries blocked for nine days at one stage, nearly 4,000 out of a total of 12,500 petrol stations were suffering shortages. Trade unionists also blocked access to airports in Paris and around France. Prolonged strikes were favoured by the majority of those polled. The problem is the trade union bureaucracy, who in spite of the pressure from the rank and file, avoided calling a general strike. Since the beginning of the strike, trade union unity was

strengthened. However, the coalition of trade unions had not been prepared for a major confrontation with the government and no longer demanded the withdrawal of draft legislation on pensions. Instead it proposed new negotiations and amendments. The government however, refused any concessions on this law, which has now been passed in parliament. Those taking part in the strikes were not deterred by the government's intransigence and planned further days of action. For them, the law is unjust, hitting hardest women, workers in hazardous jobs and those who start work at a young age. Sarkozy lost the battle for public opinion. Public support for the protests rose to 70% following the blockade of the fuel refineries and ports.

In this trial of strength between the government and the workers, Sarkozy employed the police using strong arm tactics against the strikers and high school students. His and other governments in the EU are determined to dismantle the remains of welfare states, which came into being after the second world war and institute a "social safety net" of the World Bank kind in their place. The French workers continued the industrial battle. The workers in nine of the eleven oil refineries remained on strike. While workers at Le Mede refinery voted to end their strike, production could not restart until workers at the Fos- Levre oil hub resumed deliveries of crude oil supplies. The workers there were on strike for a month over the pensions bill and plans to privatise dock loading operations. The strike at the port on the south coast of France continued to block large numbers of oil tankers. Further strikes, involving disruption of railway services and flights for passengers on airways then took place.

These strikes in France are not only against Sarkozy's pension reform but a rejection of his racist and authoritarian regime and its corrupt practices. The expulsion of the Roma and the ban on the burqa, aroused opposition not only from a significant minority of the population but even earned condemnation for Sarkozy in some of the ruling circles of the EU. In the ongoing struggles, the New Anti- capitalist Party (NAP), a party on the far left has sought unity around political objectives and demands the withdrawal and now the abrogation of the pension reform law and the resignation of Sarkozy and his minister of Labour. In this, it has had support of other parties of the far left The NAP has also put forward an alternative emergency and social plan to beat the crisis. ●

ROUNDUP AND DEPORTATION OF ROMA FROM FRANCE

The roundup and deportation of thousands of Roma Gypsies from France, highlights the discrimination and persecution suffered by immigrant communities, particularly those from ethnic and religious minorities living in the EU. A leaked memo from the French interior ministry in August 2010 reminded officials that "three hundred camps or illegal settlements must be evacuated within three months; Roma camps are a priority". The European parliament passed a resolution calling on Paris to immediately suspend mass expulsions of Roma, which it condemned as discriminatory on the basis of race and ethnicity. France continued the expulsions in the knowledge that the resolution was legally non binding. The claim of its immigration minister that the Roma were being treated no differently to other EU migrants, who do not meet France's residency rules, fooled no one.

Let us take a look at the situation of the Roma communities in the EU. Numbering up to 11 million, 86% of whom live below the poverty line, they are the largest and most persecuted of the ethnic minorities in the EU. As EU citizens, they have every right to move freely throughout the EU. The majority of Roma live in Eastern Europe, constituting 10% of the population in Bulgaria and Romania. It is here that they suffer the fiercest racial prejudice and discrimination. Living in extended families in communities housed in rolling caravans, which do not lend themselves to rooted integration, they struggle with poverty and social exclusion, with limited access to health care and jobs. They are painted as an underclass whose ambitions are irreconcilable with the wider community's and are labelled as vagrants - and their homes a breeding ground for crime and disease. The global economic crisis, which has badly affected Europe, has worsened their position. As Rob Kushen of the European Roma Rights Centre in Budapest comments, "When you are in a downturn it is convenient to blame someone. Europe is for many a beacon of human rights, but, unfortunately for the Roma is a myth. It's a tragedy and things have gotten worse - violence, segregation, abuse, evictions and destruction of their homes have all accelerated."

Following Sarkozy's targeting of the illegal Roma camps, one thousand Roma were deported from France to Eastern Europe, bringing the total last year to more than 8,000. Commenting on these expulsions, Belgian MEP and former Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt said it was unacceptable for politicians to be "tempted by populist, racist and xenophobic policies". In Italy, the prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi labelled illegal immigrants "an army of evil" and rejected the idea of a multiethnic Italy. In May 2008 his interior minister, Maroni threatened to dismantle Romany camps and expel the inhabitants. Two days later, when a mob of 60 razed a Roma camp in Naples with Molotov cocktails,

Maroni quipped "That is what happens when Gypsies steal babies, or when Romanians commit sexual violence." Gun attacks killing Roma have occurred in both Slovakia and Hungary. Roma have been driven out of Northern Ireland in racist attacks. In the past two years, Germany, Sweden and Denmark have expelled Roma or stated an intention to do so.

For most Roma who have been deported by Western European governments to their country of origin in Eastern Europe, there are even less prospect of jobs than in Western Europe and the discrimination they face is on a par or worse than that suffered in Western Europe. Entitled to free movement in the EU, many of them return soon to the countries from where they have been expelled. Their entrapment in the vicious circle continues, when after 3 months in Western Europe without a job or being a "social burden", they are deported to Eastern Europe.

Governments across Europe have adopted hostile policies towards ethnic and religious minorities, undermining the values of "human dignity, freedom and equality and solidarity" in the words of the Charter of Fundamental Rights upon which the European Union is supposed to be founded. France's lower house of parliament this summer approved a ban on wearing face-covering veils (burqa) in public. Fewer than 2,000 women in France are believed to wear face-covering veils. The measure is a blatant attack on France's Muslim population. In Switzerland, Swiss voters imposed a constitutional ban on the construction of minarets. Switzerland has only four minarets and Muslims make up 5% of the population. It is likely this ban will be found in breach of the religious freedom plank of the European convention. What is driving European governments to pass discriminatory legislation against its ethnic or religious minorities is to distract voters from their unpopular austerity policies and win popular support and gain electoral success.

While perhaps there may be majority support in Europe for government measures against immigrants and religious and ethnic minorities, there are powerful voices in opposition. In Paris and 130 other French towns, 100,000 people attended rallies to protest at the government's policy of deporting Roma people. The rallies, called by the League of Human Rights, was backed by the opposition Socialist Party and the trade union confederation, the General Confederation of Labour. It attracted trade unionists, students, illegal immigrants and anarchists. In the Paris demonstration, the actress, Jane Burkin said "We are pushing away people that have a history of being pushed away. We have to defend them because they don't have enough of a voice. We have more of a voice than them. We have to be supportive."

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.

Printed and published by the African People's Democratic Union of Southern Africa
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