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AFRICAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC UNION  
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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

## THE GENERAL ELECTIONS

### *To Vote or Not to Vote?*

With the general elections upon us there has been a flurry of activity in the social resistance movement about what needs to be done. Strangely, the decision to contest the elections by the new Socialist Green Coalition and separately, by the Workers International Vanguard League, met with strong resistance from the social movements with many calling for a boycott of the elections. This approach is being strongly promoted by various political anarchists who argue we would be deceiving people if we called upon them to vote for any party in a bourgeois parliament. This, we believe is a grave error as the people need an alternative to all the bourgeois parties taking part in the elections. They need a party that more correctly represents their interests rather than those of the rich or aspirant rich minority. It is not that we believe that fundamental change will come via the ballot box but the vote and franchise, that was at the heart of our demands in the past, must be used to further our goals with candidates who represent us doing so strictly according to our terms. There is no need to believe that, if properly controlled, such candidates would betray the interests of the labouring masses.

We observe that especially now that the capitalist world is in an economic recession the parties that make such glorious promises at election time clearly have no means to fulfil them. We must therefore fight for the right to have political parties that can represent the working masses independently of those who follow the path of neoliberalism and the free market.

APDUSA resolved to support the Socialist Green Coalition as a non-sectarian initiative that most accurately reflects the interests of the labouring classes. In its manifesto it demands:

#### **1 Control of Government**

*Right of recall and right to set representatives pay - all politicians and public servants must be completely accountable to the electorate. Develop government policy through mass public participation. Direct worker and community control of living conditions and sustainable improvements.*

#### **2 Nationalisation**

*Control the economy, industry, mines, agriculture, banks, mass media and utilities, through worker and community management. No privatisation of government land or property. Food security: Redistribute land for healthy organic food for all - infrastructure cross-subsidised from a rising per capita wealth tax.*

#### **3 End Unemployment - End Poverty**

*Full employment: 30 hour work week, permanent jobs, decent work, and a living wage for all. Stop the arms deal - use wealth and production to satisfy everyone's real needs. Eradicate poverty, inequality and prejudice, to rid South Africa of the root causes of crime, corruption and violence.*

#### **4 Free Services**

*Everyone must have sufficient water, electricity, decent homes, quality health care, nutritious food, good education, electronic communication (radio tv phone internet), safe reliable transport and an adequate living expenses allowance. Services must be provided through worker & community governance not privatisation.*

#### **5 Ecological Sustainability**

*Stop pollution, global warming and climate change. No nuclear power plants - no radioactive waste. Safe renewable energy and reliable public transport must be provided on a mass scale. Eskom must supply households with the means for renewable electricity production. Eradicate all the dangers to nature and human life due to irresponsible and unsustainable business and industry. Stop genetic engineering.*

#### **6 Revolutionary Campaigns**

*Support strikes, protests, boycotts and actions against pollution, exploitation, privatisation, labour casualisation, retrenchments, and neo-liberal commodification. Absolute unqualified human rights must be guaranteed, including the right to strike, protest and mobilise, without limitations and conditions.*

#### **7 International Solidarity**

*Fight racism, xenophobia, sexism, ageism,*



➔ *discrimination, prejudice and exploitation. Everyone must be treated equally with respect and dignity regardless of class, belief, culture, or sexual orientation. Unite in programmes of working people all over the world to defend our interests against the corrupt global elite.*”

Yet, we have seen that any party that has attempted to represent the interests of the labouring masses has been barred from the elections. Neither the Socialist Green Coalition nor WIVL was able to raise the huge money deposit that was required to register for the elections. This, of course shows the bias in the whole electoral system. It is money, not general support that matters! Given the disillusionment of the masses, with increasing numbers refusing to vote for bourgeois parties, we believe that the only course is to use the ballot to express our total dissatisfaction and the rejection of parties that represent the minority. We call for a protest vote against the parties of the rich business class by crossing out their names on the ballot paper and writing on it our democratic demands.

In all this it is emerging that what is vitally needed today is the **political** unity of all resistance organisations, be they social movements, trade unions, peasant organisations, as well as organisations in sectors such as health and education. It should be recognised that it is difficult to unite an organisation fighting for jobs for instance, with another fighting for access to clean water without a unifying factor. Only a political programme can unite us and without it we are doomed to struggle in separate spheres of interest and concern. If we ask why the government has failed to provide jobs for all it is because it places the interests of big business before that of the working class. That is why the constitution

guarantees the right to look for work but not the human right to a job. Likewise, the constitution does not even guarantee the right to potable water which is a basic necessity of human life. Instead the poor have to pay and if they cannot and do what they can to get clean water they are turned into criminals. We can go on. The constitution preserves the rights and powers of outmoded chiefs and traditional leaders which are totally undemocratic. Land hungry people in the rural areas are at the mercy of these chiefs who are being given control of land to this day. Worst of all, the constitution preserves private property rights which keeps intact the rights and powers of the owners of the large factories, farms and mines with only a few benefiting via the notorious Black Economic Empowerment policy of the government.

We observe that the anarchists are both unable and unwilling to promote a political programme that would unite people in struggles. The nett effect of their belief is that people should be forever doomed to fight their different battles separately instead of in unity under a common political banner. We repeat. Our struggle is political and must be fought politically and not simply economically.

After a long and bitter struggle in the past our economy remains under the control of a greedy few. The fact is that the constitution of South Africa was drafted without the active participation of the masses. The call for a new constituent assembly is the first political demand we must make. It is a call for a constitution that represents the interests of the majority – the labouring classes and not the interests of a minority self-serving class of those who believe in business for profit and to hell with the masses. It is time to take our collective struggles forward on a political basis. ●

## ***INFLATION – WHO IS TO BLAME?***

With inflation having reached its highest level in many years, bourgeois economists have once more attempted to put the blame on workers for fuelling this grievous state of affairs with what they call excessive wage demands. This is the normal tactic of these apologists for capitalism who hope that in this way they can keep wage demands down. For instance, Business Report of Sunday 3 August 2008 carried the banner headline: “Large wage hikes are feeding the inflation monster”. But then, significantly, we are not told who is responsible for inflation in the first place. It is supposed to be due to some unfortunate and unpreventable circumstances which workers then make worse.

If one considers the current inflation rate it is simple to see where it comes from – high fuel prices, high electricity costs, high food prices and high interest rates. In the food industry we have the activities of self-seeking monopolies. Having

cornered the world market, they feel that they can push up prices at will and so reap super profits. In oil we have had the action of big time speculators pushing up prices. They have no care about suffering consumers at all. In electricity it has been the crass ineptitude of Eskom and the government’s free market policies that is to blame. As for the high interest rates, the Reserve Bank has always had the simpler option of controlling the money supply by stipulating the amount of cash reserves that commercial banks must hold, without raising interest rates at all. But then the banks would not be able to make excessive profits on loans and foreclosures!

All these factors have, in the present period, fuelled inflation and not workers wage demands. All these factors point to the drive for high profits and greed on the part of the large financial and industrial corporations being responsible. So we have the case that when workers respond by demanding ➔

➡ that their buying power be brought back to parity the apologists for capitalism have the utter nerve to accuse them of driving the inflation monster. For them it is unthinkable that excessive profits must be cut by paying higher wages. Their solution is that workers must take a pay cut. But this would not solve the problem either as it is one gross profiteering and not high wages that is to blame.

There are a few simple but bold steps that the government could take to curb rampant inflation. Firstly, it could fully nationalise Sasol which is now making record profits out of coal-to-oil conversion and pass the benefit of this profit to consumers. Secondly, it could criminalise price fixing by the food cartels with heavy prison sentences for the guilty and a reduction in prices instead of the slap-on – the-wrist fines given out while high prices remain unchanged. Thirdly, Eskom should also be fully nationalised and innovative use of alternate non-polluting energy sources, which have already been shown to be viable, should be implemented.

These are some measures that our government could take. But it is hell bent following the neo-liberal agenda of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation, which offers rewards for a privileged few while the millions of oppressed workers and peasants

continue to languish in poverty, without any sight of any relief. Trevor Manuel projected that we would need to have a growth rate of 7% over 25 years before there could be a significant reduction in poverty and unemployment. (Cape Times 7 July 2008). Given that the best that was achieved since the ANC came to power was a 5% growth rate, which dropped to about 3 - 4% last year and now, with the general economic recession threatening a decline rather than any growth in the economy, it will take much more than 25 years of working class suffering while the privileged minority continue to live it up in luxury. Those who place their faith in Jacob Zuma are due for a rude awakening. The first thing he did after assuming presidency of the ANC was to go around the world assuring bourgeois bigwigs that there would be no change in economic policy.

For the immediate future we have no alternative but to support and strengthen the struggle against high food and energy prices, both in and outside the campaign that was launched by Cosatu, even though it now appears to have been short-lived. Notwithstanding the support of the Cosatu bureaucratic leadership for the ANC and Jacob Zuma, the struggle of the workers is borne of their suffering. We must unite! ●

## **RADICAL LEFT NETWORK SEMINAR**

### ***“ECOSOCIALISM OR BARBARISM”***

The Radical Left Network (RLN) held its second year-end seminar on 8 November 2008 in Cape Town (South Africa) with the highly topical political theme of “eco socialism or capitalist-barbarism”. The theme was fitting given the deep and ever growing dimensions of the crisis of the capitalist system worldwide. Contributions from the panel and from the floor were both enlightening and food for much further thought. Panel participants included members of Keep Left, the APDUSA, the New Unity Movement, Comrades for a Workers’ Government- Labour Left Collective, WOSA and a speaker from the Environmental Monitoring Group, an NGO active in environmental struggles.

The opening address and those that followed linked the issues of the capitalist economic system, the ecological question and the question of food production. The keynote speaker outlined the destructive and scientifically documented impact of capitalist industries worldwide on the natural environment, specifically global climate. The livelihood that this destructive capitalist system forces on millions of people has the net effect of threatening the very existence of life on earth. Darfur in Sudan and India were cited as examples of devastating impacts on the livelihoods of millions of poor peasants and nomadic peoples caused by accelerated climate change. The keynote address

pointed to the availability of cost efficient solutions to the problem of climate change but that these were not considered worthwhile using due to the disruption this will cause in global power relations. The use of solar power instead of a continued reliance on fossil fuels has been shown to be a workable proposition in the Mediterranean region as well as in South Africa. One myth pointed out was that individual, personal effort would be enough to reverse the effects of the pending environmental meltdown. The building of a global movement for climate justice is what in stead has to be focussed on.

The keynote address and subsequent contributions focussed on other equally important issues such as the continued increase in the areas under cultivation worldwide for the growth of genetically modified foods. The problem of food waste (this in the face of the levels of global hunger increasing) dealt with the matter of dumping of food, simply because it could not meet the profit targets of those corporations in control of the food system worldwide. Carbon trading between and amongst capitalist industries and states was shown to be leading to an increase in emissions of greenhouse gases. The deficiencies of the much lauded and much discussed Kyoto Protocol which the USA government (inter alia) has ➡

➔steadfastly refused to sign shows clearly how the international bourgeoisie tries to maintain its position through deception, lies and wars. One such lie is the notion that the use of biofuels could serve as a solution to human-induced atmospheric warming. This ‘solution’ merely shifts the emphasis of the problem from the atmospheric/ climatic to that of soil-utilisation and the skewed food production that flows from this. The possibility and actuality of the approach adopted in the ongoing Bolivarian Revolution in Latin America was considered as a practical political alternative.

A major factor in the present global economic crisis is the fact that between 1 to 3 billion people are suffering from chronic hunger world wide. The number depends entirely on which definition of “hunger” is used. The role of Multinational Corporations and UN linked organisations such as the Food and Agricultural Organisation in this scheme of things are well documented – as are the practices of speculation that in many cases cause sharp escalations in the price of basic foodstuffs. Studies have revealed that the use of genetically modified organisms – GMO’s can be linked to increased levels of food insecurity. The impact of the cultivation of these foodstuffs (which is a strong

trend in South Africa presently) on the environment can not but be destructive since it directly interferes with natural gas and nutrient cycles.

Many NGO’s are tackling the climate/environmental issue head-on. Their contributions shed light on how poor communities globally are the ones to suffer the most from the impacts of atmospheric changes caused by their class enemies, the capitalist bosses and their political representatives the world over. Recent natural disasters (hurricanes, floods, earthquakes etc) have without exception caused most destruction and brought most misery to the lives of millions of poor workers and peasants the world over. The way forward looked at the important task of all those who consider themselves foremostly as citizens of the world, to organise and act politically by focussing their efforts on replacing the capitalist system with a socialist one. Notwithstanding problems encountered and still to be faced, the tasks ahead were broadly defined. The contribution amongst other things raised the need to get rid of political pettiness and excise sectarianism from the left in South Africa. This means raising anti-capitalist political demands linked to a definitive political programme. ●



## *From Around the World*

### **ZIMBABWE – POST GNU DEVELOPMENTS**

The signing of the agreement heralding the Zimbabwean so-called unity government (January 2009) took place at a time of an ever escalating collapse of the neo-liberal model of economic organization in that country. In terms of the agreement Zanu would retain half of cabinet seats (the most strategic ones) and its leader would remain as executive state president of the country. The leader of the MDC-M, Morgan Tsvangarai became the prime minister, occupying a subordinate position to that of the president. The deal came about due to the economic implosion of the country and long running mediation efforts on the part of the SADC. In terms of the agreement a new constitution, based on a referendum is envisaged, to come into force within 18 months.

All subsequent developments point to this deal heading for a catastrophe as far as the millions of Zimbabwean workers, small scale traders and farmers and peasants are concerned. The imposition of, or more precisely the reimposition of neo-liberal

economic prescriptions is on the cards. Donor countries as well as the IMF and World Bank have laid down conditions for assistance to be granted, such as repayment by the Zimbabwean government of millions of dollars in public debt. Acceptance of these prescriptions by the new government is a given. The dollarisation of the economy (in addition to the ZAR being used as currency) that accompanies this ‘new deal’ holds negative implications for the majority of the country’s citizens. The liberalisation of the trade regime that will be enforced holds the possibility of the country being swamped with imported goods, priced in ZAR and US \$. The removal of state support in the form of subsidies on basic goods and services will only serve to worsen the plight of millions of Zimbabweans. At the other end of the social spectrum a new layer of petit bourgeois state apparatchiks stand to gain from their participation in the reorganized economy. Opportunities will also be available for the acquisition of state assets with or without foreign partners – on the cheap. The inaffordability of goods by the poor majority means continued hardships. The removal of price controls points in the same direction. These developments cannot but serve as a basis for continued struggles against this elitist arrangement. ➔

➔ Ongoing struggles under the banner of the civil society in Zimbabwe has seen many progressive advances being made. The adoption of the people's Charter under the banner of the People's Convention (in early 2008) and the subsequent popularising of the charter condenses the demands of divergent segments of the movement for radical change in Zimbabwe. It forms a basis for the struggle inside the country as well as on a regional level to progress. Demands that call for support across the board centre, amongst others on the need for radical constitutional reforms; the advancement of socio-economic rights of all Zimbabweans; the right to food security and basic social services; the right to public control and ownership of assets and resources of the country. ●

## LEFT DEVELOPMENTS IN FRANCE

At the beginning of February in Paris, the 40 year old LCR (Revolutionary Communist Party) dissolved itself to be followed the next day by the formation of the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA). This development has taken place after intense preparation over the past year, beginning early last year with the call by the LCR national congress for the formation of such a party. Later in the year, in June, almost 800 delegates representing hundreds of local committees all over France endorsed the call and prepared the way for the concrete tasks of formulating the programme, democratic functioning and defining the activity of the new party.

For some time in France a vacuum has existed to the left of the social democratic, Socialist Party, which in and out of government, has pursued a neoliberal agenda. That vacuum is being filled by the NPA. It is a broad based party, which already has more than 9,000 members. It is clearly not an enlarged LCR but something different. Within its ranks are political fighters long involved in radical politics, trade unionists, ecologists, feminists, young and old and thousands who have never been involved in social or political movements. What unites these diverse elements is a rejection of capitalism and a determination to create an instrument that can challenge it.

The new party has been built on the experiences of past and present struggles. The committees established throughout France have brought together people in the workplace, neighbourhoods, schools and communities at local, regional and national levels. A federal structure has been created on all levels, in towns, in each department, in each sector and throughout France. In its appeal for the creation of a new anti-capitalist party in February 2008, the LCR called upon the committees "to conduct their own political activities and interventions as well as discussions and initiatives aiming to build an effective collective dynamic". Elsewhere, the same appeal calls for "A democratic

party whose project allows people to lead their own mobilisations to be in a position to take charge of society and the economy". This LCR document could hardly be more explicit on the necessity of the self organisation of the workers.

In rejecting capitalism, the NPA has formulated proposals for the construction of an alternative society. It embraces internationalism and is implacably opposed to imperialism and the pillage of the global South. Feminism and the fight to save the environment are constituent elements of its programme. It believes that the central tenets of its programme can only be achieved through a concerted struggle conducted together with other anti-capitalist parties internationally. At the European level it has to reinforce the "Europeanisation" of struggles against the policies of the bosses pursued in the European Union.

In France, Nicholas Sarkozy, since his election as president in 2007, has been intensifying attacks on the working class, cutting jobs, making it more difficult for workers to strike and attacking their pensions. In January, 2.5 million striking workers demonstrated in the streets. Following this, there was a whole series of strikes by teachers, school student demonstrations and parents' mobilisations against school closures. In 2008 unemployment rose to 11% with 45,000 job losses in December. At the same time, Total, the big oil giant, announced record profits of 13.9 billion euros. Workers were not reassured by Sarkozy that his 26 billion euro stimulus package would protect them from the downturn. His approval rating has slumped and he was unnerved at the size of the demonstrations. In the French 'department' of Guadeloupe there was a general strike against high prices and the degradation of living standards, which spread to Martinique.

In the context of the deep global economic crisis and increasing unemployment with sharper attacks on living standards, a more explosive social situation is developing in France. The challenges facing the NPA in the context of fighting back against Sarkozy are huge. The questions that are increasingly being asked concern the future prospects for the party. Olivier Besancenot, a young postman, who is in the leadership of the new party, was the LCR presidential candidate in the 2007 candidate elections. He obtained one and a half million votes, more than 4% of the total cast but pollsters now suggest he could attract about 18%. He has become one of the most popular figures on the French left and a leading spokesman of the opposition. He represents the new generation, which is standing up to fight against capitalism. He was given a hero's welcome by protesters during the nationwide strikes and demonstrations in January. As the economic crisis lays bare the nature of capitalism, the message of collective ownership and redistribution is hitting home more effectively than it has for many years. As so often in the history of France, people all over the world will intently follow events as they unfold there. ●

# GAZA MASSACRE

The massacre in Gaza cried out not only for immediate condemnation but for an historical explanation. Israel, since its founding in 1948, continually seeks to destroy the foundations of the life of the Palestinians, their health, dignity, livelihood, personal security, access to education and political organisation.

In 1948 the Zionist forces violently drove over 700 000 Palestinians out of their homeland. In 1967 the Israeli state conquered the West Bank and Gaza and has aggressively continued a genocidal pattern of displacement and destruction, creating and expanding Jewish settlements, stealing Palestinian land, with the bantustanisation of the remaining Palestinian communities through a brutal military occupation. Yet the Palestinians have always resisted these processes of destruction and displacement that settler colonialism enacts. We are witnessing further atrocities where avoidable deaths occur in the occupied territories due to the Zionist refusal to supply or allow the supply of life-sustaining food, medicine and medical services to its “conquered” subjects. But why these Atrocities?

## **Economics**

The independent media group, Global Research, has pointed out that when the Zionists have claimed that these wars are their sovereign right to protect themselves against hostile forces the demand for resources are always below the surface,. The 1967 war revealed that prime land and water resources was the catalyst for this invasion and at the same time Israel would have access to cheap labour from the Palestinian migrant labourers. According to Global Research the military invasion of the Gaza strip by the Israeli forces bears a direct relation to control and ownership of strategic offshore gas reserves that were discovered in 2000 along the Palestinian coastline. Under a proposed agreement with a British Gas Group, Palestinian gas from Gaza’s offshore wells was to be channelled by an undersea pipeline to the Israeli seaport of Ashkelon, thereby transferring the ownership of gas to Israel.

The deal fell through, but could this be the real objective of this massacre?

## **Politics**

It is important to note that this massacre happened during the Israeli elections period and that their major political parties do not have fundamentally different policies. The two camps therefore had to show the frustrated Israeli voters that the two opposing camps can show the same military policies and the lines between the doves and the hawks became blurred. Since the mid 1990’s, each successive government in Israel has appeared to be degenerate and corrupt. The politicians seem to be concerned about their own personal careers. Israel, during this era, has become more isolated, more hated in both regional and international spheres. This brings it to rely more and more on the military and violence as the only means to consolidate itself. This feeling of isolation introduces an overwhelming feeling of fear into the Israeli population, and this fear is translated into militarism and more support for the same politicians and their empty promises.

It is time for the more advanced layers in Israel to look beyond Zionism for solutions. Considering the complete bankruptcy of bourgeois politics, and the irony that has been pointed out earlier, that there is a convergence of Israeli bourgeois ideology at the top, while Israel is on the verge of its deepest political division in its history, as indicated by the rejection of the massacre in Gaza by a huge section of the Israeli population. At this moment Israel is gripped by a wave of reaction, a direct result of the isolation of the country, with no genuine left alternative being offered and the new government will further expose the bankruptcy of bourgeois politicians even more. In the long run a united Israel and Palestine based on class unity across the ethnic divide would be the only solution. ●

## TWO ELECTORAL VICTORIES FOR SOCIALISM IN VENEZUELA

Venezuelans voted in two separate nationwide elections within just 4 months. In the state and municipal government elections held in November 2008, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) basically extended and consolidated its political base across roughly 70% of the country. But in a few strategic

territories it suffered defeats at the hands of a powerful rightwing opposition. This was followed by the February 2009 referendum for a Constitutional amendment on ‘term limits’ in which President Hugo Chavez and his supporters triumphed in a resounding victory. Scrapping term limits for elected officials is ➡

➔ a meaningful gain for Chavismo because it allows President Chavez to stand for re-election in 2012 and push forward with the Bolivarian socialist revolution.

### **Local Government Elections**

Voter participation was at an unprecedented high of 65% in the state and municipal elections of 23 November 2008. Interestingly, the geographic concentration of the PSUV victory has been heavily centered in rural localities. A primary reason for this has to do with the land and agrarian reform that is radically restructuring the socio-political and economic landscape in rural areas. This agrarian revolution has been accelerated in response to the food crisis. Arable farms have been nationalised, taken over with compensation and redistributed to peasants to boost food production. The agrarian bourgeoisie (especially large-scale multinational agribusinesses based in Europe and the USA) and their politicians have thus been substantially defeated and uprooted in large parts of the countryside.

In the capital city, Caracas, the Libertador Municipality continues to be a PSUV stronghold. However, the party lost the mayoral seat of Greater Caracas to the opposition. This is the political capital of the country and site of the popular battle to restore Chavez to power in the failed 2002 coup de tat. It is still unclear what strategies the PSUV have in store to capitalise on its political strength in Libertador as a way to capture this vital and intensely contested terrain of power.

Several strategic socio-economic regions of the country now fall under the political control of the opposition. For example, in the richest oil producing state, Zulia, the PSUV has been unsuccessful in dislodging the opposition from power. Tuchia is another stronghold of the opposition. Both states border Colombia, the neighbouring country engulfed in civil and drug wars, where American forces enjoy enormous freedom to operate. This spans a vast zone for illicit trade and drug trafficking that can be used to sabotage the Chavez government and obstruct the progressive transformation of society. Carobodo is the industrial heartland and concentration of the working class, but it is under political control of the opposition.

### **Constitutional Amendment On Term Limits**

In the 15 February 2009 referendum on eliminating terms limits for elected officials, 55% of the electorate voted for this constitutional amendment against 45%

rejecting it. The old ruling elite opposed the amendment basically because they wanted to protect their narrow victory in the December 2007 ballot when term limits featured in a package of almost 70 proposals for Constitutional reform (with the result 50.5% versus 49.5%). But it is worth noting that the outcome of the 2009 election effectively allows even the conservative right and wealthy to stay in office indefinitely, if elected of course. More importantly, this victory imparts much needed momentum into the movement for 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism as it offers President Chavez the possibility to carry forward this project beyond 2012.

Naturally, the 2007 defeat stimulated intense debates within the Venezuelan left about a host of fundamental questions. They reflected, for instance, on the political clarity, commitment and cohesion of the socialist leadership. They also re-examined how deeply and strongly rooted this leadership is within the broader social movement. It is widely recognized that resolving these complex questions are actually vital for deepening their social revolution. A lack of political mobilisation and clarity was evident among the population. It manifested in 45% of the electorate abstaining, mainly due to the difficulties to consciously distinguish between the various reform proposals, distorted through the opposition's propaganda campaign. What also counted against Chavez was that the PSUV was a new political party whilst its predecessor, MVR (The Movement for the Fifth Republic), had become too fragmented and glaringly incapable to mobilise and offer leadership in the fight for socialism.

### **Making a Socialist Revolution**

Since Hugo Chavez rose to political power in 1998, Venezuelans have participated in 14 nationwide elections. But in the last 10 years citizens of this Bolivarian Republic did not just flock to the voting polls to make a cross on ballot papers. On the contrary, the society is marked by a growing level of political awareness and intensification of self-mobilisation around major political questions. What is in fact happening is the active and direct participation of millions in a popular movement to construct a worker-based democracy and new socio-economic system. Venezuelans are engaged in a socialist revolution. To the global anti-capitalist movement, the Bolivarian Socialist Revolution has become a beacon of hope and a vital reference to envisage genuine alternatives to capitalist crises. ●

# LATIN AMERICA: LEFT TAKES POWER THROUGH ELECTIONS (Part 1)

El Salvador is the latest country in which a left party succeeded in winning the presidential elections. The victory of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in the 15 March 2009 elections comes after the party had put up a presidential candidate on four previous occasions since 1992. This closes the long history of conservative rule and opens a new era with the left occupying political power for the first time in El Salvador. As a precursor to this victory, the FMLN captured a slight majority in National Legislative Assembly as well as more municipal governments in the January 2009 elections. But winning the presidency is even more impressive if the uneven capacities of the main competing parties are fully taken into account. In a speculative preview of outcome of the elections, this is what *The Economist* had said about the prospects of the rightwing Nationalist Republican Alliance (Arena) party to stay in power:

*“Arena also has the advantage of incumbency, the support of most media and more money to splash around. It has placed almost four times as much advertising as the FMLN, according to a study by Funde, a think-tank in San Salvador. Many analysts consider it to be the best organized political party in Latin America. It is also more pragmatic than the left. Arena has persuaded candidates for two other parties, one conservative and one centrist, to withdraw.”* (The Economist, 14 March 2009, pp 46).

Despite its remarkable strength and tricks of desperation, Arena still lost the elections. Like, in so many other parts of Latin America, the FMLN took up the fight for national liberation through the strategy of guerilla warfare. It is the product of the unification of five leftist guerrilla groups in 1980. In 1992 it transformed itself into a political party, signed the Peace Accords and started fielding candidates in elections. The tide of history has taken a radical turn.

Meanwhile in Paraguay, a leftist priest, Fernando Lugo, was sworn in as president in August 2008 following the electoral victory of the Patriotic Alliance for Change (*Alianza Patriótica por el Cambio- ACP*). Politically, President Lugo appears to have positioned himself closer to the 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela than the ‘social democratic’ (neo-liberal populist) governments in Chile and Argentina. Congress, Paraguay’s chief lawmaking institution, however, is still under the dominance of the old conservative and neo-liberal parties such as the Colorado Party, followers of General Oveido, and Liberals.

Moreover, the ACP includes the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA), a faction of the old ruling classes that defends the protection of private property, which is at the base of an intensified contestation to resolve the agrarian question. During the five-month long transition from April to August, the Colorado Party simply plundered the state: it demolished infrastructure, officials used state funds for personal enrichment and destroyed many data archives. How and where will the new state find the resources to satisfy the demands and aspirations of the poor?

Social movements that form the electoral base of the ACP have united their forces in the *Frente Social y Popular* (FSP). The FSP includes over 100 grassroots movements with representation ranging peasant associations and trade unions to social relief organizations attached to the Catholic Church. Through the FSP, these movements have a vehicle ‘to influence the policies of the new government based on their grassroots demands’. One of the main policies drafted by President Lugo’s government is a universal free public health program based on social equality and aimed at directly involving community organizations- including cooperation with Cuba and Venezuela where this kind of health system is producing world class improvements in the lives of poor people. Another impressive development in the last two years has been the birth of a socialist political organization, Movement Towards Socialism (P-MAS). Whilst P-MAS supports the anti-capitalist transitional measures of the ACP, it has its own programme and structures. It is organising predominantly among squatter communities, garbage pickers and youth movements. Traditional leftist parties have been in decline, yet P-MAS managed to increase its votes from 8,000 in local elections in 2006 to 20,000 votes in the August 2008 national elections.

Left electoral victories across Latin America continue to reshape the socio-political landscape of a continent which US imperialism sees as its own backyard. By any measure, every victory is a critical political breakthrough as it helps break the grip on power of brutal ruling elites. And the old ruling classes in South American have been rotating at the helm of government for decades, shamelessly propped up by the United States of America. A lesson from these victories is worth repeating: Without taking political power the anti-capitalist left throws away a moment in history to radically overhaul the socio-economic structure in countries trapped in underdevelopment and poverty. Yet ➡



➔ to win an outright majority in parliament forms merely a first but decisive step in a protracted and arduous struggle for radical change. The scale and speed of a left government's transition to a democracy of working people hinges quite crucially on deepening popular self-organisation. Another transitional political instrument which has emerged to pave the way towards a better society for the working majority is the constituent assembly, a key demand which we examine in the next article in this 2 part series. ●



## *Letters*

**Dear Editor**

It is that time when we are entering the political silly season in which the working class and landless peasants are once again being treated as voting fodder. In this case COSATU, the so-called worker representative body, is taking a leading role in canvassing for a degenerated party. We are witnessing a situation where this so-called leadership is urging the downtrodden to once again vote for a party that shows disrespect for the demands and aspirations of a class that they had supposedly liberated.

It is important to understand that these bureaucrats within the trade union movement have long ago abdicated their role of conscientising the workers. The post 1994 elections saw the demobilisation of progressive organisations of the people and we saw that the only way in which the workers are being mobilised is at election rallies where they are garnered into voting so-called representatives into power for the next five years. This is with the promise of better service delivery and policy positions of the different parties, which will be forgotten after the elections.

A manifestation of this demobilisation, is that workers are being herded during their lunch time breaks to listen to organisers rallying them to vote, once again for the ANC, with all the broken promises and betrayals of the past 14 years. No political education and agitation has taken place within the union movement for these past years and a situation has arisen where the population is starting to question the bonafides of their representatives. I believe that the time has come for all left forces to start working towards the building of a programmatic unity in which we could challenge these capitalist parties and wrench control from them to the benefit of the toiling masses and to build a leadership that could take society forward.

**Forward with a progressive alternative.**

EDK

## **POST POLOKWANE POLITICS** ***THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE*** ***EMERGENCE OF COPE***

Cde Editor

The most significant political development in the aftermath of the ANC Polokwane conference in 2007 is the emergence of COPE. While there is consensus that COPE is a result of the political outcome of Polokwane, there is no such consensus on the justification for its existence.

The justification by COPE that the current ANC leadership has lost all moral fibre is too shallow to hold water. This argument is based on the attempts that were made to prevent Zuma's faction from gaining the presidency of the ANC, viz., the rape and corruption charges, which in spite of their seriousness did not deter the outcome of Polokwane. Similarly, the ANC leadership's allegations that COPE is a bed for all the disgruntled Mbeki loyalists, who could not imagine themselves out of power and would do anything to stay in power, does not take us far. It does not explain, for instance, why are they so desperate for power? Why can't they win that power through the ANC? Why are they making inroads into the membership of the ANC?

Accompanying these shallow explanations is the 'Malema factor'; mud slinging, abusive language, personal attacks, etc. As if that is not enough, the DA and UDM retorts are not far off: 'Uyinkwenkwe Malema!'; 'The Polokwane Mob!'; etc. It is clear that bourgeois politicians are caught up in a very serious bourgeois affair that they are not explaining. While former comrades are at each others throats, their fellow travelers (DA and UDM) are urging them on. What is going on? For us to understand these developments we would have to trace back the major internal conflicts of the ANC that have plagued former President Mbeki's reign.

### **Mbeki vs 'Vavi-Nzimande Axis'**

We know of the bitter differences between Mbeki's leadership and that of 'Vavi-Nzimande axis'. At the centre of the conflict is what Moipane Malefane raised in an article entitled "The SACP may go it alone"(Sunday Times 30/06/2006) he quotes Dr Blade Nzimande as saying, "... some policies, for example, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) plan, had been adopted by the government without any involvement of the ANC. I was a member of the ANC National Executive Committee when GEAR was adopted and I did not know about it '[I] had to listen to it when it was tabled in Parliament, let alone [within] the alliance. Also, we were not consulted on the ➔

➡ whole policy of privatization. These technocratic powers are centralized in the Presidency”.

GEAR is primarily, the state policy through which the BIGGEST MONEY BAGS, the finance capitalists of the big banks and huge conglomerates benefit. It was formulated, partly as a result of the 1970s economic crisis of over production and severe profit loss. Gambling (speculation) with property, generating up to trillions of US dollars became the only major avenue for profiteering. It is this senseless speculation, defended by all governments of the world – including our own - which has been responsible for major economic crises internationally. Nevertheless it benefitted only a very tiny but powerful section of the bourgeois class, to the detriment of other sections of the bourgeoisie, not to speak of the workers and landless peasants, the ones who pay for these crises. It is this GEAR that has made our society so restless. Now and again we see bitter struggles, be it; ‘border municipalities’; the ever increasing anger of striking workers; the outrageous lack of delivery; incredible corruption; the shocking international financial crisis; a deliberate infra-structure and Energy crisis (“A 10 Year Predictable Crisis” by Melani Peters www.iol.co.za). The list is endless.

#### **Mbeki vs Sexwale- Ramaphosa- Phosa Axis**

Pusch Commey, writing in the NEW AFRICAN(1/11/2008), stated “During Mbeki’s first term of office, the then minister of security (and Mbeki right-hand-man), the late Steve Tshwete, cooked up spurious allegations of a plot by potential rivals of Mbeki to topple him ... Cyril Rhamaphosa, Tokyo Sexwale and Matthew Phosa were fingered, prompting them to issue denials and curtail whatever political ambitions they might have entertained. In that soap opera, Zuma was also mentioned, compelling him to swear allegiance to his boss, Thabo Mbeki. Mathew Phosa was later investigated relentlessly by the Scorpions...”

As we approached Polokwane – amidst the Zuma-Mbeki fiasco - David Cherry revealed in a book review entitled ‘Slow-Motion British Coup in South Africa’( EIR 11/07/2008), that “... Thabo Mbeki aroused the wrath of the Anglo-Dutch imperialists, who consider Africa as their private hunting and looting preserve...” and “... are promoting ..., billionaires Tokyo Sexwale and Cyril Ramaphosa, both owned by the Oppenheimer interests,...” Further on, “Ramaphosa got his start in business when Oppenheimer’s Anglo American effectively gave away to him a \$500 million stake in Johnnic Ltd in the name of (BEE)” and that “Sexwale, has become a major figure in diamond mining and oil [and] ... His Mvelaphanda Resources is said to be the third-largest company in diamonds, after De Beers and JFPI Corporation.” He then states, “The task facing South Africans is

to... address the institutional threat to South Africa posed by the globalizer-imperialists, such as the Oppenheimers, Rockefellers, and Soroses, and their bought-and-paid-for politicians masquerading as democrats – all children of a British ‘mother’.”

#### **Mbeki vs Zuma**

Pusch Commey writes that the Zuma camp is “comprised of erstwhile comrades that Mbeki had hurt, as well as the leftwing partners of the ANC, the SACP and COSATU. Mbeki had often treated them with disdain. They all thus coalesced around Zuma, the man with grassroots support, and the enemy of their enemy. It proved to be Meki’s undoing.”

Of those that Mbeki had hurt Pusch sites: “Tony Yengeni, the ANC chief whip, was prosecuted in relation to the Arms Deal ... spent time in jail .... Billy Masethla, the head of the NIA... prosecuted on some obscure charges under NIA Act; Winnie Madikizela-Mandela went quiet after being forced to defend herself against fraud charges dug up against her.... However Jacob Zuma decided to stand and fight until checkmate...” How did he do it?

When the then Minister of Defence, ‘Terror’ Lekota revealed that the cabinet had agreed not to have any dealings with Nkobi Holdings yet Zuma ‘went behind our backs’ and dealt with them, little did we understand the import of this revelation.

It must be remembered that the Nkobi Holdings was a company within the late Brett Kebble stable who Mark Bristow said of him (“An Informed Daily Look At The US Market” Elliot Wave’s International Market Watch) was “... one of the founders of the Randgold, [and] was monumental in transforming the mining industry in South Africa...”. Tim Wood and John Nones commented that he “... had thrown his support behind the demoted Vice President, Jacob Zuma, ... [and] The fiasco has split factions within the ruling party” (ibid) (emphasis added). Kebble’s involvement in the Black elite was quite significant. Budy Naidu in his article “Minister’s wife in Kebble tax probe”(Sunday Times 25/06/2006), quotes Mrs Skweyiya as saying she “... was struck by what she then perceived Kebble was doing for the BEE”. Johan Hienman, Zola Skweyiya’s spokesman, said Kebble paid R350 000 to one of her companies, Fikza Investment Holdings, to kick-start a R32 million wine project she had initiated. She had started receiving money since 2004 adding that the project had yet to get off the ground. The Sunday Times further reported that “The taxman has targeted several prominent business figures and politicians who benefited from the slain magnate Brett Kebble’s largesse.”

The ANC Youth League fundraiser and executive member Songezo Mjongile was the ➡

➔ first Kebble beneficiary to be hauled before court. He allegedly failed to declare R4.8 million he received between 2002 and 2005. Mjongile and fellow youth league member Lunga Ncwana were former directors of Kebble's company Randgold & Exploration and when Kebble was shot dead in his car Ncwana had received R6.5million. Forensic investigators of Kebble's affairs at Randgold discovered widespread fraud in which R2 billion in shareholders' money vanished from the company through a series of deals put together by Kebble. Drawn up by Umbono financial Advisor Services, the reports also included claims from Kebble that more than R95 million of shareholders money was channeled to ANC structures and leading members of the party. (ibid)

The seriousness of the matter is seen by its revolving around the battle for control of the ANC and the state apparatus, hence Push Commey's comment about the dismissal of Zuma as the state deputy president, "Ominously, Zuma stayed on as the deputy president of the ANC, where power lay. It became clear that if Mbeki wanted to shape the present and future of the ANC, Zuma and his allies would be breathing down his neck...."(emphasis added).

The implication of these developments is that the 'broad church', as they call it, of the ANC could no longer house under its roof the various constituencies of the 'church'. If Mbeki is at the helm then those who feel like the SACP may finally "go it alone"(whatever that means); and, if Zuma is the crown prince, then the Mbekites had to find hope in COPE.

The reason why bourgeois politicians are not frank about this, is because, they risk inflaming other non-beneficiaries of the GEAR policy who are much more worse-off than some sections of the bourgeoisie and who, if involved, would make the current dispute look like a picnic event. These are the workers and the landless peasants. Both the ANC and COPE leadership together with their fellow travelers of the DA and UDM ilk, know this very well. But, you see, they are sworn to secrecy on the bourgeois alter, first, never to awaken a sleeping dog, lest it is to their peril. Secondly, 'they never say what they mean and they never mean what say'. This is an honour amongst thieves and there is little if anything we can do about it.

**That's bourgeois politics for you!**

Eltee

## *From The Archives*

### ***On Political Ideologies - From the Presidential Address, APDUSA conference 2005***

"Even as Jesus said that the poor will always be with us, so will we have the eternal ideology of petit-bourgeois reformism and opportunism polluting the struggles of the poor. But let us move on. What has resulted is the prominence of three political ideologies competing for leadership in the struggles of the exploited labouring masses. They are the ideologies of spontaneity, anarchism and radical reformism.

However much they appear to differ yet there is an unmistakable unity between these ideologies. They all agree that political organisations can only play a secondary, supportive role in the spontaneous struggles of the oppressed and exploited masses. There are even political groupings that accept this as a matter of principle rather than a short term tactic. They agree that political organisations must be excluded from deciding on the direction and basis of struggle so as to protect the masses from bureaucracy and to safeguard the independence of their struggles against potential betrayal. While many speak of the need or desirability of socialism as an answer to society's problems it is hardly defined and remains in the realm of a promised land in the after life of present day society. Hence there is no essential difference between these and those who promote radical reformism – the radical limitation of the powers and authority of the giant business multinationals and the international institutions that serve them.

Others will say that they accept the necessity of a political program as a basis of unity and progress but then argue that this cannot be pre-determined and must emerge from the struggles of the masses or otherwise be introduced step by step at appropriate stages in these struggles - politically conscious groups or individuals essentially have the prime task of making their knowledge available to the masses and thereafter the masses must determine their own action. This conveniently overlooks the fact that if a member of an independent, initially non-political, working class organisation becomes imbued with a high level of working class consciousness then he in fact becomes a theoretician of sorts. This intellectual status immediately removes him from the ranks of the ordinary worker and he is then subject to all the potentialities of corruption as faced by the intelligentsia. This nullifies the argument for independent worker organisation that is only assisted but not led by the political intelligentsia.

We must further observe that these notions of spontaneity, anarchism and radical reformism are themselves political ideologies. Their proponents gratuitously obscure the fact that while they attempt to consign political organisations, with clear cut political programs to the rear, all they are doing is to seek means to advance their own political ideologies, while pretending to defend the spontaneous and independent demands of the masses."

## ***On Working Class Leadership and the Continuity Of Struggle - From the Presidential Address, APDUSA Conference April 2003***

“We start from the basis that in the final analysis the struggle of the labouring classes for emancipation from oppression and exploitation, here in South Africa and internationally, is a political struggle and that in the end it can only succeed if it is conducted on the basis of revolutionary political programme. We also accept that for it to succeed the struggle will inevitably require the leadership of a revolutionary working class party organised on the basis of democratic centralism, while the basis of power and government of a new society can only reside in democratic soviet style committees of people’s organisations. There is no contradiction between these two requirements.

We also base ourselves on the understanding that the struggle is one and continuous. There can be no separation between the struggles for liberation from oppression and exploitation in the past and the struggles for the same things today and we must resist the conception that we are now engaged in a new struggle. A new phase yes, but it is in all senses a continuation of the struggle in the past. For that reason there is a need for all to recall and appreciate the true history of the struggle in the past and to understand how it was diverted from the road of progress.”

# **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***