



# THE APDUSAN

Vol. 18 No 3  
Dec. 2012

AFRICAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC UNION  
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA [www.apdusa.org.za](http://www.apdusa.org.za)

*The Interests Of The Workers And Landless Peasants Shall Be Paramount*

## WORKERS' DEMANDS AND ORGANISATIONAL ADVANCES

The second half of this year has seen major developments on South Africa's labour and political scene. In the last week of November the minister of labour, Mildred Oliphant added insult to injury when announcing that the review of farm labourers' wages would only be done in March/April 2013. These are acts of defiance by the oppressor minister acting on behalf of an oppressor government, which in turn is acting in defence of farm owners who see themselves as modern day slave-owners. In terms of the private property rights provisions of the SA constitution, these farmers are legally entitled to treat their employees like animals or sub-humans. The same has to be said of the mine owners' treatment of workers in the platinum, gold and coal mines.

The government-farmer alliance is but a variation of the government-mine owners' alliance that we witnessed with the Marikana and broader mineworkers' revolts. Amplats, Lonmin and Agri-SA have for long been allowed to rule the roost with a compliant ANC government in tow. These alliances are well organised, armed to the teeth and launch unrelenting attacks on the South African working class. They employ agencies like their media, tri-partite alliance leadership figures and structures, tired political narratives, etc, to unleash unrelenting attacks on unionised and non-unionised workers alike.

The resistance movement against these capitalists' forces has had to galvanise all manner of organisational responses in defence and advancement of workers' demands. These have included strikes, marches, pickets, sit-ins and other efforts aimed at finding redress from an increasingly repressive government and business enterprises.

Their first retort of the capitalist class is to blame the state of the world economy. But it is exactly they who own and run this system and expects workers to pay for all its defects.

The emergence of strike/worker committees occurred in conjunction with a demand for the sidelining of trade unions from worker-management wage negotiations. Subsequent developments however, reconfirmed the need for the involvement of trade unions genuinely committed to representing their worker membership. After the Marikana massacre tentative calls went out for the

broadening of the struggles of striking workers – calling for the involvement of civic structures and other community formations. In this period new trade union formations, joining forces with political organisations and loose anti-capitalist networks started to emerge, e.g., The Marikana Support Committee and the Coalition of Farmworker Organisations. The organisational challenge the new formations had to face up to was to infuse a clear-cut, political alternative into the ongoing militant struggles. In short the situation called for raising the level of political and organisational expression above that of solidarity actions alone.

The situation still calls for the launching of an offensive for political power, against the present corrupt political establishment which has lost all credibility.

These new developments however, carry within them the sad legacy of two decades (and longer) of Congress politics that systematically fostered disunity amongst the labouring masses. Whatever unity was forged was on flimsy, narrow populist political grounds. The bureaucratic tri-partite alliance is a case in point. The motivation behind these political acts was primarily aimed at securing access to resources for the new elite. The building of progressive, principled unity and the training of a political cadre to govern and implement progressive politics was never on the agenda of the new political administrators.

Today we are therefore faced with the objective task of building unity in struggles, but to do it on the basis of a political understanding that the struggle must be moved forward – closer to wresting political and economic power from the capitalist enemy. This period has seen a forward movement predicated on a rejection of the neoliberal policies of the ruling elite – government and its big business alliance partners. People's eyes are opening up to the real enemy we are facing. It was noticeable how quickly big business and government closed ranks after the ➔

### *Inside*

- ◆ W.Cape Farm Workers Take A Stand P.2
- ◆ Zuma's African Way P.3
- ◆ The Progressive Youth Movement P.4
- ◆ International News & Events P.5 ➔

➤ mineworkers' uprising. One response from the Cosatu leadership after the Marikana massacre was to state that 'we must reclaim Rustenburg'. Losing political control compels the tripartite alliance leadership to revert to old style Stalinist practices aimed at 'reclaiming' political control. Discrediting and attacking the emerging leadership of workers'

and community organisations has become a firm priority for them.

Raising explicit political demands, that are long term, allows us to formulate and agitate fruitfully around current, short term demands. These struggles and the demands that flow from them allow us to build our forces to better fight for working class political power. ●

## WESTERN CAPE FARM WORKERS TAKE A STAND

The strike action by farm workers in the Western Cape has signalled that they are no longer prepared to live under the intolerable conditions which have been their daily lot, with no sign of any change or improvement coming from any quarter, including the government. This, after eighteen years of so-called freedom.

The Commercial Stevedoring Agricultural & Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU), which operates in the Boland region of the Western Cape, has in recent times issued a number of public statements highlighting the deplorable conditions under which farm workers work and live. The powers that be may put up a twisted argument that this is a small union which is politically motivated and therefore its utterances can be ignored. But through the years there have also been serious warnings from various sources which cannot be so blandly dismissed. For example, there is a research paper, "*The Unseen Plight of Farm Workers in South Africa*", published in 2003 by the Human Sciences Research Council. Another working paper by the Provincial Decision-making Enabling Project (Provide) entitled: "*Quantifying the economic divide in South African agriculture: An income-side analysis*" (Sept. 2005) and yet another paper, "Conditions on Farms", produced by the Crystal Prince Unit for Social Research, Directorate Research and Population Development, in 2004, especially for the Western Cape Provincial Government. There is a further study done by the Human Rights Watch entitled; "*South Africa: Farmworkers' Dismal, Dangerous Lives. Workers Protected by Law, but Not in the Fields*", published August 2011. Besides these there are certainly a number of other papers and statements issued by various agencies through the years, effectively saying the same things.

It is difficult to conclude that the ruling party in government chose to effectively ignore these findings unless it has been impressed by the spurious argument that fruit and wine farming in the Western Cape is a major contributor to the national GDP and an important earner of foreign income, with a delicate economic balance that dare not be disturbed. Indeed, it is a popular argument emanating from those who argue for the status quo, that an "unrealistic" increase in the minimum wage will

force many farmer owners to either curtail their operations or turn to greater mechanisation, which will result in job losses numbering in tens of thousands. While they succumb to the price demands of large, international marketing and distribution agencies, they still earn a healthy profit for themselves.

The current minimum wage of approximately R70 per day, which most farmers pay, hovers on the international poverty datum line of two US dollars per person, per day. It is quite hypocritical of ANC spokespersons to now lament the miserable wages on which farm labourers are forced to exist while it has been in their power to raise the statutory minimum wage to a reasonable level a long time ago. It is also interesting to compare minimum wage rates in South Africa to those in other countries. A posting on the Wikipedia website compares the annual minimum wage rate of various countries. This is done by converting the currency of each country to a standard of international dollars. The value of an international dollar (I\$) is based on the buying power of a United States dollar in 2009.

The annual minimum wage in South Africa was set at a standard of I\$2471, based on a figure of R1067 per month (No year date given, but obviously a few years ago). Taking the present (year 2012) annual minimum wage for farm workers of R1504 per month, this translates into a South African annual minimum wage rate of I\$3483.

By comparison:

The 2012 minimum wage in Venezuela is I\$8495.

In Chile the 2012 rate is I\$5484.

In Peru the rate in 2008 was I\$5342.

One could go on and refer to the minimum wage rates in countries like France, Germany, Australia, etc. These make the figures given above look miniscule. (Of course there are a number of countries with far lower minimum wage levels which is even more inexcusable).

As for the threat of greater mechanisation and lower employment in future, it should be noted that there has already been a dramatic increase in farming capital expenditure in the country, e.g. from just a shade over R2 billion in the year 2000 to R8.1 billion in 2011 (*Abstract of Agricultural Statistics - 2012, Dept of Agriculture, Forestry and* ➔

➤ *Fisheries*). Combined with this there has been a growing decrease in employment in the farming sector, coupled with a rise in the use of casual labour. Some farmers admit that it would be difficult to greatly increase mechanisation without a loss of quality in their produce.

We fully support the immediate demand of farm workers for R150 minimum per day, but even this is

pitifully low. Yet, it should be borne in mind that it is not just their immediate employers who are responsible for their dire plight but the entire chain of international capitalist financiers, middlemen and marketers who enjoy glorious comforts while most workers of the world are forced to live in squalor and misery. ●

## ZUMA'S AFRICAN WAY

In a recent address to the National House of Traditional Leaders, President Zuma made some startling statements. As similarly reported in various newspapers and South African news websites: He said inter alia:

*"Let us solve African problems the African way, not the white man's way,"*

*"Let us not be influenced by other cultures and think that lawyers are going to help. We have never changed the facts. They tell you they are dealing with cold facts. They will never tell you that these cold facts have warm bodies."*

*"Because if you are not an African, you cannot be a white, then what are you? You don't know. You can't explain yourself. How then can you grow children?"*

*"We are Africans, we cannot change to be something else,"*

Speaking in isiZulu, he went on to ask: *"Whose traditions will they (the children) practise? The Zuma traditions or the Smith traditions? We have lost direction. Even if I live in the highest building, I am an African."* *"During our time we did not have prisons because never did we say it was a problem we could not resolve ... Prisons are done by people who cannot resolve problems,"* he said, He then asked traditional leaders not to be *"influenced by other cultures"*.

He further stated that he felt *"very passionately"* about resolving disputes in a traditional way.

*"Our view is that the nature and the value system of traditional courts of promoting social cohesion and reconciliation must be recognised and strengthened, ... Apartheid took away "our dignity ... because our traditional system and leadership was undermined ... But once you get freedom, you must bring it back"*.

Lastly in an angry tone, Zuma asked traditional leaders to help people understand who they are. This appeal to idyllic tribal custom by a leader of a nation state is shocking, to say the least. It demonstrates that in loyally following a flawed ANC ideology, that Zuma has no clear conception of what constitutes a nation. He implies that there is one set of laws for those with an indigenous tribal heritage

and another for anyone else and only the former are Africans. But in his twisted thinking he conceives that if you do not have an African tribal heritage then you are not African, whereas in our view, anyone born in Africa or who accepts Africa as her or his home, and is prepared to work for the progress and development of its peoples, is an African, irrespective of heritage and skin colour.

But let us consider this mystical "African way" of solving problems, without prisons and "White Man's law". We see that it only possibly existed in a single tribe. But what does Zuma say about inter-tribal war which saw the Zulu tribe ruthlessly conquer rival tribes? What does he say about the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and the mass murder of an estimated 800 000 people, mostly Tutsi "cockroaches"? What does he say about the ongoing violent struggles in the DRC, Somali and Mali? We are to understand that this is not the "African way" of solving problems. Indeed, it is not uniquely African as there has been intertribal, inter-ethnic conflict and brutal warfare all over the world. We only have to recall the horrific Srebrenica massacre in the Bosnian war as one example.

It may be that Zuma thinks that if ever the fraud and corruption charges against him are resurrected, he could plead for a hearing in a tribal court. He then could not possibly be sentenced to prison and even tribal banishment is out of the question. So the most severe sanction, if any, that he could ever receive is that he committed an error of judgement and in a spirit of reconciliation, he is fined a hundred head of cattle, to be delivered to his traditional leader. But this is neither here nor there.

Historically, tribalism has preceded feudalism and capitalism in which the nation state was established. Today, the idea of non-elected or self elected traditional leaders who wield power by way of outmoded law is completely anachronistic. But our respected national leaders in the guise of the ANC, still expect us to be indoctrinated by this divisive system. We reject it totally. ●

## SEDICK ISAACS

We salute the life of ex Robben Island prisoner, Sedick Isaacs, who passed away at the age of 72 years on 18 October 2012, claimed by the malignant affliction of lymphoma. He was not a dedicated politician, but that by no means detracts from the positive and extremely meaningful life that he led.

As a quiet and unassuming young man he entered the University of Cape Town in 1959 to further his education. This, he saw as his main purpose and he eschewed involvement in the turbulent student politics of the time.

After he completed his bachelor's degree he went on to teach at Trafalgar High School with his basic idea of helping others. But then, the gross ignominy and fundamental injustice of the apartheid system finally became too much for him to ignore. Without any political training, he set out with a small band of students on a defiant act to blow up a local electrical substation. This failed, but the ruling powers deemed that such acts of defiance could not be tolerated and Sedick was given a harsh prison sentence of twelve years.

It was on Robben Island that his full mettle was revealed, as a man of passion for what he believed in. He was instrumental in setting up a sophisticated system of education for prisoners on the island and became its leading member. For himself, he completed a degree in Mathematics and Psychology, as well as a masters degree in Information Systems. He also became legendary in the organization of the prisoners' soccer league which is well documented in the subsequent film, "*More Than Just A Game*".

It also became evident to Sedick that for an existence that was not unnecessarily troubled beyond the hardships that all prisoners had to endure, he needed to belong to an organization. From a limited number of options, he chose the Pan Africanist Congress, but he hardly became active in propagating its ideology. However, he worked closely with another PAC inmate, Jeff Masemola, a genius with his hands, in designing and fashioning a key that could open the prison cell doors. In addition to this, they had also surreptitiously built a raft, hidden at the stone quarry, with which they hoped to effect their escape. The key worked but, unfortunately, in an unforeseen raid and search by the authorities, it was discovered and Sedick was subjected to an added year to his sentence.

After his release he went to work at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town and continued with his studies to gain a doctorate in Epidemiology. At the same time, he also became a key spokesperson in discussions and research seminars organised by the Heritage and Educational departments of Robben Island Prison Museum.

Throughout his life he never sought self-acclaim, always devoting his time and attention to the education of others. In 2010 he completed a book relating his experiences in prison - "*Surviving in the Apartheid Prison*", which is well worth reading.

We honour a remarkable and selfless man, who lived his life in the progressive service of his fellow human being.

## CONVERSATIONS WITH THE PROGRESSIVE YOUTH MOVEMENT - PART 1

Sporadic outbursts of youth militancy after 1994 did not automatically lead to the formation of a militant anti-capitalist youth movement. Contrary to their slogans and rhetoric, popular youth organisations have generally failed to break free from neoliberal and capitalist political influences. The formation of the Progressive Youth Movement (PYM) might signal a promising step away from this trend and towards building a leftist alternative among the new generation of rebels. To reflect on the experiences of the PYM, APDUSA began a series of conversations with PYM activists in Cape Town.

Our first conversation took place on a Sunday morning in an informal settlement in Khayelitsha - called SST across the road from the corner of Landsdowne and Steve Biko avenues. Four PYM comrades participated in this informal discussion. Interestingly, each comrade became politically

active and radicalised at different moments in the fluctuating post-1994 protests. Two activists traced their friendship back to primary school through high-school when protest marches against apartheid debt appealed to their rebellious spirits. It was around 2000-2001 when this duo got increasingly drawn into the activities of Youth for Work, a project initiated by the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC). Another member threw himself into recent community mobilisations for proper sanitation and jobs at a new hospital in which the PYM continue to play a very prominent role. A 'new recruit' joined earlier this year shortly after attending an inspiring PYM rally on June 16.

Whilst the immediate forerunner to PYM is believed to be the Youth for Work project, the transition from the latter to the former must be further investigated. Evidently the decision to form the PYM was taken during a globalisation school under the auspices ➡

◆ of International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG), another Cape Town based NGO. However, the official launch only took place after the inaugural conference of the Democratic Left Front (DLF) in 2011.

AIDC and ILRIG initiatives provided those in the leadership of PYM with their elementary political schooling. Political training therefore came from the outside and enabled these rebellious youths to host a politically oriented school debating society. Ideas learned from these NGOs also raised their self-confidence and boosted their capabilities to question the content being taught in high school subjects like History and Economics a decade ago. One activist vividly remembered how he had challenged teachers on the biased perspectives on the 'History of the Russian Revolution' in their prescribed textbook. Another comrade recalled his fierce disagreements with the Economics teacher across multiple issues like Adam Smith versus Karl Marx, nationalisation versus privatisation, neoliberalism and so forth. Surprisingly, even teachers who were trade union members would discourage them from intensified political activism.

The PYM has a national footprint but its strongest base is clearly in Khayelitsha. A handful of members operate in Phillipi and Gugulethu. Individual activists or groups exist in other parts of the country such as North West, Free State, Johannesburg, Durban, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. They have lost

contact with their comrade in Eastern Cape and plan to break new ground in Northern Cape. In Cape Town it claims more than 200 members even though more or less 20 members normally attend its weekly 'leadership collective' meetings. Young women evidently form the majority of the local membership of the PYM but they appear to be less prominent in its leadership.

The organisation is open to anyone but its 'leadership collective' is in the process of introducing a membership form to have a more accurate count of its membership. A new member must accept the political programme and constitution of the PYM. At the time of our first interview they were busy drafting a code of conduct. There is no standard subscription fee because it is felt that this will be unaffordable to their unemployed members. It was hard to gain a precise idea of the PYM's politics but we hope to do so during follow-up interactions. One member, for instance, defined their politics in one brief statement: "we are against political parties and stand for people acting collectively to solve their own problems". How this perspective manifests in their campaigns must be further explored. How does this viewpoint compare with tried and tested political ideas of self-organisation and independent struggle? What is their understanding of independent anti-capitalist political struggle? ●



## *From Around the World*

### STRUGGLES IN PORTUGAL

A million people mobilised in the streets of Portugal on September 15th, to reject the austerity measures imposed on the Portuguese people by their government and the Troika (IMF, the European Central Bank and the European Commission). It was the biggest demonstration since the fall of the dictatorship in 1974. The international media deliberately downplayed or ignored the demonstration. Neither the actions of the Troika, nor those of the banks and other financial institutions have succeeded in halting the ongoing crisis in the eurozone. The intervention of the European masses in the crisis, as highlighted by the events in Portugal, is a challenge to bourgeois rule. In March 2011, the austerity plan of the Socialist Party government was rejected by the Portuguese parliament and a snap election called. A caretaker prime minister, Jose Socrates, negotiated a bail-out loan from the Troika. The bail-out was for 78 billion euros (of which 12 billion is for bailing out private banks) and the institutions of the troika are to be paid out a further 30 billion in interest and commission. The elected right wing coalition government led by the prime

minister P.Coelho, carried out massive attacks on the living standards of the Portuguese people, in accordance with the bailout package. These included increased taxes, cuts in wages and pensions, the sale of the national airline TAP Air Portugal, payment for healthcare, increased fares in public transport, higher tuition fees, increased hours of work and attacks on collective bargaining rights..

As a result of these measures, the GDP contracted by 1.6% in 2011 and is expected to contract by 3.1% in 2012. The public debt, instead of decreasing, which is the stated aim of those imposing the austerity, is forecast to grow to 116% of GDP in 2012 (from 107% in 2011). The deepening of the economic recession which followed, led to further job losses, falling revenues, lower wages and higher prices.

The Coelho government, under the watchful eye of the Troika, launched further attacks on the workers, revising the labour law which included reduction of holiday entitlement, reduction in the number of public holidays, reduction in lay off compensation and flexibility of working hours. Not only the ◆

➡ bosses organisations but the UGT trade union, controlled by the Socialist Party, breaking ranks with the CGTP union, agreed to these measures. The CGTP trade union, linked to the Communist Party, organised a demonstration of 300,000 people in February 2012 against this attack on the workers.

The million strong mobilisation of the people on September 15 in 40 cities across Portugal was in reaction to the government imposing a hike of 7% in a social security tax to be paid by workers. This mobilisation was initiated by a collective of individuals drawn from social movements and political currents. They were inspired by an appeal from the occupy movement and organisations in Spain, to demonstrate on the same day as they were in Madrid against the austerity measures of the Spanish government. The collective adopted the slogans "Out with the Troika"; "We want our lives!"; "We have to do something extraordinary" for the appeal. The appeal rejected the austerity measures of the government and the illegitimate debt. It called for the creation of maximum unity of the people and their organisations, with the aim of bringing down the government. The collective appealed to the people to take their future into their own hands, together with the people of the peripheral countries in the eurozone, Greece, Spain, Italy and Ireland. This massive mobilisation of the people led to Coelho's coalition government retreating temporarily and withdrawing the 7% social security tax to be paid by the workers.

Following the mass mobilisation both the Left Bloc and the Communist Party presented motions of

censure of the government in the parliament, rejecting the austerity measures imposed by the Troika and the government. These motions were defeated in parliament, with the Socialist Party abstaining. The new fiscal measures presented by the government for the 2013 budget included an increase of 35% in income tax, a big increase in council tax and the reduction of tax credits on the lower incomes. All these measures were agreed with the European Central Bank before they were discussed in Portugal. These measures are expected to cut family incomes by 20%-30% at a time when the country is in recession, with high and rising unemployment and severe cuts in public services. At the same time privatisation is planned of the few remaining companies that are publicly owned.

To counter the attack that the government has put in place, the CGTP called for a general strike on the 14th November. Despite attempts in the mass media to downplay it, this general strike was the biggest and most successful national strike action in Portugal since the 1974 revolution. Even the brutal state violence could not diminish the scale and impact of the general strike. In spite of the Socialist Party controlled UGT rejecting the strike call, many of its affiliated unions ignored their 'advice' and came out in support of the strike. Further massive and united movements of resistance are needed in the campaign to defeat the government's austerity program. ●

## **INDEPENDENCE FOR SCOTLAND**

The recently announced referendum on Scottish independence will take place in 2014. In terms of the agreement between the British government and the devolved government of Scotland, there will be one question placed before the Scottish people, whether they support Scottish independence or wish to remain as part of the British state.

The tide of Scottish nationalism has been rising since the latter half of the 20th century. In 1979 in a referendum conducted by the British government, the Scottish people voted in favour of a devolved parliament for Scotland. The devolved powers include health, education, agriculture and justice and exclude foreign policy, defence and finance. Tied to the debate on independence is the shaping and future of a post independence Scotland.

The disaffection of the working class in Scotland with the British political system has been developing over some time. Rising unemployment in the 1970s recession and the lack of improvement in their economic and social situation, in spite of the discovery of oil in the Scottish side of the North Sea, created dissatisfaction in the working class. The anger increased with the election of Thatcher to power in 1979, implementing the policies of neoliberalism. When she imposed the poll tax in

Britain, starting it in Scotland, it was robustly rejected by the Scots and then by the rest of Britain. In an era of globalisation, successive Tory and New Labour governments stepped up the policies of neoliberalism. It was the pressure of the Scottish working class that was decisive in producing a positive vote for a devolved Scottish parliament in 1979. The minority Scottish National Party (SNP) controlled government abolished prescription charges in the National Health Service and brought in free university tuition fees, measures which the Scots compared favourably to the legislation passed by the central government in London. They had to endure public service cuts, wage freezes and higher taxes brought in by the Conservative/Liberal coalition government. In the 2011 elections to the Scottish parliament, the Scots voted in the SNP with a thumping majority. For the first time, the SNP was able to rule as a majority government.

The issues that have been dominating the debate of the parties supporting independence, since the announcement of the referendum, have centred on the constitution and the external relations of an independent Scotland. The SNP favours a constitutional monarchy with the queen of England as head of both the English and Scottish state. ➡

➤ The radical socialist parties, like the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) are fighting for a socialist republic. The SNP supports remaining in or seeking entry to the EU and seeking NATO membership. For many years the SNP was against being in NATO, but in a recent divisive debate the party narrowly supported NATO membership. It was asserted by the leadership of the SNP that their support for NATO was dependent on Trident nuclear weapons, based at Faslane in Scotland being removed from Scotland and on Scotland's refusal to host nuclear weapons in the future. Does the SNP leadership really believe it would gain entry to NATO if it refused to allow Trident nuclear weapons to be based at Faslane or has it adopted this stance to retain some credibility with its supporters? In contrast to the position adopted by the SNP, the SSP is opposed to NATO, which it characterises as a nuclear based alliance waging foreign wars, such as in Afghanistan, largely as a junior partner of US imperialism. It would get rid of nuclear weapons and withdraw from foreign wars. Following the SNP vote on NATO, two of the members of the Scottish parliament resigned in disgust from the party.

The foreign policy of a country reflects its internal policy. The SNP in voting for NATO membership, is reaching out to support imperialism.

It endorses the constitutional monarchy's role, tied as it is to Britain's feudal past and as a buttress for the capitalist state. Turning to the internal

policies of the pro independence parties and their supporters, the SNP has received the support of large numbers of Scottish businessmen and women. They perceive correctly that the SNP economically is wedded to neoliberal policies. One of the key planks of this policy is to cut corporation tax. The SNP supports the creation of jobs in Scotland, regardless of the terms and conditions. Thus when Amazon, the giant US corporation invested in Scotland, the SNP did not attach conditions such as union recognition and a living wage to the public funds that the company received for its Scottish investment.

Many businesses see new opportunities opening up for them under an SNP ruled independent Scotland.

Unlike the SNP, the SSP derives its support from the working class and socialists. Because of mainly internal conflicts and some external factors, it is much weaker than in the early years of this century. It is beginning to recover support. Its policy as a socialist party rests on meeting the needs of the people, as against private profit. In power, it would place the energy wealth from oil and wind power in public ownership and the profits used to end fuel poverty and the scandal of winter deaths. The SSP is fighting for an independent socialist Scotland, free from capitalist exploitation and imperialist warmongering. Of the greatest importance is an environmentally sustainable economy. Independence is a means to these ends. ●

## VENEZUELA'S 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: CHAVEZ RE-ELECTED

Hugo Chavez won a third term as president of Venezuela in the country's October 2012 national elections. This election victory allows him to lead his country for the period 2013-2019. Chavez won 55% of the national vote whereas the rival candidate representing the opposition coalition, Henrique Capriles Radonski, received 44% of the vote. While Chavez was widely expected to win, his election campaign also helped to re-energize and popularise big strategic debates on the best ways to advance Venezuela's 21<sup>st</sup> century socialist project.

Chavez's 11% victory margin received mixed reactions, even from his gigantic radical left support base. A closer look at the numbers should help to show why some *Chavista's* are so concerned about what this outcome means for the unfolding Bolivarian socialist project. Voter turnout was higher than in the last presidential elections: 75% of eligible voters cast their ballots in 2006 compared to 81% in 2012. By any standards, this is an impressive example of voluntary participation in elections on a mass scale.

The opposition coalition, called the Democratic Roundtable (or MUD), gained 6,5 million votes, at least 25% higher than their best performance since 1998 when Chavez came to power. Capriles narrowly lost to Chavez in most states as well as in

the Caracas, the capital district, while the states of Merida and Tachira remain firmly in the opposition camp. These gains certainly boosted the optimism of the opposition and probably helped to consolidate the rightwing into a less fractured force for future battles.

At the launch of his electoral campaign in October 2011, Chavez urged supporters to campaign for a landslide victory, stating: "If we won last time with 63%, this time we have to go after 70%, 10 million votes, which is going to require a gigantic effort that goes beyond the party." Yes, Chavez won but fell *far* short of the 70% target. In fact, according to a pro-Chavez journalist, his slightly more than 8 million votes constitute a proportionately smaller gain than that of the opposition forces. On the whole, a tentative conclusion from the 2012 election results appears to point towards the stalling of the Bolivarian revolutionary process whereas the rightwing seems to be gaining ground. Reasons to explain this situation are very complex and feature concerns such as the widening gulf between the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) leadership and its rank-and-file as well as its increasing bureaucratisation of the state apparatus.

➤

➤ The PSUV, with a membership running into a few million people, was obviously the main vehicle driving Chavez's election campaign. In fact, Chavez fully understands that a democratic socialist party is a *sine qua non* for a revolution to bring about the socialist society which he envisions. Addressing a PSUV mass meeting in Bolivar, he reiterated: "It is impossible to make a revolution without a revolutionary party, and that is what our socialist party increasingly needs to be, but at the same time, you cannot create a revolutionary party without a revolutionary militancy, without a socialist militancy. Each one of you is that militancy, individually and collectively."

But the PSUV, in turn, relied heavily on grassroots activists, mobilised through the Great Patriotic Pole (GPP). Chavez conceptualised the GPP as a broad front of diverse social movements and party activists jointly organizing for revolutionary socialism. In the state of Merida, for example, the GPP brought together the Tupamaros, the Educational Community Socialist Front, the Frebin (the Bolivarian Front of Researchers and Innovators), the student movement Community Integration, the

comrades in the rural workers front- the Campesino Front Ezequiel Zamora, the popular educators Network and the Women's Bicentennial Fronting, among other formations. However, the fact that Chavez lost to the opposition in this state fuelled scepticism regarding the dynamism of the GPP.

Immediately after the elections, Chavez reshuffled his cabinet and appointed his foreign minister, Nicolas Maduro, as the vice president. Then, on October 23, Chavez led a parliamentary debate marked by intensive self-criticism. For him, the deepening democracy based on the communes is inseparable from radically transforming Venezuela's productive model. During one of these interventions, he argued: "In (socialist city) Belen, we keep giving houses to people, but you can't see a commune anywhere. Not even the spirit of the commune, which right now is more important than the commune itself; a communal culture... this is a matter for all of us, this (the communes) are part of the soul of this project." The direction of developments will become clearer after the forthcoming regional elections. ●

## 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.