



ANC FACTIONAL INFIGHTING AGAINST WORKING PEOPLE

Tito Mboweni, ex-governor of the South African Reserve Bank, recently joined government's economic bureaucracy after a few years in the corporate world to grow his private business interests. His return to the state bureaucracy signifies more than another example of the revolving door between a rich politician and arch capitalist that typifies the ANC and their parliamentary rivals. It also lays bare the decomposition of the governing party, barely emerging from one scandal just to plunge into another monstrous mess.

Mboweni's Bravado – Capitalist Convictions

President Cyril Ramaphosa appointed Mboweni as the finance minister when Nhlanhla Nene resigned after a few months into his second stint at the helm of national treasury. In effect, Nene was forced to resign after confessing to his engagements with the notorious Gupta brothers during his testimony at the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into 'state capture', a superficial investigation into corruption scandals involving a few high-profile government officials.

Mboweni is the third finance minister in a brief but stormy baptism of Ramaphosa's 'caretaker' administration, completing the final term of their ousted president, Jacob Zuma. Since his euphoric ascent to the presidency, Ramaphosa has been hoping for and preaching stability, unity and peace whilst upheavals engulf him (See: *APDUSAN, Vol 24(1), July 2018, pp1-3*). As evidence of these crises, consider the ongoing economic meltdown and anarchy that manifests in the growing debt burden, exchange rate collapse, unemployment and inequality. These catastrophes, in turn, stem from a rotten socio-economic system with its own stubborn logic, devastating the lives of working people.

Added to this economic catastrophe is the socio-political turmoil and acute factional strife within the governing party a few months before the 2019 national elections. Appointed to bring stability to the finance ministry and tasked with appeasing and winning the confidence of capitalists, Mboweni's bravado stirred an uproar within the party and the tripartite alliance shortly after delivering government's medium term budget plan. His call for

speeding up the full privatisation of state owned enterprises at an investors' conference in New York seemingly contradicts ANC policy of securing 'equity partners for SOEs'. Some speculated that Mboweni's foolhardiness in New York would cause a rift with President Ramaphosa, two men with such similar paths towards self-enrichment. Unsurprisingly, neither the State President nor the Public Enterprises Minister (Pravin Gordhan) renounced Mboweni's statement. They just repeated their hollow policy of finding 'equity partners for SOEs' when COSATU begged for Mboweni to be chastised. After all, does privatisation differ in substance from giving investors ownership in SOEs under capitalism?

Loyalists with sentimental faith in ANC politics reduce this debacle to a clash of personal taste and style – or Mboweni's own opinions. This distorted view hides or overlooks, deliberately or not, the ideological premises of the finance minister's words and deeds. It fails to see this saga as a reflection of self-seeking petit bourgeois politics; the ideology entrenched in the Freedom Charter and anti-working class policies the governing party promotes. The irreversible rot in the ANC originates from the logic of this ideology.

Neoliberal State Managers, Incipient Bourgeoisie and Corruption

Ramaphosa, we may recall, defeated his rival for the ANC presidency by a slim margin at their December 2017 conference. His was not a landslide victory but one hinged on a fragile truce. Factional infighting at all levels of the party plunged their 54th national elective conference into chaos. Compromises to bridge the divisions within their ranks and uphold the façade of unity have not lasted. Costly battles in courts to resolve intra-party ➡

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➔ hostilities drag on in many regions of the country, subjugating how the party operates to bourgeois court judgements instead of progressive principles. (See: *Mail & Guardian, Ghostbuster cleans up ANC branches, 16-22 November 2018, p16*)

Voting at the 54th national elective conference was in line with ANC traditions. Branch delegates, supposedly representatives of a vague social base, voted overwhelmingly for black elites and capitalists to consolidate their control over the ANC leadership and apparatus. What matters is not the nominal categorisation of delegates but the social class interests they consciously or unconsciously safeguard. Inside this party regime, on which social class can voting delegates model themselves but the ambitions of the dominant force in the party – established and aspirant black capitalists? These are the *nouveau riches* cultivated with insidiousness through state procurement tenders for black economic empowerment (*'tenderpreneurs'*) and co-optation into big businesses.

In this situation, the makeup of the 80-member National Executive Committee of the ANC and Ramaphosa's inner circle, particularly his handpicked council to attract investment, is telling in itself. The president's investment council, for example, includes his capitalist ilk and the neoliberal superstar coached by the IMF and World Bank, Trevor Manuel. Malusi Gigaba, implicated in a string of scandals, occupies the fifth position in the NEC, which is the highest decision-making body between ANC elective conferences. Tito Mboweni narrowly missed out on being part of the top 10 in this powerful leadership body! More often than not, a NEC position is a gateway to a lucrative member-of-parliament seat as well as richer networks in the business world. Managing a neoliberal state at the behest of a bourgeois minority (coupled with self-enrichment by any means necessary) dictates ANC politics today. This political mission of the ANC fans a toxic and highly contagious political

competition inside and around the party. The faithful on the party's periphery, adept at sanitising the ANC's hideous politics and in justification of their own allegiance, uphold the false hope of organisational renewal, regeneration and restoration of democracy inside their structures. With the 2019 elections fast approaching, and campaigns to win votes shifting into top gear, such spin-doctoring and blatant lies will intensify.

Growing Resistance for Anti-Capitalist Political Alternatives

Sporadic, fragmented but growing resistance to social injustices, gender based violence, xenophobia, exploitation, land theft, poverty and state repression must guard against entanglement in ANC factional strife. For the warring factions inside the ANC are united in their faith in capitalism, steeped in liberal tutelage to downplay or conceal the system's relentless attacks on working people. Failing to break from the ANC, in terms of its ideological and organisational traditions, is bound to frustrate, demoralise and misdirect the fightback of trade unions, landless peasant organisations, social movements and student formations. Rallying protest movements behind fallacious slogans such as the 'Radical Interpretation of the Freedom Charter' would be just as self-defeating.

Instead of channelling anti-neoliberal protests into these political dead-ends, the need for a movement to unite struggles of working people based on anti-capitalist political demands is ever more pressing. It would be a grave setback for our struggle if this anti-capitalist political movement limits its agitation and mobilisation to parliamentary elections. Instead, we must unite all forces of resistance around a minimum political demand: a democratically elected Constituent Assembly under the full control of working people and free from protections for privileged minority interests. ●

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE – THE GENDER SUMMIT AND POLITICAL IMPERATIVES

1-2 November saw the hosting by national government and The Total Shutdown movement of the national gender summit. Protests organised by The Total Shutdown movement on 1 August, flowed into the launching of a campaign aimed at addressing the scourge of gender based violence in South Africa. This initiative, through its spokespersons identified "prevention, laws and policies, response and support, accountability and resourcing, co-ordination and support and communication" as the thematic areas government has to attend to. The verdict was

already out as to what the outcomes were going to be when the parties in attendance are examined: academics, government, civil society formations, traditional leaders and others – all meeting in a posh Pretoria Hotel. Working class formations like the Gauteng Community Health Forum protested about the undemocratic composition of the summit in that it excluded women representative bodies from rural areas and townships.

A list of 24 demands were drawn up by The Total Shutdown movement and government's responses in meeting these, were going to ➔

➔ be monitored. Already, as expected, certain demands linked to certain deadlines have not been met. One spokesperson, Brenda Madumise-Pajibo promised on-going agitation, advocacy and lobbying in advancing the issue. Failing this, she maintained that women in their numbers can still choose to vote the mostly ANC politicians out of office. Participants criticised the summit for not taking gender-based violence seriously and actions of government not going 'beyond words'.

Inasmuch as these struggles attempt to solve and address a major social crisis, serious questions need to be asked about its intent and content. Firstly, in reformist struggles, directing demands at government must not mean abdicating control of the entire agenda and narrative to government. At all levels and spheres of South African society government is in fact more willing or inclined to withdraw from social service provision than increasing or improving them. Directing demands to government in equal measure means people's organisations also assuming responsibility for the realisation of the demands. The building of viable and powerful people's organisations and using them to independently drive campaigns must be what guides these struggles.

The misdirection of women's anger and struggle energies is indeed reflected in the misleading name by which the organisers identify themselves. It suggests a nebulous entity with no central command or organising authority. The loose association of individuals and all sorts of questionable organisations around a critical social issue does not lay a solid foundation for consistent united action. The singular lack of a set of central political

demands to guide the movement is an additional handicap. This points to a state of political amnesia where all the lessons of past struggles are conveniently swept aside. Its radical sounding tone only serves to obfuscate the real issues: intensified class oppression, suffering and exploitation of millions of workers and peasants. If a 'total shutdown' is the objective, then relying on government action, as a partner makes little political sense.

To completely tie the objectives of a campaign to the willingness or unwillingness of a government to meet or not accede to demands is tantamount to running around in circles. The summit's talk-shop point on patriarchy illustrates how serious social, economic and political questions are conveniently swept under the rug. The minister of Justice, Michael Masutha argued that further examination of this question is required; the state president suggested that an end must be brought to patriarchy; Mrs Baleka Mbete rehashed an old government cliché that 'better implementation of sound policies' is what should happen. How can anyone take these statements seriously when it comes from the very people who perpetuate patriarchy and its associated oppression of women? Surely, a working class political alternative movement is what is required.

The five year national plan of action against GBV and femicide promised to be launched by government, will raise the hopes of many. Many also argue that it amounts to electioneering gimmickry. Women's struggles must become part of an alternative movement for socialist democracy. ●

TRIBUTE – COMRADE LAZARUS LEGODI

It is our honour to pay tribute to our comrade Lazarus Legodi who passed on suddenly on the eve of Thursday 19th July 2018. He was a committed member of the Northern Cape branch of the African Peoples Democratic Union of Southern Africa. As a comrade from a working class background, he joined the movement to add his voice and make a contribution in the struggle for liberation and against the capitalist system which is in decay and incapable of providing sustainable jobs and livelihoods for the very people who keep it alive, that is the landless Peasants and the Working Class.

Comrade Lazarus was a very active member of the organisation, to the point where none of us can remember him missing a meeting. His participation in the branch activities and contribution in building and recruiting new members will be missed. He attended the extended National Executive Committee meetings as well as National Conferences of APDUSA, which were held in Kimberley, Cape Town, East London and Johannesburg, without fail.

As part of his political training, he participated in the local study group and attended the Bi-Annual Political Schools organized by APDUSA and the Unity Movement of South Africa where discussions were held on six papers each over a period of two days. As a disciplined member of APDUSA, he continued to distribute the APDUSAN, the mouthpiece of the organisation amongst his peers and the community in general. We salute Comrade Lazarus. Long live the spirit of Comrade Lazarus. Forward to the struggle for the total destruction of the Capitalist system!

APDUSA POLITICAL SCHOOL 2018

Below is the first in a series of articles based on the papers presented at its April 2018 political school. The theme dealt with the working class seizing and maintaining state power. APDUSA places great emphasis on the political education of its members in particular and the working class in general. These contributions therefore serve as a platform for members to contribute to the ideological and organisational growth of the movement for socialist democracy.

LATIN AMERICA – THE STATE AND 21ST CENTURY SOCIALISM

The papers and the discussion on them raised fundamental questions, chief amongst them the question of political power: its class manifestations, its contestation as seen from a historical perspective and its modern day expression in the clash between the bourgeois state and the labouring classes. As part of the inexorable forward march of history it clearly crystallised that there is an objective necessity for the working class and its allies to seize or wrest political power from the bourgeoisie; a class which wields political power totally out of proportion to its size and economic function. Deliberations concluded that the future of humanity itself is at stake when we consider the ecological destructive practices of a decaying global capitalist-imperialist system. The resilience of this neo-liberal order stems in large measure from a combination of the use of force (through bodies of armed men); the control of the thought processes of the laboring classes through mis-education and nefarious mass media practices as well as co-optation of the petit bourgeois or elements thereof.

The 20th century political and economic pathways in Bolivia highlighted the struggles of the indigenous peasant movement against colonial rule; the emergence of tin and silver mining as prominent in the expansion of the capitalist economy; the rule of right wing capitalist parties and its associated military rule. These developments brought about an atmosphere that generated growing worker and peasant radicalism: against landlessness, water and gas privatisations. The early 2000s saw the emergence and electoral victories of the Movimiento al Socialismo or Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) under Evo Morales. Being in charge of state affairs was however accompanied by important shifts in the balance between electoral politics/representation and radical activism aimed at destroying the neo-liberal capitalist state machinery. These shifts were not always of a progressive type, leading to what one author classifies as 'reconstituted neo-liberalism'. The Bolivian experiences of extra-parliamentary and electoral politics therefore holds invaluable lessons for socialist worldwide- especially in Africa.

The section on Venezuela focuses on the successes achieved by the left parties in this region: From the electoral victory of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela followed by Evo Morales of Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador. These are the left parties who came into power in the late 1990s and based their electoral campaigns on anti-neoliberal

programmes which serve the interests of the minorities at the expense of the majority. One paper focused more on progress made by Hugo Chavez as he transformed that country into a new society. Chavez and other left Latin American leaders that came to power through anti-neoliberal electoral programmes termed their policy to be "21st Century Socialism". This raises the question of what is 21st Century Socialism? One of the ways to understand the meaning of the concept is to analyse and understand the way capitalism of the 21st century operate globally; the strategies they use to exploit the working class for the benefit of themselves. These influence the counter strategies to overthrow the capitalist system. The 21st century socialism is a non-dogmatic approach to socialism and is dependent on the particular conditions of each society. It is in this context that attempts were made by left governments in Latin America to build an alternative to the neoliberal capitalist model; one which is based on humanism and solidarity.

The adoption of the Bolivarian constitution in 1999 when Hugo Chavez came to power became the centrality of human development for Venezuelans. Venezuela has implemented social justice, reducing inequality through government subsidised programmes. The 21st century socialism transition in Latin America differed from transitions during the 20th century where people have conquered state power via armed struggle. The transition in Latin America is occurring via the institutional road where government power has been achieved through elections

However, the left and centre-left governments in Latin America are confronting a difficult situation. This entails the objective economic and cultural conditions; the existing correlation of forces from outside and in their own countries. Faced with backward economic conditions they still do not have complete state power. They are restricted by an inherited state apparatus whose characteristics are functional to the capitalist system but are not suitable for advancing towards socialism. However, experience has shown, contrary to the theoretical dogmatism of some sectors of the radical left, that a revolutionary government can use the apparatus of the inherited state, transforming it into an instrument to assist in the construction of the new society. The government has adopted several strategies to advance the Bolivarian revolution transition towards socialism. This includes initiatives to change the ➡

➔ ownership and control over the means of production. Several programmes are being implemented to distribute wealth such as the rural and urban land reform programme while oil revenue has been used to fund social programmes for free health care, education and subsidised food markets. The formation of ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our Americas) in 2004 by Venezuela and Cuba, later joined by Nicaragua, Ecuador and five Caribbean countries is a move away from market exchanges; it is also an attempt at the economic, social, political and cultural integration of the Latin America and the Caribbean regions, to promote trade on the principles of fairness and solidarity rather than a free trade system.

However, no policies have been introduced to break the free market system of exchange. The establishment of Bolivarian circles has allowed for increased citizen participation in the state. The establishment of Bolivarian circles with millions of members, have been described by Chavez as the backbone of the democratic revolution unfolding in Venezuela. The people see the Bolivarian Circles as tools for self-help and political awareness. They work hand in hand in order to make ends meet in various shanty towns, neighbourhoods and villages across Venezuela.

The Transformation Of The Armed Forces:

The army is an important aspect in achieving state power as is the transformation of the armed forces. The role of the military as an instrument that can work for the nation in line with the Bolivarian Circles in terms of providing social services, is important. The role of the military as an instrument to suppress the population has been weakened through a civil - military union: providing health care, subsidised food, school tutoring and construction equipment. The left governments in Latin America have attracted support in a large variety of social sectors that are interested in defending and extending the social advances that were achieved under the Bolivarian Process as well as the extension of the revolution internationally.

Challenges Faced By The Bolivarian Revolution

Despite the two decades of the Bolivarian Revolution's extraordinary achievements, which are

significant to the process of transition to socialism, there are internal challenges that could pose a significant threat to advance the Bolivarian Process. There are several external challenges to the Bolivarian Process as well. External challenges include the continued attempts by the US government to isolate the Venezuelan government and also its funding of opposition groups in an attempt to overthrow the government. The opposition continues to deny the legitimacy of the government despite continuing to lose in all electoral processes. Internal challenges pose a threat to the revolution and government moves towards a socialist transition. Firstly the lack of a political programme. 21st century Socialism is a very generic idea that is still in the process of construction. The lack of collective leadership became problematic as the Bolivarian Process became dependent on Chavez while he was still alive and his leadership was not questioned. The absence of a revolutionary party: the PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) is described as an administrative and electoral instrument used for applying the political line that President Chavez has been establishing. Moreover it is a political party that is organised from above. Also, there should be a number of parties to generate richer discussions. A large, powerful party can generate arrogance and generate bad relations with its own allies. The Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela is faced with extreme difficulties and is under constant threat. The Maduro presidency is facing challenges of shortages and inflation which grip the growth of the economy. There have been calls for more radical programmes by some left groupings after the June 2017 elections for the Constituent Assembly. The calls are for the CA to assume all power and the expropriation of banks and multinationals. In addition, government is called upon to institute greater measures against corruption and counter revolutionary activities by the opposition. These calls are made in the context of a state apparatus that fundamentally remains the same with the possibilities of a reversion to neo-liberal policies. It is still a question whether the Maduro government will go forward with the implementation of further reforms to deepen the social transformation process. ●



From Around the World

WAR AGAINST YEMEN: THE VIOLATORS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The South African state's weapons sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are illegal in terms of South African law; more

specifically the National Conventional Arms Control Act (2003). The so-called oversight role of the parliamentary structure called the ➔

➡ National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) is clearly just a pretence. The thunderous silence of the defence ministry, the Department: International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and other SA government officials on this matter, again demonstrates the duplicity and dishonesty of the ruling class' international practices. For them, it matters little if they break their own laws. Ideally, for them, these sales should continue without much fuss, away from the headlines and open public scrutiny. To sidestep any criticism, behind the scene manoeuvring aims at convincing the world that any criticism of the Saudi war effort against Yemen might jeopardise the brokering of a peace deal. Such are the absurdities of the international armaments industry and its operators: first you supply/sell weapons to a country; this country uses it in massive human rights abuses and then you say that you can't stop the weapons sales because it might upset the recipient country. Some years ago, the SA government, in its usual boastful manner, got involved in 'peace-negotiations' between the Palestinian resistance and the Israeli government as well. It came to nought. And today the Israeli government is still arresting, detaining and killing Palestinians on a daily basis. Our South African rulers are part of an international military-industrial complex which in 2017 spent US \$1.74 trillion on armaments (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute – SIPRI). Interestingly, the USA and Saudi Arabia spent approximately 44% of this total; respectively being the largest and third largest spenders. Britain and France follow the USA as the largest weapons suppliers to Saudi Arabia. 16 400 civilian deaths in Yemen , in the period March 2015 to May 2018 (UNO) are direct results of drone attacks and air strikes on bridges, factories, wedding parties, funerals and on school buses. The subsequent starvation,

cholera outbreaks and threatening famine coupled with soaring food prices and job losses have cut across tribes and across class in Yemen. 8 out of 27 million Yemenis are currently dependent on emergency food aid. Fuel prices have risen, aggravating an already desperate situation for millions of citizens. In all this, the South Africa state is directly complicit.

Recent history also shows a strong continuity of the foreign policies of the old white minority regime – especially insofar as the armaments industry is concerned. Former president Thabo Mbeki had to publicly apologise to the Rwandese population for the complicity (via weapons sales) of the white minority government in the 1994 genocide. The multi-billion rand arms procurement deal, signed in 1999 promised much in terms of foreign direct investment. These benefits are yet to materialise. The Sereti Commission – amidst widespread criticism – concluded that no wrongdoing on the part of government ministers could be proven. The South African presidency will no doubt justify the current weapons sales on the promises of US\$ 20 billion investments made by the Saudi and UAE governments. These two governments are notorious for their undemocratic, highly repressive economic and political systems – especially the oppression of migrant workers from Asia. Trade unions are banned and migrant workers are immediately repatriated if they lose their jobs.

As we can all witness, continued relations with Israel and other repressive states is a standard practice with the SA government. Weapons sales to the Egyptian and Myanmar governments are considered acceptable. It matters little that the repressive policies of these governments make daily worldwide headlines. So much for the upholding of human rights. ●

A LEFT TURN IN MEXICO'S 2018 GENERAL ELECTIONS?

The twin parties of Mexican elites and capitalists suffered an unprecedented defeat in the July 2018 general elections. This electoral result shattered the shared control of Mexico's government and presidency by the PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*) and PAN (*Partido Acción Nacional*), organs of corrupt politicians notorious for 'stealing elections' and plundering Mexico's wealth.

Mexicans voted for an end to misery,

oppression, exploitation and corruption. They want an end to the relentless terror of drug cartels that are claiming the lives of civilians on a rapidly expanding scale. Impoverished, exploited and oppressed Mexicans voted for livelihood security, the exact opposite to the neoliberal nightmare that a succession of PRI and PAN presidencies imposed on them!

With 60% of the country's 89 million ➡

➡ eligible voters participating in the elections, it gives the incoming government of president-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador, a powerful mandate to push forward with an anti-capitalist model of socio-economic transition. Does the programme of López Obrador echo the hopes for a higher quality of life for Mexico's poor and working majority? Will the López Obrador government implement the bold and resolute policies demanded to end the crises in living and working conditions that afflict Mexican workers and peasants?

Capitalists Welcome Electoral Outcome

Answers to these questions cannot ignore how the capitalist rulers assess the outcomes of the July elections and what the results mean for their economic and political domination in future. A closer look at reactions of the bourgeoisie, particularly from the enlightened guardians of their interests, reveals their aims.

Mr Carlos Slim, a Mexican capitalist ranked among the top 10 billionaires in the world, does not see López Obrador's victory as a threat to bourgeois interests. On the contrary, this owner of Mexico's largest telecommunications network and major banks views him as a proponent of "a more austere government, reducing costs substantially and focusing on the internal sector of the economy more." The 'economic nationalism' that features in López Obrador's political statements dovetails with Slim's tongue in cheek retaliation to the anti-immigrant bigotry of President Trump in America: "the best wall is investment and creating opportunities in Mexico" (Reuters Press, 31 July 2018).

This critic of Trump's campaign for a border-wall across the desert that separates Mexico and the United States, a case of brutal state-sanctioned xenophobia, is not a defender of working class interests. Far from it! Mr Slim's call to place Mexico's fate in the hands of investors amounts to nothing but the unbridled enrichment of a privileged minority at the expense of the majority! In other words, the accumulators of private wealth through worker exploitation and looting of Mexico's natural resources, with Carlos Slim a prominent member of this class, should be supported in their pillaging without any obstacles. It is an insidious scheme to prolong and intensify the exploitation, impoverishment and repression of Mexican working people.

The Economist magazine, an authoritative voice and reference for capitalists globally, responded to the electoral outcome with guarded optimism. July's electoral outcome, it argues emphatically, was "the most momentous occasion since the revolution that began in 1910" because it "has destroyed the political duopoly" of

the PRI and PAN (*The Economist*, 5 July 2018). The tone reverberates with militancy and euphoria, equating the elections with a revolution. Its reference is not an anti-capitalist revolution. On the contrary, it refers to the peasant revolts against colonial domination and imperialist invasion, of more than a century ago – essentially a bourgeois revolution. Moreover, electoral victories, no matter how momentous they might be, are far from social revolutions in which one class overthrows another and opens the way towards a radical overhaul of the socio-economic system and the state.

Whither Lopez Obrador?

The election results highlight a dual message. On the one hand, voter turnout on its own attests to widespread faith in Mexico's parliamentary system among the population. In other words, illusions in parliamentary elections run deep even among working people. On the other hand, voters threw their weight behind the presidential candidate standing for a seemingly progressive alternative to the discredited traditional parties of the bourgeoisie and elites.

It is in this political atmosphere that Lopez Obrador, ex-mayor of Mexico City and presidential contender in two previous elections, launched yet another bid for the presidency. His political party, *Movimiento Regeneración Nacional* (MORENA), is a leading force in an electoral front known as *juntos haremos historia* (together we will make history). This broad coalition includes centre-left formations and radical left parties that will be part of the new cabinet. MORENA, launched in 2014, has an alliance with prominent trade unions in Mexico. When Constituent Assembly elections took place in Mexico City in 2016, MORENA emerged as the main political force in the capital, capturing 32,87% of the votes. In the 2018 elections, it also received critical support from 'Izquierda Revolucionaria' (IR), a Mexican Trotskyist organisation.

López Obrador started his political career several decades ago in the PRI, leaving it in 2000 for the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD). When he contested the 2006 and 2012 elections, he did so as the PRD presidential candidate.

What does López Obrador stand for beyond his anti-corruption and clean governance populism? The election platform of MORENA, dubbed "National Project: 2018-2024", resembles the character and substance of tried and failed neoliberal development experiments. Compared to the political aspirations of working people, this programme is hollow. It is conspicuously silent on the need to displace bourgeois democracy with workers' democracy and the political means for doing so. Using government and private sector partnerships for the building of highways, railroads and rural roads is bound to ruin Mexico as has happened elsewhere. ➡

➔ Lowering the cost of living for the vast majority of Mexicans is a pressing necessity. López Obrador promises to do this through energy and agricultural subsidies, among other schemes. This forms part of the flawed model of government-business partnerships. It is indicative of his populist fallacies. In his victory speech, López Obrador committed himself to ‘an orderly transition’ and the maintenance of ‘economic and financial stability’. His promises of prudent budgeting and no tax increases are the centrepieces of fiscal austerity.

The incoming administration’s stance on the United States is a crucial indicator of its

international outlook. The Trump administration in Washington has recently locked Mexico into a new trade deal – or a ‘new NAFTA’. In addition, the orientation of López Obrador towards the divergent political currents in Latin America is unclear. It confronts him with a test that he cannot dodge. Will he champion the Bolivarian Alternatives for Latin America (ALBA), the anti-imperialist current spearheaded by Venezuela and Bolivia, or align himself with local and foreign elites who are enriching themselves through dispossession, plundering and heinous repression? ●

ZAPATISTAS AND MEXICO’S 2018 ELECTIONS

The Zapatistas, with their stronghold in Chiapas in Southern Mexico, resolved in October 2016 to participate in Mexico’s 2018 general elections. This marked an historical shift in the political strategy of the Zapatistas.

The Zapatistas decided to enter the electoral arena through a coalition known as the Indigenous Governing Council. The base of this council is rooted in organised peasant communities active in a large number of Mexican states. With a programme steeped in anti-capitalist politics, it focuses on land dispossession, environmental pollution and human rights violations.

The barriers imposed by Mexico’s electoral laws preventing independent candidates from appearing on the ballot paper became an insurmountable obstruction to this effort. Although the coalition’s presidential candidate, María de Jesús Patricio (popularly known as Marichuy), criss-crossed the country, this campaign did not secure the required 900,000

signatures from 17 states by the February 2018 deadline. With the odds so firmly stacked against her, Marichuy had to abandon her efforts to be on the ballot paper.

Throughout the campaign, however, Marichuy urged supporters attending her mass assemblies to organise themselves. This call for the self-organisation of the oppressed and exploited majority aimed unambiguously at the defeat of the bourgeois system of governance instead of winning the presidency.

In a reflection on her forced withdrawal from the presidential election, she remarked: ‘We discovered that the National Electoral Institution was designed with the rich in mind’. At the end of her campaign, she called on her supporters to lift the struggle to new heights: “If fighting for life means being against the laws, then so be it. We shall fight that way.” A Luta Continua ●

UNFOLDING BREXIT POLITICS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS

The British government has triggered the two year process by which Britain must leave the EU at the end of March 2019. The Tory government and party remain deeply divided on the terms of departure from the EU. The government’s negotiating position on these terms neither satisfies those who wish to remain in the EU nor those who voted to leave (Brexiters). The terms of the deal or whether there is no deal at all, has huge implications for Britain’s politics and economy. While the EU will be affected by British withdrawal from the union, the 27 nations can better withstand any deleterious consequences of Britain’s departure.

The British working class, in deciding on Brexit, whether to support the Tory Party or Labour Party(LP) led by Jeremy Corbyn, face a real choice affecting their lives.

The negotiating position of the Tory government on Brexit is known as the Chequers proposal. For the Remainers, because this proposal provides for a market in goods only with the EU, it does not go far enough. The Brexiters reject it because of the market ties Britain retains with the EU. Two Brexiteer cabinet ministers, David Davis and Boris Johnson, have resigned from the Cabinet. One of the other Brexiteer cabinet ministers, ➔

➡ Liam Fox is of the opinion that Chequers will not be ratified; that no deal is more likely, with Britain having to accept WTO tariffs. This is a position he favours. The chief EU negotiator, Michel Barnier rejects Chequers as cherry picking by choosing to trade in goods and not services, as well as the ending of free movement of people. There is also the question of the soft border (no customs barrier) between Ireland and Northern Ireland, which will become a hard border when Britain leaves the EU. None of the parties involved in the negotiations are in favour of customs barriers having to be put in place when Britain leaves the EU. There is a great deal of loose talk among the British negotiating team about a technical solution to the border problem, without customs barriers but the EU negotiators reject this 'solution' outright.

In discussion on Brexit, what we must not lose sight of is the racist, xenophobic and anti-immigrant referendum campaign conducted by the Brexiteers. They are working towards Britain as 'a race to the bottom' low wage economy falling under WTO tariffs and negotiations. The counterpart to Brexit lies in the US is Trump's presidential campaign. His accession to power, Brexit and the rise of right wing governments and near fascist parties in Europe, represent a sharp turn to the right in world politics.

While the agenda of the Brexiteers is being propelled forward, those opposing it are focusing their attention on the approach of the main opposition party, the Labour Party, to the Brexit negotiations. The majority of LP supporters (65%) voted to remain in the EU in the referendum. Many LP supporters to the north in Britain, where there has been large scale deindustrialisation felt abandoned by the LP and voted to leave the EU. The LP, led by Jeremy Corbyn has to win back their support and try and unite the party. As part of this process, it is important for him to retain the support of the many trade union members of the LP and

extend the influence of the party to trade unionists outside the LP. The LP has accepted the verdict of the British people in the referendum. It aims to ensure that the post-Brexit settlement preserves the benefits Britain obtains from collaboration with the EU. Its policy on Brexit is a new customs union with the EU with easy but not open access to Britain for migrants. The right-wing of the LP, and this includes many LP MPs, fear a radical program for the future of the country promised by the Corbyn leadership, supported by large numbers of young recruits to the LP. This program is opposed to neo-liberal policies and tackles the social problems that caused the Brexit vote. The Corbyn leadership has discussed bringing back under public ownership, privatised public services such as transport, undertaking a massive social housing program and abolishing trade union laws that interfere with workers rights to strike. Some Tory MP rebels, who voted against the government on the terms of withdrawal from the EU, have been in discussion with right wing LP MPs and there is even talk of a "new political party".

If the Chequers proposal for Britain leaving the EU is rejected by the EU and there is a no deal, the spotlight will then turn to the British parliament. The coalition of the minority Tory government, supported in key votes by the Democratic Unionist Party of Northern Ireland, is unlikely to survive the combined opposition to a no deal of the LP, Liberals, Scottish Nationalists (SNP), Welsh nationalists and rebel Tory MPs. Whether the impasse produced will lead to a call for a general election or a second referendum on membership of the EU, is hard to predict. There is a growing demand in the ranks of the LP for a second referendum on the EU. There are powerful forces at work opposed to a Corbyn led LP winning political power. Turbulent times in Britain lie ahead. ●

FROM THE ARCHIVES – THE LAND QUESTION

The Land Question continues to dog the South African political scene. Today we have both the ANC and the EFF campaigning vigorously for "Land expropriation without compensation", as if this can fundamentally change anything within the capitalist context. We can do no better than to refer our readers to the paper archived on our website: "The Land Question And The Struggle For Freedom" by Jane Gool-Tabata, written in 1991. (retrievable via the existing link on Jane Gool-Tabata). Two quotes from this paper gives an idea of the penetrating analysis she presents.

... the concept, NATIONALIZATION OF THE LAND, transferred to the soil of economic reality is a category of commodity and capitalist society. It is not what the peasant thinks and what the populists says that matters and applies to the world of harsh realities but what emerges from the economic relations of present society..... ➡

➔ Speaking from a long range point of view - the impending proletarian struggle with the working-class in the lead and the peasantry as its true ally, it is necessary for the proletariat to defend revolutionary traditions against capitalist strivings. But it would be a great mistake to think that the new farmer class turning towards division of the land, nationalisation will be a transient phenomenon of no serious significance. On the contrary, it will have serious material and moral significance. The moral significance of nationalization in a revolutionary epoch lies in that the proletariat helps to strike a blow at one form of private property. (Our emphasis).

Jane Gool-Tabata Harare 1991

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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Website: www.apdusa.org.za Email: apdusa@mail.org