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AFRICAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC UNION  
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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

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## KENYA HOSTS THE 2007 WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

Africa hosted the 2007 World Social Forum (WSF) in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi from 20-25 January. All discussion sessions and other activities took place inside the Moi International Sports Complex situated on the outskirts of central Nairobi. It was arguably the largest event linked to the global anti-capitalist movement to take place in Africa in recent memory. About sixty thousand people registered for the Nairobi WSF. This is about half the attendance of the Mumbai WSF in 2004 and less than a third of recent participation in Porto Alegre. But given that fewer than 5000 people participated in the polycentric Bamako (Mali) WSF in 2006, then it is reasonable to conclude that attendance at the 2007 WSF was not unimpressive. So, even at the conservative guess that roughly 25% of participants came from Africa, in the order of 15,000 people, this figure is still higher than Bamako.

Nonetheless, a major obstacle to broader participation was the exclusionary registration fee (pegged at about US\$6). This blocked scores of poor Kenyans from attending WSF events inside the boundaries of the sports complex. Several hundreds of these poverty stricken people, mainly from the slums surrounding Nairobi, protested this exclusion from the main WSF space and forced their way through the main entrance guarded by the army. Activists from elsewhere, especially South Africans, joined this action but the Kenyan WSF Organizing Committee refused to scrap the fees for those unable to pay. In reaction to this closure of the WSF space to the poor, a spill over 'People's Social Forum' (dubbed a 'people's parliament') took place in a city garden. Many activists flocked from the main WSF venue to this 'parallel event' which better reflected the anti-capitalist spirit that the WSF had become known for. This alternative forum provided space to debate a range of socio-economic problems and the need to strengthen resistance movements. At a rally on the final day though, called the Social Movements Assembly, militant forces from the 'two forums' joined hands around the slogan 'Another World is Possible'.

Even with these 'logistical blockages' the WSF continues to attract tens of thousands of activists from across the world. There might be many reasons

why the WSF retains this appeal. Basically, it provides activists with an 'open space' to better understand how neo-liberalism destroys the world, share resistance experiences and forge united actions to make 'another world possible'. In Nairobi, however, the poorest Kenyans were barred from participating in this 'open space'. Yet virtually every member of the WSF International Council, the Forum's central decision making structure, consistently upheld the image of a body without leaders, repeating that the WSF belongs to its participants. Of course, this is a fraudulent assertion because the Charter of Principles governing the WSF prohibits some anti-capitalist forces, like socialist political organizations, to operate within this 'open space'.

A force that displayed its dominant presence at the Nairobi WSF was the NGO movement and that is why Patrick Bond, a South African radical political economist, called the event a 'NGO Trade Fair'. Almost all 'social movement activists' who attended the WSF were funded by some NGO, with NGOs from poorer countries normally in the pay of some rich donor in America or Europe. The other visible elements in this mix were churches and government officials. In several hundred sessions speakers from these outfits lamented the brutality of neo-liberal globalisation, but their anti-capitalist feelings never went very far. They were clearly interested in building a 'capitalist world with a human face' rather than make 'another socialist world possible'.

These concerns point straight to the core of the programmatic orientation and future of the WSF. On one day, in an obscure and tiny venue inside the sports complex, consecutive sessions reviewed the last 7 years of the WSF and debated its possible future trajectory - indeed, gigantic questions for the global anti-capitalist movement. Although many of those who initiated the WSF back in 2001 and served on its International Council actively participated in all these sessions, the ideas raised were speculative and are unlikely to impact on the future course of the WSF. Nevertheless, the small number of participants (consisting mainly of youth) in these stimulating workshops, spoke

► passionately for a change in the direction of the WSF. In the final session panellists from the Brazilian and Italian governments said there was no need to shift from its 'social movement' focus to a clearer political orientation. But nearly every speaker from the audience agreed that the current WSF was rather weak on concrete alternatives to neo-liberal globalisation. Some younger participants in these sessions, specifically those from Kenya and Sudan, stated that the slogan of WSF needs to change to "Another Socialist World is Possible". This effectively articulated the need for the WSF to adopt an explicit socialist orientation. (See also: APDUSAN March 2005).

Although they were excluded from the official programme, a small gathering of African radical left

groups took place before the final day. Fewer than a dozen countries were represented, but the discussions were highly perceptive. This gathering evaluated the 2007 WSF and looked at strategic actions to strengthen their coordinated intervention in ongoing struggles in their respective countries. It was clear, these comrades agreed, that the current leadership of the WSF has reached a *cul de sac* and is evidently incapable of offering the political leadership needed today. At the social movement assembly, these left groups took part in solidarity actions with militants from the 'two forums'. They also forged contact with the leadership of the 'alternative forum of the poor' as part of the task to build a revolutionary anti-capitalist force in Africa.

## UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN STRIKE

More than 600 white collar and professional workers at UCT went on strike on Friday 16 February. The strike was called by the Employees Union (EU), an in-house union of UCT administrative and professional staff. Initially planned to continue only until 11am on Monday, the strike was overtaken by unprecedented rank and file determination. Strikers assembled outside the university administration building and created a permanent mass meeting which took its own decisions. This disrupted plans by the EU leadership for a return to work at different points during the day. UCT management which first expected the strike to fail, and then to disappear over the week-end were forced into serious negotiations. A mass meeting on Tuesday morning accepted a reorganised offer with almost all involved claiming victory.

The strike drew solidarity from activists of NEHAWU, the majority union of the lowest paid workers directly employed by UCT. However the NEHAWU leadership had already settled, leaving the EU stranded. With the ethos of competitiveness and individualism dominant amongst students and academics at UCT, there was little support, despite individual exceptions.

It is hard to find any basis in Rands and cents on which the strikers can claim a victory. But it was clear that something else took place. For the first time in most of their lives, strikers simply defied a university administration which presumed it could take them for granted. In the process, they discovered that they had the capacity both for collective defiance, and through that, the capacity to disrupt the normal functioning of the university.

A week after the strike, UCT was again disrupted, this time by catering workers in the university residences. These workers are amongst the hundreds of outsourced workers, following the retrenchment of hundreds of workers by then Vice Chancellor Mamphele Ramphela in 1998. Workers

were striking against Royal Sechaba with the demand for a R500 across the board wage increase. With residence catering shut down, UCT management has been forced to provide each affected student with R60 per day simply for food – more than half of what the workers are paid per day.

UCT administration tries to deny any responsibility in a dispute between workers and a private company. It parades a Code of Conduct which is meant to improve conditions. But it is UCT management which is responsible for outsourcing in the first place and for seeking to drive down the costs of providing necessary services. All workers at UCT – whoever employs them - are facing a university administration which is in some ways simply another example of what is happening throughout the public sector: privatisation, outsourcing, inadequate state funding, commercialisation, an ethos of cost-recovery, and an aggressive managerialism to impose all of this. The UCT Workers Forum has been struggling for years to provide a single organisational framework for everyone working at UCT – regardless of employer, sector, union and whether unionised or not. However union organisation is fragmented, suffering from the impact of retrenchments and outsourcing, and weakened by a dominant politics of class collaboration. This fragmentation is not an accident. It is easier to underpay and impose bad conditions on workers who are weakly organised. All of this weighs heavily on those providing the labour on which UCT depends. That situation is only going to be changed by their own resistance. The strikes show the possibilities – the task is to build on them through united organisation and action around unified demands. ●

*Jonathan Grossman*

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# **WORKERS TO PAY FOR ANOTHER INVESTOR-FRIENDLY BUDGET**

On the 21 February 2007 the minister of finance publicly explained how the government will raise and spend public income in the year ahead. Before he unveiled the details, as usual, the minister emphasized that his team had worked overtime to carefully balance the competing priorities of the state and our nation. This budget speech followed two weeks after President Mbeki's 2007 state of the nation address from which the finance minister took his lead in terms of tone and broad political thrust. Both men celebrated the recent improvements in economic growth and boldly proclaimed that the country is winning the war on poverty and unemployment. Where delivery was still short of targets, capacity constraints need to be overcome through volunteerism, privatisations and so forth- all to build a nation based on 'social solidarity'. Media highlights of the 2007-08 budget were the first time budget surplus, more corporate tax breaks, infrastructural and social spending and a poverty line. How the working class and landless peasantry stand to benefit from the 2007-08 public revenue and spending targets is unclear.

## **Investor-friendly welfare reforms**

Minister Manuel has been budgeting to please the wealthy investor classes. In post-apartheid South Africa taxes on corporate profits have steeply dropped - from 49% to 29%- to lure investment into the country. And the 2007-08 budget gave companies more lucrative tax breaks- enriching the bourgeoisie at the expense of working people. This investor-friendly budget is even more glaring when looking at the repayment of the apartheid public debt. Mr Manuel prides himself for honouring and speedily repaying the debt of the apartheid regime, lowering it from over 50% in the 1990s to a staggering 26% of GDP in 2006. Scrapping this enormous resource transfer to finance capitalists is not on Minister Manuel's agenda, implying that working people will continue to pay for the crimes of that hated pre-1994 system.

Those with solid faith in capitalism, someone said a long time ago, know how to display the cosmetic attractions of this system to conceal its heinous crimes. These free-market fundamentalists are the best apologists for this system and mastered the art of mystifying reality. True to this ideology, minister Manuel has presented his investor-friendly 2007-08 budget as if it genuinely intends to better the lives of working people. While promoting an economy based on individual 'savings and self-reliance' (capitalist individualism) he also paid lip-service to 'social solidarity'. For example, Mr Manuel champions an 'earnings-related social

security scheme' yet rejects even the diluted Basic Income Grant (BIG) proposals of the Peoples Budget Campaign. The so-called 'wage subsidy for low income earners' is really aimed at making every job cheaper for companies and might translate into sliding wages as the cost of living skyrockets. More pro-capitalist welfare reforms are in the pipeline. In fact, national treasury is searching for ways to privatise the state pension system and reduce social welfare rolls.

In his latest budget speech Minister Manuel also kick-started a public debate on a national poverty line which is desperately needed to effectively combat poverty. The Peoples Budget Campaign has welcomed this initiative which should have been at the top of government's priorities in 1994. But measuring poverty is far from a cold counting exercise. To what extent will the poor actively partake to shape the meaning of poverty? Will a genuine effort be made to attack and uproot the systemic causes of this scourge? If those doing the counting ignore the multiple faces of deprivation, many poor people may be excluded from official numbers and consequently an underestimation of the depth of poverty. This one-sided view or ideological bias in number-crunching is a well-known trick in calculating unemployment figures. In South Africa, for instance, politicians claim that unemployment has rapidly fallen to about 25% from around 40% in the 1990s. But what largely accounts for this astounding drop in unemployment is the inclusion of guesstimates on job creation in the expanding 'informal economy'. And an expanding informal or survivalist sector is hardly a sign of a healthy economy. Hopefully the team of experts picked to help the minister to define a national poverty line will expose the fact that capitalism bears ultimate responsibility for underdevelopment and sliding living standards of the working class and landless peasants.

## **Workers Pay to Beat Neo-liberal Fiscal Targets**

The surplus in the 2007-08 national budget and sharply lower deficit in the previous year are far from ideologically neutral number-crunching activities. Minister Manuel's bookkeeping is in line with the post-apartheid state's overarching political and socio-economic orientation. This obsession with balanced budgets and surpluses is a core element in the package of neo-liberal or Washington Consensus economic prescriptions. It derives from the deeply entrenched Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic policy adopted in 1996 which is premised on shrinking the size of the state and its economic role. The framework that ➤

► President Mbeki unveiled in his 2006 state of the nation speech, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA), reinforces the GEAR perspective. ASGISA basically perpetuates the neo-liberal myth that the war on poverty and unemployment can be won through the expansion of markets and private accumulation of wealth.

Chasing and beating these neo-liberal fiscal targets will not be costless. But who must ultimately bear the burden of ultra conservative public budgets?

## EDUCATION UNDER POLITICAL SIEGE

The ANC government is steadfastly forging ahead with the implementation of its neo-liberal GEAR programme. Some apologists, like Z. Vavi maintains that Cosatu's profferings and admonitions of years gone by are having an impact and that the government is showing signs of 'moving left'. This is hardly to be seen in the sphere of education. Millions of school going youth of the labouring masses must in the mean time witness the steady erosion of what little progressive education they might have been exposed to. The government's own statistics ( the General Household Survey published in 2005 and the 2006 Human Rights Commission report) reveal that 41% of children under 18 years do not live with an employed person. 43% of children come from communities that can only access an inadequate water supply. 81% of schools in the country do not have a library. The ritual of surveys, policy statements or declarations, non or poor implementation of policy and the familiar exchange of accusations in parliament has been the order of the day. It gets repeated year after year, without fail.

Bureaucrats and political leaders in the education department alike maintain that educational problems can not be solved in isolation from broader economic and political issues. We cannot but agree with them. From the point of view of the labouring masses educational demands must in fact become part of a united set of political demands that are put forward by the independent organizations of the working class and peasantry. These demands must serve the purpose of guiding us forward on the road to become our own political and economic masters – freed of the yoke of the bourgeoisie. But what the ANC government and the capitalist class are offering the poor labouring masses are piecemeal, ad hoc solutions based on 'focussed interventions' and budgetary increases that in the long run simply serves the purpose of perpetuating the inequalities, not eliminating them. As part of their economic and political programme is the firm commitment to allow market forces to determine what policy positions are going to be. Privatisation of education by stealth and sometimes starkly overt, is the order

As noted above, in the real world the direct relation between economic growth and tax revenues breaks down. What is most likely when a government budgets to win the confidence of wealthy investors is for tax revenues to rise at a falling rate. To balance the budget or generate surpluses in this context, state expenditure must slow down at a faster pace. This means the working poor must endure extra belt-tightening. ●

of the day. All sorts of smokescreens, like the no fee schools debacle are put up to make us believe the government is serious about the education of the children of the labouring masses. What they are not saying, and will indeed never admit, is that they have no intention of solving the educational problems of the poor in a fundamental and sustainable manner. The market dictates otherwise.

Repeating the fact that 'education is a constitutional right' does not take us one inch forward either. The constitution of the country is a capitalist constitution and protects the capitalist system and those who defend it – big business, the bourgeois political parties and all their hangers-on. The constitution is but a reflection of a given set of class relations in South Africa, which it guarantees or enshrines. In any event, the rights of the masses only attain real meaning if they are given practical effect through organised action in support of specific demands; and in so doing gaining compliance by the state. Reminding the capitalist government of the fact that they have it written in their constitution that the poor millions have educational rights, is but one part of a much broader struggle for working class liberation. Where and when possible the capitalist ANC government will in fact actively work to weaken the organised resistance of those who can potentially challenge them for political power. This is a task that only the organised working class and its political allies can and must carry out.

The organisations of the people outside of the tripartite alliance, that are involved in struggles fighting on the educational front are today few and thinly spread. Their demands for free, uniform education can only have meaning if they are part of a broader struggle aimed at the labouring classes achieving political power. For this struggle to move forward we need to build genuine, politically and organisationally independent organisations that will speak and act in the interests of the working class and landless peasantry. In so doing the basis for an alternative social organisation is laid. To argue and act to the contrary is simply playing into the hands of the enemy. ●



# *From Around the World*

## **US TRADE UNION STRUGGLES TODAY**

Last year a historic May Day action swept across the United States, confronting the country with the power of the growing immigrant workers' movement. Although International Workers Day originated in the US, its tradition had long been lost for the mainstream labour movement, as the conservative labour bureaucracy sought to separate its ranks from labour militancy in the US and abroad. After last year's actions, including millions in the streets, partial strikes and student walkouts, the US labour movement was presented with a historic opportunity to create the groundswell necessary for launching a real organising fight back against years of declining union membership and eroding gains at the bargaining table.

While AFL-CIO and Change to Win Coalition unions participated in last May's mass mobilisations, they were not in the leadership and have not taken the lead in building for mass mobilisation this May. After last year's action, unions channelled the energy of the May first movement into getting vote efforts to help gain Democratic Party control of Congress. With mass momentum fizzled and the Democrats in the House and Senate, what are we left with?

The first labour reform legislation in years, the Employee Free Choice Act, could impose needed penalties against companies' rampant anti-union activities and provide an easier path to unionisation if won. It could possibly pass in the House and the Senate, but will be vetoed by the President, with insufficient congressional support to override the veto.

This is a small effort by the trade union leadership after years of doing nothing. Its results are demonstrative of the waste of millions of membership dollars and time in a failed strategy of supporting the "lesser evil" but equally capitalist Democratic Party over the conservative Republicans. However, this struggle is still significant in larger ideological battles that affect local campaigns. For example, when union hotel workers recently won card check agreements [a union authorisation process which the Employee Free Choice Act advocates]- from Long Beach City Council in California, which include neutrality agreements which take workers right to a union recognition strike in exchange for card check, employers began to pay 5 dollars per petition to call for a referendum against this measure, as well as

thugs to keep union members from presenting their view to potential petition signers. Debate in congress and streets could have been significantly different if labour leadership did not miss opportunities to link the immigrant rights movement to possibilities for mass unionisation and national labour law reform. The trade union movement would not have compromised the strike weapon for partial organising rights if it relied on and built the power of the mass immigration movement rather than the Democratic Party.

While the movement that culminated last May 1st was successful in getting the Senate to back away from the blatantly anti-worker and racist Sensenbrenner bill that passed in the House, the popular "March today, vote tomorrow" slogan was the signal for the pro-amnesty movement's defeat. With the energy of the movement safely channelled into Democratic Party mobilisation, no organised response against the "Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act," was forthcoming. This act is a supposed compromise backed by Bush and passed by the Senate. A stalemate stands between the competing bills, especially since regrouping occurred in the election of a new congress. Meanwhile no-solution proposals like building a fence between much of the US and Mexico, doubling naturalisation fees, increasing policing and having local police enforce immigration policy, have made headway. Bush's Department of Homeland Security/Immigration Custom Enforcement [formally INS] had its largest workplace raid in INS/ICE history at Swift meatpacking plants, detaining 1,217 union workers. Without the power of the masses generated in the streets last May 1st, and current focus on trusting the compromise the new congress enacts, hope for amnesty and full citizen rights remains grim.

Progressive organising unions are making some necessary reforms, like UNITE-HERE, which has fought to make it a national standard in the hotel industry that workers are not fired when companies receive notification that an employee's Social Security number does not match his or her name. In addition, such workers are permitted leave up to a year to work out their paper status if necessary, and with full job security and seniority. However, to prevent further decline in union membership, to prevent further defeats in contract struggles like those seen in strikes against NYC transit, Northwest Airlines, and Delphi, more serious linking of union movement struggles to immigrant workers struggle is necessary, building mass mobilisation as opposed to channelling energy into the Democratic party. ♦

➤ May 1st, which had the potential to become a national immigrant strike if the leadership was more militant and united last year, could be an opportunity to revive May Day as the holiday for all of the US working class. The trade union movement could use May 1st to focus on targets like Smithfield foods, which faced a raid and round-up of immigrant workers during a union organising drive, and Cintas, where immigrant workers were fired supposedly for their paper status during union organising efforts. Immediate demands to link the immigrant workers movement to the trade union movement would include ending ICE workplace raids; no more firing of immigrant workers based on Social Security "no match" letters, a living wage for all workers, and comprehensive immigration reform with full rights and path to citizenship without penalty for all immigrant workers, including future arrivals.

The position the union leadership takes towards this May 1st will not only have great impact on the future immigration debate and Employee Free Choice Act, but could have significant impact on major struggles coming up the next year nationally for Grocery Workers, the automobile big three and the United Parcel Services workers.

Given the increasing volatility of the world economic situation and increasing political crisis, the need for a revolutionary socialist leadership in the trade unions is more necessary than ever, not only for gains, but just maintaining current standards. ●

*Contributed by an American activist.*

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## **ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS IN BRITAIN AND EUROPE**

The anti-war demonstrations on February 24th in London, in which it is estimated 80,000 - 100,000 people participated and in Glasgow, attest to the enduring strength of the anti-war movement. It has been in existence since the attack on Afghanistan at the end of 2001 by the US and its allies. It has created a space in British society, where the issue of the wars can be discussed and the barrage of pro-war propaganda emanating from the government and dished out by the media, can be countered.

The huge demonstrations against Britain attacking Iraq failed to stop the Blair government taking part in the invasion. The British involvement in the occupation of the country continues in spite of the opposition to it by the majority of the British people. The Blair government has created a climate of fear in the country by raising the spectre of a prolonged "war on terrorism", attacking "Muslim extremism" and eroding the civil liberties of the people. Muslims have been physically assaulted,

some even killed and many detained for allegedly being terrorists but very few convicted of offences under the Terrorism Act. Because of the foreign policy pursued by the government, in particular in the Middle East, a few Muslims have turned to acts of terrorism, such as the bombing of the London underground in 2005. The government's reaction was to bring in further laws, taking away democratic rights of the people. Control orders have come into effect. These allow the government to confine people to their houses, prevent them from attending meetings and deprive them of their rights without their having been convicted of any offence. These laws can be compared to the South African apartheid regime's banning and house arrest orders. The government also tried to introduce 90 days detention without trial but was defeated in parliament, and had to reduce the period of detention to 28 days. The right to demonstrate in Parliament Square without permission has been taken away.

The Blair government was returned to power in the elections in 2005 with only 36% of the votes cast and just 22% of the electorate - the lowest mandate since the Reform Act of 1832. Millions of Labour voters stayed away from the polls because they were disenchanted with Blair dragging the country into war with Iraq. They perceived the main opposition party, the Conservatives as having similar policies on the war and internal policies as New Labour. The distance between the rulers and ruled is increasing. The Labour parliamentarians, judging that Blair's unpopularity with the electorate could cost many of them their seats at the next election pressured him into announcing that he would be vacating the premiership sometime this year, earlier than he had intended.

Nowhere is the war more unpopular in British society than among some military families, who have lost a loved one in Iraq or have family members serving in the forces there. They have formed themselves into an organisation, "Military Families against the War" and become part of the anti-war movement. In doing so, they have established a very visible public presence. There have been many desertions from the armed forces who have found it increasingly more difficult to recruit soldiers. A remarkable statement by the British Chief of the General Staff, calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq because their presence exacerbated the security problems, must be seen in the context of the deep unpopularity of the war among the British people. He also called for more troops to be sent to Afghanistan, where he believes that the "war is winnable". Shortly thereafter, Blair announced the withdrawal of 1,600 soldiers from Southern Iraq and the despatch of 1,000 troops to Afghanistan. The fact that the armed forces chief could voice his disagreement in public with government policy speaks volumes of the degree of disaffection in the highest circles of the army ➤

Opposition to the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan runs deep elsewhere in Europe. The defeat of Mr Prodi's coalition government in

parliament in Italy over its alliance with the US and its role in Nato, is an echo of the deep hostility of the Italian people to its government's military alliances and wars abroad. Parliament rejected the government's recommendation extending a US military base in north Italy and its open-ended commitment to the Nato-led force in Afghanistan. The Prodi government was obliged to resign. Two left wing senators, members of Prodi's coalition refused to support the government and one of them is threatened with expulsion from the party to which he belongs, the Refounded Communist party. Prodi

is busy reconstructing his coalition to form a new government. Sixty-two percent of Italians and 73% of the government's supporters want to withdraw all Italian troops from Afghanistan. Italy withdrew its troops from Iraq last year. The Spanish government withdrew its forces from Iraq two years ago because of the opposition of the people. The French and German governments who opposed the war in Iraq are encountering the hostility of their peoples for having sent troops to Afghanistan. ●

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## THE QUAGMIRE IN IRAQ - HOW WILL IT END?

Iraq continues to hold a central position in world politics. The spectacular failure of the imperialist armies of the US and Britain to quell the resistance of the Iraqi people to the occupation of their country is a serious blow to the US plans for the Middle East. Where the invading armies have achieved some success is in helping to stir up sectarian conflict among the Iraqi people. They have been responsible for the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians and a million refugees fleeing to countries surrounding Iraq as well as over a million internally displaced.

The growing opposition to the Iraq occupation in the US itself played a large part in the victory of the Democratic Party in the Congressional and Senate elections in November last year. There is a split in ruling US circles as to how to deal with the failures of US policy in Iraq. The Baker-Hamilton report, commissioned by Bush and released after the elections, called for dialogue with Iran and Syria and recommended that any dispatch of extra US troops to Iraq must be short term and part of a larger commitment to pull most US combat troops back to bases by the spring of next year. This has been rejected by Bush, who seeks confrontation with Iran. He is placing another 20,000 troops into Iraq. US commanders on the ground, who argued that this increase would be ineffectual, have been replaced.

The Iraqi resistance to the occupation has been considerably weakened by increasing sectarian violence. Following the invasion there had been efforts to unite Shias and Sunnis opposed to the occupation, led by the cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr from the majority Shia community and the Association of Muslim Scholars from the Sunni community. When the US forces razed Fallujah, a town in the Sunni heartland and a centre of resistance to occupation, Sadr and the Shia community showed their solidarity with the people of the town. Naturally, this did not suit the occupation forces, who strove to break this unity. It is believed that they are behind at least some of the sectarian attacks, which the victims wrongly attribute to Iraqis belonging to a different religious community. The US regard Sadr

and his militias, with whom they have clashed militarily, as perhaps their most dangerous enemy because of his consistent opposition to the occupation and his appeal to such a wide layer of the Shia community. Following a sectarian attack on the mosque in Samarra in February 2006, outbreaks of violence between Shias and Sunnis have become bloodier and more frequent. There is a slide towards sectarian war and no one appears able to stop it.

One of the main goals of the US occupation of Iraq was to obtain control of its vast oil wealth. The Iraqi government is finalising a draft of a controversial Hydrocarbon Law. This has been seen by the occupying powers, the IMF and the multinational oil companies but not Iraqi MPs and civil society organisations such as trade unions. It is feared that the Iraqi government under pressure from foreign interests will grant Production Sharing Agreements, long term contracts, whereby foreign companies will control the production, development and sale of Iraqi oil for up to 45 years. The leader of Iraq's most powerful oil union, The Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions, Hassan Jumaa has warned the government against placing Iraq's oil under the control of the multinational oil companies.

The announcement by Tony Blair of the withdrawal of 1,600 troops, almost a quarter of British total force in Southern Iraq in the next few months, comes at a time when he is under increasing pressure from British service chiefs to withdraw most of the troops. They believe that the presence of the troops inflames the opposition to the occupation and that Britain should deploy its troops to Afghanistan, where it is fully engaged. The news that a further 1,000 British troops will be sent to Afghanistan confirms that the service chiefs are winning the argument. The intense hostility of the majority of the people to the occupation in Iraq, which was an important factor in Blair having to announce his departure from office later this year no doubt also influenced his decision.

The British decision to withdraw troops is a blow to the US position in Iraq, in spite of its

public posturing that it is comfortable with the decision. The British are their most important ally in Iraq and the pressures for them to extricate themselves from the quagmire, for which they are primarily responsible are building up. It seems inconceivable that after the debacles in Afghanistan and Iraq, that Bush is contemplating further military adventures. The US has for some time been spearheading the diplomatic attack on Iran for using its nuclear facilities to enrich uranium, which it declares is for providing nuclear energy for civilian use and which it is perfectly entitled to do under the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty it has signed. The US also alleges that Iran is aiding the resistance to the occupation in Iraq. US initiatives persuaded the

UN Security Council to pass a resolution adopting sanctions against Iran, because it is claimed Iran is planning to manufacture atomic weapons. The steady build up of US aircraft carriers and missiles in the Gulf, appears to confirm the view of well informed circles that the Bush administration is preparing military air strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities, military targets and its infrastructure. Iran is in every respect a much more formidable opponent than Iraq. If the US goes ahead with its plans, the consequences for the Middle East would be disastrous and there would also be serious repercussions internationally. ●

## APDUSA

APDUSA was established in 1961 by the Unity Movement of South Africa (UMSA) to raise the interests of the working class and landless peasantry as paramount in the national liberatory struggle. Despite the gain of political rights for all, the compromise of 1992 has not fulfilled the national 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. We have therefore adopted a programme of transitional demands for the completion of the unfinished tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution in an uninterrupted struggle for socialism.

APDUSA calls for the self-organisation and united independent struggle of the labouring masses. We further 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

We 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.
- 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.

**The democratic demands and aspirations of the oppressed workers and peasants shall be paramount**

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