



## HIGH FOOD PRICES AND ECONOMIC CRISES

Local food prices soared to historically new heights in 2008. This coincided with a worldwide surge in food inflation from about 2007. Back then, South African ministers and commentators blamed the local food price crisis on the globalisation of food markets. Like other small economies, according to the often repeated storyline, we are increasingly integrated into and dependent on global agricultural markets for our domestic food supplies. This peripheral position in the global economy we share with many other small countries that export resources while being dependent on manufacturing and capital inflows from wealthier nations. Moreover, poor countries have virtually no control over the chaotic fluctuations in global agricultural and food markets, purportedly governed by ghostlike forces. The typical advice to the citizens in these economies is not to lose faith in the 'invisible hand of the market' to smoothly and quickly lower the cost of food; to hope for more affordable food in the foreseeable future.

Main United Nations agencies have been reporting that global food inflation has fallen sharply since the beginning of 2009. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) experts have highlighted two general trends in world food prices: a visible slowdown in the rate of food price increases from double-digits to tiny fractions; absolute falls in some food prices, meaning they are substantially lower than their 2007-2008 peaks. Thus far, however, investigations by FAO and WFP analysts have revealed no signs of the benefits of lower food inflation trickling down to the working poor. For the period ahead, the basic food basket is set to remain expensive to poor families.

South African food prices did not follow the slide in global food prices during the first six months of 2009. Contrary to the recent worldwide trend, domestic food prices climbed higher - albeit not as steeply as around the middle of last year. It steadily drove the generalised cost of living upwards and thus further depressed the living standards of workers and peasants. Sporadic protests erupted to push the state to more effectively implement the "right to food" in the Constitution. But the protests quickly fizzled out because a self-organised mass movement failed to develop and it lacked a set of coherent alternatives for a food industry under the control of the labouring classes; to radically restructure the food system for the provision of healthy foods for all.

Government responded to the so-called 'food price crisis' in two main ways. Firstly, the state transferred a bit more money through its social grants. The extra pension and child grant monies, however, covered just a tiny fraction of higher food costs. This consequently brought little relief to grant-dependent families.

Secondly, the state instructed some of its agencies (the Competition Commission and the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC)) to investigate and identify the forces pushing local food prices above their global trends. The agencies probed a few local food industry scandals (bread price-fixing, short-changing of dairy farmers, the big-four supermarkets overpricing food, etc.) in line with their respective legal mandates and what their limited resources allow.

### **Double Blow To Working People: High Food Costs And Recession**

NAMC is a statutory body which advises the Minister of Agriculture on the workings of agricultural markets. It publishes the Quarterly Food Price Monitor (QFPM) which carefully tracks food price movements throughout the country. The QFPM was launched in 2004 after the sharp rise in food prices in 2002-03.

The May 2009 QFPM combines a bleak picture of food prices during the first few months of 2009 with a fairly upbeat forecast for the rest of the year. For the year April 2008 to April 2009, it is worth citing a few facts and figures reported in the QFPM: the average consumer was paying 80% more to buy a 2kg packet of rice and a 50% higher price for fresh cabbage; potatoes and pumpkin were 30% above their prices a year before; bread and sugar prices were roughly 20% higher. Interestingly, it compares the rural-urban food price gaps for the year ending January 2009 with the situation up to April 2009. For a basic basket of food, the rural consumer was paying 10% more than their urban counterparts in January 2009 compared to the previous year. If April 2009 is compared to April 2008, then this rural-urban food price gap expands to 16.5%! A full discussion as to why rural food prices are so much higher falls outside the scope of this brief article. Nevertheless, what ought to be pointed out is that the QFPM restricts attention to the variation in food prices at the cashier for the same food in city and countryside shops. But it does not factor in the extra transportation costs people in rural areas must pay to get to so-called cheaper supermarkets in nearby towns. What the May 2009 QFPM clearly shows is a rising cost of food and a heavier burden of food inflation falling on the rural poor.

A retailer normally charges all its customers the same cash prices if they buy the same food stuff. In other words, rich and poor people usually pay the same price for the same food in the same shop. But the wealth gap between rich and poor families means that the weight of the same food prices fall more on the poor. Tracking this relationship between food inflation and inequality is a highlight in the recent QFPM. It points out that: ➔



“The cost of the food basket expressed as a share of the average monthly income of the poorest 30% of the population increased from 28% in April 2008 to 33% in April 2009, while the cost of the food basket expressed as a share of the average monthly income of the wealthiest 30% of the population only increased slightly from 2.2% to 2.6% over the same period.” (QFPM, May 2009).

This pertinent observation is critical in the context of the global recession. However, recent editions of the QFPM fail to systematically uncover the ways in which the global economic slump raises the cost of food for the poor. A passing comment ought to be in order. Recessions or generalized economic crises drive up food and other costs through the loss of income that result, in turn, from job losses and other strategies companies employ to cut wages.

### **Supermarkets Profit From High Food Prices**

The Competition Commission falls under the Department of Trade and Industry. It serves as a watchdog or policing agency to bring about and maintain “fair competition” throughout the economy. Over the last few years it has investigated a few cases of unfair competition along the food supply chain and found some companies guilty of this punishable crime. For example, in the bread price fixing scandal, it found Tiger Brands (a giant food manufacturer) guilty. As a penalty the company had to pay a considerable fine and the Competition Commission declared this the first step to dismantle the so-called ‘bakery cartel’. In another food-related case, the milk and dairy products scandal, it was all about ensuring ‘fairer producer prices’ (justifiable profit margins) to dairy farmers from processing companies.

In June 2009, the Competition Commission released a press statement saying that it was investigating whether the supermarkets helped to inflate local food prices. At the time, the Commission appointed a team of experts to draft a preliminary report but the public release date of this document is yet to be announced. Conservative estimates suggest that Pick-n-Pay, Checkers-Shoprite, Woolworth and SPAR control more than 60% of the food retail sector. Their dominance of the local food chain, on the one hand, gives them enormous power to dictate prices and other terms to factories and farmers they buy from. On the other hand, they profit from imposing exorbitant prices on final consumers.

Around the middle of this year, the big 4 supermarkets published statements to display their 2008-2009 financial performance. All giant supermarkets reported higher profits in the current period in comparison with the previous financial period, benefiting handsomely from the main driver of overall inflation: inflated food prices. Woolworths and Pick n Pay, reported the smallest increases – of 13% and 18% respectively- evidently due to their aggressive

expenditure on the construction of new stores. SPAR managed to increase its profits by 22%. Evidently the Shoprite-Checkers group outperformed its retail rivals: raising its profits by nearly 30% from its South African shops and by 50% from stores elsewhere in Africa! Celebrating its stellar performance this group’s CEO, Whitey Basson, told a leading business newspaper: “The high inflation in some of these countries, although lower than SA, really boosted our turnover”. (*Business Day*, 26 August 2009, page 13). Meanwhile, the share prices on the stock exchange and dividends to be distributed to shareholders of these big supermarkets have been rising in tandem with their higher profits. The rates at which supermarket profits have increased are clearly above South Africa’s general inflation rate of 6%. But they are also above the wage increments won by retail and other workers in the latest round of wage negotiations.

### **For An Agrarian Revolution To Guarantee The Right To Quality Food For All**

The rapid escalation in the cost of food has converged with the global economic slump to depress the living standards of the labouring classes. Working people need sustainable solutions to counter the ongoing food crisis. Two basic reasons exist why an independent working peoples’ alternative to this crisis is vital. Firstly, the logic of competition that governs capitalist agribusinesses and supermarkets work against guaranteeing the right to quality food for all. South Africa’s big four supermarkets, for instance, thrive on business secrets, serve the interests of their wealthy shareholders, profit from the exploitation of a vast army of temporary contract workers and keep food prices high.

Secondly, watchdog agencies such as the NAMC and the Competition Commission start from a deeply flawed premise to resolve the ongoing food crisis. These bodies want to reform the food system within the limitations of existing laws and the Constitution. This effort is based on the moral myth of fair competition and the idea to have a capitalist food system that works for the poor. But they fail to admit that the small number of powerful corporations that now dominate and control food production and distribution arose from the logic of capitalist competition. Moreover, a savage rule drives the dogged pursuit of profits in every corporation: beat your rivals by any means necessary!

The ways in which society produces and distributes food must be radically restructured if we are to resolve the food crisis in the interests of the working majority. The key pathway to such a new food system is through an agrarian revolution. It must start with constructing an ecologically sustainable farming system under the democratic control of peasants and workers active in agriculture. Moving food from the farm to the plate must be reconfigured so as to protect the environment and human health. A food system for profit must be replaced with a food system to guarantee the right to quality food for all. ●

# THE BIG ESKOM RIP-OFF

A few months ago Eskom applied for a whopping increase in the price of electricity. At the time various voices in ANC ruling party expressed outrage at the proposed increase but a 31% increase was granted all the same. This followed on a 27% price increase that Eskom was granted last year. Now Eskom is back calling for a 45% increase in each of the next three years. Once again we hear voices of outrage coming from various quarters but are they being honest? Although its shareholding is wholly in the hands of the South African Government, Eskom operates not as a public utility but as a private capitalist enterprise which produces electricity, not necessarily according to public needs but for a profit.

Now when a capitalist enterprise needs a large sum of money for capital expansion it will normally attempt to raise the amount via a rights/share issue or bond issues or loans. Eskom is only partly following this route. It wants to raise a massive amount of money from the consumers which means

that the hard-pressed labouring masses must be made to bite the proverbial bullet.

There is a big difference between capital expenditure and running expenses. The former is a long term investment while the latter is simply written off as necessary costs. Eskom is asking us to pay for its investments! That being so it will get those investments for free. It feels that it is able to do this because it holds a monopoly over energy production. When the new power plants and service roads have been built Eskom will hardly need the additional cash any more but we can be sure that the intention is to keep prices up so that the bosses of Eskom can enjoy super profits. We are told that renewable energy like solar power is too expensive. What will Eskom argue next?

The only immediate answer to the problem is that Eskom must be fully nationalised and placed under workers' control, where profits and super salaries for directors are not at all considered. But that is not what the ANC thinks so it is our struggle. ●

## THE SCOURGE OF CASUAL LABOUR

The International Labour Organisation declared the 7<sup>TH</sup> October as the International Day of Decent Work. There are four fundamental elements that make up a decent work situation namely: Full employment, Labour rights, Social Security and Dialogue between labour, government and business. It was also during this period that COSATU started their campaign, as was resolved at Polokwane, to have labour brokers banned in order to eliminate this rabid form of exploitation. A local study commissioned by the Department of Labour in 2008 estimated that 40% of people in employment are informal workers, working in small, medium, large companies and even in the public sector.

Of particular interest is the Labour Broker question. According to the Labour Relations and Basic Conditions of Employment Acts every person that works more than 24 hours is being deemed an employee and is covered by these Acts. In terms of these regulations workers contracted by labour brokers are governed by the same rules as other employees but due to the negligence of government and the labour movement workers are vulnerable to be exploited by some of these unscrupulous agents.

### How Labour Brokers Impact on the Right of Workers

**Job & Social Security:** Workers are employed through these middlemen on short term, casual contracts. They also guarantee that if companies are not happy with particular workers, they will replace them. In some areas even previous permanent jobs with reasonable contracts of employment are being reduced to informal employment through contracts and temporary employment. We also see that in many cases the

employment relations are changed with the sole purpose of circumventing the labour laws, i.e. workers are denied Unemployment Insurance Fund, sick leave and all other benefits that are guaranteed by the acts.

**Labour Rights:** Workers are further denied their rights that are accorded in terms of the above mentioned acts that govern employee relations. The outsourcing of skilled labour is another method of circumventing the labour laws and to ensure cheap labour of highly qualified artisans and technicians.

**Dialogue:** Due to the fact that labour brokers are the legal employers of casual labourers consultation between the companies and employees are non-existent, which gives rise to inconsistencies in the treatment of company employees and those employed by labour brokers. This can also be used to divide and rule the workers.

### What Is To Be Done?

It is time that the trade union movement organises these workers and creates a platform where workers in the informal and formal sector could meet as equal employees. This would eliminate a situation where labour brokers could use their employees as scabs when strike action needs to be taken. Workers will see themselves as a united force against exploitation. The trade unions in this case cannot rely on closed shop agreements. A new method of Agency Shop agreements needs to be looked at. This means that trade unionists again need to become activists and organisers. At the same time the trade unions will have to look at their investment companies to ensure that they themselves are not making use of casual labour. ●

# TRAINING LAYOFF SCHEME - ANOTHER CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Against the backdrop of global capitalism in crisis, South Africa like other developing countries that are strongly integrated in the international economy, has been affected by the sharp drop in demand for its export products and the fall in prices of exported commodities, resulting in distress for mining, manufacturing and most other sectors. It is in these circumstances that the workers are being forced to take retrenchment packages. This is the final phase for workers who have been on short-time for a long period of 6 months or more and we need to be aware that this is a short term "solution" for these workers.

The ANC government has announced the Training Layoff scheme initiative that falls under the Medium Term Strategic Framework for the 2009-2014 period. It is the government's response to the skills development challenges that were identified during the first five years of this decade. The official jobless rate rose to 23.6% with thousands of jobs still in the balance. This scheme has been invented as an alternative to retrenchments and to allow a temporary breathing space for a minimum of three months for workers to allow them to undergo training that is in line with their current field of employment. This will supposedly enable the worker to enhance his/her skills and to afford him/her "better opportunities" for the envisaged economic revival.

It is important to note that only those earning less than R180 000 per annum are eligible. Workers will only receive 50% of their basic wage, up to a maximum of R6239 per month through the creation of a National Job Fund. It is also important to realise that the average worker earns R3500 per month, which means his/her training allowance will be R1750 per month to subsist on.

The key elements of this scheme are as follows:  
"A temporary suspension of work use for training;  
Retention of the employment contract;  
Training to be flexible but link to the skills needs of the employer;  
A training allowance paid to the worker;  
Employer carries cost of basic package of social benefits." (A guide to the Training Layoff scheme – Department of Labour 24/08/09)

## Is This Scheme A Solution To This Crisis?

We are again being bombarded with this nonsensical notion of liberal, capitalist thinking that the economic crisis is a short-term hiccup and that the South African economy will pick up by the end of the year. The fact is that the system is periodically confronted with crises resulting from over-production.

This scheme is supposed to train workers for their benefit and at the same time to the benefit of industry. This implies that there will be work at the end of these training interventions. This may not be, because none of these measures adopted take into account overproduction which is the root cause of this crisis. In terms of costs, South Africa is unable to compete with countries who do not adhere to progressive labour laws within the capitalist framework.

Another contributing factor is that South African companies are importing from the very same countries where the labour laws are ignored. This facilitates lower costs through denying workers a decent wage and working conditions.

We believe that these are bail-outs in another guise which are misleading the workers by giving them false hope. ●

## PLANS FOR A NEW DEVELOPMENT PATH?

More information has been trickling into the public domain about the vision and plans of the Zuma administration over the next few years. Major ideas of this vision and plan appear in two documents produced by the newly established National Planning Ministry. These documents are the *Medium Term Strategic Framework* (MTSF) and the "*Green Paper on National Planning*". The MTSF spells out the new cabinet's overarching goals and strategies over its full 5-year term until 2014. Its emphasis is on the efficacy of the state's recovery plans from the economic recession and reiterates the promise to reduce unemployment and poverty by 50% in line the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations.

The "Green Paper" refers to a menu of planning tools which incorporates elements of the MTSF, government's annual Programme of Action and technical guidelines on how this kind of planning process is likely to operate. It introduces the notion of a longer term plan to be articulated in "*Vision 2025*". The 'Green Paper' further

motivates the need for a National Planning Commission (NPC), what its status would be inside the Presidency and its composition. With the NPC government intends to create a high-level think tank made up of well-qualified and experienced advisors or commissioners.

COSATU and the SACP broadly support economic planning and the creation of bodies like the Ministry of National Planning. Their leaders argue that planning is in line with their demand for a developmental state. The current popularity of 'national planning' in government circles, these allies of the ANC say, translates the Polokwane resolutions into pro-poor state policies and thus represents a 'victory for the left in the tripartite alliance'.

Enlightened sections of the capitalist class understand that the Zuma administration's infatuation with planning is not targeted at liquidating private property rights. After all the post-apartheid Constitution, the country's supreme law, secures private ownership of the commanding heights of the economy. In effect, this protects ➡

➤ and promotes the exploitation of working people for the profits of a few investors.

Shortly after the publication of the MTSF and Green Paper, a leading voice of the bourgeoisie gave the following sober assessment of these documents in an editorial piece:

“And contrary to fears that the planning commission might be a Stalinist bureaucracy that weighs heavily on the economy, the entity the Green Paper envisages is something far more flexible and interesting. The question is not so much whether the proposed planning function will make the state too big and unwieldy: it’s more whether it will improve the functioning of the state at all.” (*Business Day*, 7 September 2009, page 8).

Indeed, a closer reading of both documents exposes them as blueprints to rationalise why the economic fundamentals, the capitalist ownership structure which dictates the shape and rhythm of the political economy, are to stay intact.

### **Contradictions Of Capitalist Economic Growth**

The MTSF reiterates the need for a plan to improve the ways in which government allocates its resources. It therefore outlines a framework to “guide planning and resource allocation across all the spheres of government.” (NPC 2009). Government’s top priorities are listed as: “more inclusive economic growth, decent work and sustainable livelihoods, economic and social infrastructure, rural development, food security and land reform”. Any third world country with South Africa’s strikingly uneven state of socio-economic development must have these outcomes at the top of its development agenda. The more fundamental and unanswered question

is: how are these noble goals are to be achieved under capitalism?

The MTSF and the Green Paper praise the economic performance of South Africa since the end of apartheid, with caveats on setbacks due to the current economic slump. GEAR and ASGISA, the non-negotiable neo-liberal programmes of the post-apartheid state, are credited with the relatively high growth rates up to mid-2008. Thus the era COSATU and its allies at one point termed ‘jobless economic growth’, has been superseded by the ‘golden age of growth’ in the history of South Africa’s political economy. Economic growth is not merely celebrated, but lifted to the dominant theme and seemingly the country’s most important goal.

Both documents, however, are restricted to generalisations about economic growth, which is typical of neo-liberal economic reasoning. The papers concentrate on the astounding rise in the production of goods and services in the country but are unsurprisingly silent about whether this ‘output growth’ has been useful or harmful to human needs. It evidently does not care whether the country has produced more expensive weapons of mass destruction, luxury gadgets for the elite or paper clips. Ecological disasters flowing from capitalist economic growth and its anarchic tendencies to overproduce and ignite crises are also ignored. There is absolutely no analysis of the movements in profit rates. Yet this motive directs capitalist investment decisions (private investors are in charge of our economy!) The inescapable reality is that investors throw money into projects they reckon to be profitable and treat human needs and the environment, for example, as secondary. It is therefore only sensible or logical to uncover the social forces that propel and stand to benefit from economic growth - big omissions in the MTSF and the Green Paper. ●

## **OLD STATE-OWNED COMPANIES AND NATIONALISATION**

Mr Fred Gona, chairperson of parliament’s portfolio committee on mineral resources, says that talks about the nationalisation of our country’s mining industry must continue (*Business Day*, 3 September 2009, pp1-2). Nationalisation is necessary, Mr Gona argues, to uproot poverty and inequality. Failing to do so, our honourable parliamentarian warns, could ignite a ‘serious rebellion’ by the poor. One is left to wonder how nationalisation is logically connected with these purported outcomes. Hopefully our honourable MP will clarify this at some stage. Another reason to keep the nationalisation debate alive, according to Mr Gona, is to urge the business community to endorse the formation of a state-owned mining company. Originally registered in 1944, this company is to be revived to consolidate state owned shares in the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and Alexcor into one company.

What is so admirable about state-owned companies formed in the pre-1948 era - before the Nationalist Party came to power? Why do our ‘left-leaning politicians’ cherish a model of state capitalist corporations conceived by our oppressors more than half a century ago? How does this dovetail with the promise to nationalise the commanding heights of the economy expressed in the Freedom Charter? In fact, what has happened to state-owned companies from that era (ESKOM, TRANSNET, etc) in recent years? The champions of the Freedom Charter privatised these on the advice of the World Bank and IMF. Aided by government’s BEE policy, these companies have also been used to cultivate a nationalist or patriotic business class who live by the capitalist law of worker exploitation for private profits. Neither old state-owned companies nor deceptive and empty slogans about ‘nationalisation’ serve the interests of the labouring majority. ●

## **A CRITIQUE OF CIRAJ RASSOOL'S THESIS: "THE INDIVIDUAL, AUTO/BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY IN SOUTH AFRICA"**

This doctoral thesis, submitted in 2004, recently entered the public domain via the internet. The thesis is divided into two parts. The first deals with various methodologies of recording or documenting history in South Africa. It contains criticisms of the shortfalls of mainly documentary collections, the biographies of individuals as constructed by others or otherwise idealised and the large absence of people's history, i.e. the recording of acts of people that were independent of any organisation. The second part tackles the biography of IB Tabata via an attempt to critically examine biographies that had been produced by others and to construct a biography independently. This critique is concerned solely with the second part, examining to what extent Rassool has succeeded or failed in this project.

Because of the methodology used and the objective of this thesis there is a focus mainly on the personality of IB Tabata. Unfortunately, this results in a biography of a politician that contains very little of his political ideology, its theory and practice. Instead we are presented with a picture of a man who was driven mainly by personal ambition and concern for his self-image. This is typified in Rassool's tracing of Tabata's career "from collective leadership to presidency". In exile, we are given to understand that Tabata was somebody acting mainly on his own account. Yet, he was the elected representative of the Unity Movement of South Africa and nothing says that he did not fulfil this mandate. Again, in every conflict or difference with other individuals in the Unity Movement it is suggested that Tabata acted mainly out of self-interest. There is little, if any indication of the political issues at stake or the principles and organisational objectives which Tabata defended in these instances. Moreover, Tabata is not seen as acting together with others in defending what they believed to be the best interests of the organisation. The net result is that his political opponents are given more credence than Tabata himself. Thus for example there is no understanding given to the dispute in the Unity Movement in the fifties over the interpretation of the agrarian problem, nor is there any attempt to indicate the essential political difference over guerrilla warfare with Neville Alexander and his colleagues, who later went on to establish the Yu Chi Chan Club. The least said about Frank Anthony's criticism of Tabata in his self-justifying novel, "The Journey", the better.

Another direction in which this thesis leads is the argument that Tabata was not the sole author of his written works and that these works should more correctly be jointly accredited to Dora Taylor. There is little doubt that in his early years in the political movement Dora Taylor did provide assistance to Tabata in developing his writing style and ability but Rassool's main contention must be rejected. If he is correct then Tabata could not possibly have written anything of significance after her death in

1976. But he continued doing so in the same style as before until his own death in 1990. Secondly, Tabata was a renowned orator and much of his unique oratory ability was captured in his writings besides some of his speeches which were actually recorded and are part of his written legacy. On the occasions of his speeches was Dora Taylor somewhere in the background with a hidden microphone, prompting him on? The idea is laughable. Then again, Tabata used the help of more than one person to whom he would dictate his texts for typing. One example is his 1961 Presidential address to Apdusa which was dictated to another person and prepared independently of Dora Taylor.

In all, Rassool does Dora Taylor an injustice in suggesting that she collaborated in constructing a biography of Tabata that was lopsided and probably false. What she did was to assist in the production of his political biography as an objective necessity of the times, whereas in Rassool's biography the politics of a man who was a politician first and foremost, is singularly absent.

We come to the third criticism of this thesis and that is the almost total obliteration of Jane Gool's role in Tabata's biography. She is just mentioned as is necessary on various occasions but she has no voice, indeed, no political voice. This is most astounding since Jane Gool and IB Tabata shared a very close political and personal relationship for the best part of their lives, a relationship far closer than the one Tabata shared with Dora Taylor. Jane Gool was a powerful intellectual in her own right and she presented papers on the International Situation at almost every Unity Movement and All African Convention conferences. The minutes of these conferences provide testimony to her skills as a political analyst. Incidentally, for Rassool's information she was also the co-author, with Tabata of the important document; "The Wreckers of Unity at Work". Rassool apologetically tries to write his omission of her role off. It does not hold water.

There are other instances of clear bias and neglect on Rassool's part. Here we may refer to his characterisation of Robin Kayser's thesis and his co-authorship of writings with Mohamed Adhikari on the history of APDUSA as the work of "partisan research of (an) Apdusa member". The truth is that Robin Kayser is not and never was a member of Apdusa, a fact that Rassool could easily have established. In mathematical terms one such error invalidates an entire argument but it is not necessary to rely on this alone to dispute the accuracy of Rassool's work. Robin Kayser sought to establish first hand evidence of the organisational work and impact of the Apdusa. Rassool, however asks one to rely on Clifton Crais' approach to "rural social movements on their own indigenous terms-of healing, social health and confrontation with evil, and to their own political rituals of appropriation", thus denying the importance of political organisation in the liberatory struggle. Secondly, we have the recording of Baruch Hirson's allegation of the non-participation of the Unity Movement in active struggle which goes uncontested in this thesis ➡

➔ despite hard evidence of other writers to the contrary.

Lastly we have the peculiar attention paid to the nature of Tabata's funeral which was partly a Christian ceremony. This, Rassool compares to the purely secular funeral of Ben Kies and Victor Wessels and calls it "surprising". As if the wishes of Tabata's family did not matter and that he as a dead man could dictate the course of these events. An attempt is then made to examine the Christian influences on Tabata's life. All of this is irrelevant as

Tabata was a student of scientific socialism to the very end.

In conclusion, whatever this thesis purports to be it is not history. Anyone who wants to learn more about IB Tabata and what he represented would do far better by reading Allison Drew's works, Robin Kayser's MA thesis on "Land and Liberty! : The Non-European Unity Movement and the Land Question, 1933-1976" and Leonard Nikane's autobiography, "My Life Under White Supremacy and in Exile". Tabata's own writings speak for themselves. ●

## LIVINGSTONE MQOTSI

Apdusa pays tribute to the life's work and contribution to the liberatory struggle of Livingstone Mqotsi who passed away in East London on 25 September 2009. Mqotsi served as an executive member of the Cape African Teachers Association, the All African Convention. He further served as joint secretary of the Unity Movement of South Africa and General Secretary of the Apdusa. In his work, in defending the interests of the peasantry in particular, he actively opposed Bantu Education and the implementation of the erstwhile government's policy of bantustanisation. For this he suffered banning orders and was made to endure extreme hardship.

In 1964 he left the country under organisational instructions to work in exile. It was under the pressures of exile and the difficulty that Apdusa had faced in gaining recognition by the Organisation of African Unity that Mqotsi developed differences with the organisation and subsequently left for England where he spent his life before returning to South Africa a few years ago. He then joined the ranks of the New Unity Movement. Regardless of the differences he had with Apdusa we nevertheless honour the valuable contribution that he made to the struggle during its most difficult years. As the vice president of Apdusa, Mmiselo Bayi observed in a tribute at his funeral, it was the generation of stalwarts to which Mqotsi belonged, who taught many valuable lessons about the need for a principled approach to struggle that is very much required today.



# *From Around the World*

## RESISTING THE COUP IN HONDURAS

Manuel Zelaya Rosales became the president of Honduras in 2005. This outcome was the result of the victory of President Zelaya's party, the Liberal Party, in nationwide elections. But Zelaya neither campaigned nor won on the basis of an anti-capitalist left platform. The Liberal Party is not a radical leftist party. It consists of several factions situated to the left of the National Party, a rightwing bourgeois party which the Liberal Party managed to beat at the polls. During his first two years in power, President Zelaya evidently pursued the standard package of neo-liberal policies to the detriment of the rural and urban poor. For example, he took Honduras into the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which is the trade-pact designed by the US to subject Latin America to its dictates. Yet critiques of CAFTA pointed to its logic to kill the Honduran agricultural sector and textile industry. This is the main reason for the angry and militant opposition of Honduran peasant movements [*Centro Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo (CNTC)*] and left political party [*Unificacion Democracia (UD)*] to CAFTA. In June 2007 the UD organized a large meeting with representatives of

leftist political parties from Mexico, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala in Tegucigalpa to formulate a resistance campaign to free trade across the region. The grievance of poor families in the cities was that President Zelaya failed to assist them to counter the hardships they have to endure as a result of the sharply higher food costs.

But it was Zelaya's perceived move to the left that saw him removed from political office in a coup d'état on 28 June 2009. The coup was orchestrated by a fragile coalition of the army, headed by sacked General Romeo Vásquez Velásquez, and the Honduran elite under the leadership of Roberto Michelletti. The coup plotters installed Michelletti, former president of the country's national congress, as the country's de facto president. A dictatorship now exists in Honduras: Michelletti and the army suspended the constitution, imposed a dusk-to-dawn state of emergency and sustain a campaign of state sponsored violence against protestors who demand the 'restoration of democratic governance'. To legitimise the dictatorship, the coup cabal plans to host fraudulent national elections in November – in a political climate without any "free extra-parliamentary" political activities.

General Velásquez was trained at the infamous School of the Americas (renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC)), a military training project based in ➔

➤ and sponsored by the US government. Military men trained at this camp have been implicated in heinous crimes against liberation movements across Latin America.

Thus far there is no evidence of the direct involvement of US imperialism in the coup. However, the official position of the Obama administration with regard to the coup regime in Honduras remains ambiguous. In sharp contrast, the Organization of American States (representing countries throughout the region) and almost all other countries in the rest of the world refuse to recognize the coup regime and call for the reinstatement of the country's constitutionally elected president. Evidence of American ties to the coup regime is clear from the following report:

“Lanny Davis, a lawyer to Bill Clinton and campaign advisor to Hillary Clinton, has been lobbying in Washington for Honduran coup leaders and elites. Some of the businesses that support the coup in Honduras that Davis is representing in DC are US companies such as Russell, Fruit of the Loom and Hanes – all of which have benefited from the low wages, neo-liberal policies and crackdowns on union rights in the country.” (Benjamin Dangl, *Upside Down World*, 21 September 2009)

This coup has taken place when Washington is boosting its militarisation of the region with an expanded military presence in Colombia. The real motivation behind the US imperialist so-called anti-drug war is to counter the anti-capitalist leftward shift in the political landscape in Latin America.

In the meanwhile, President Zelaya made a dramatic return to the capital city of Honduras and has found refuge in the Brazilian embassy. The sinister plot of the coup clique was to force Manuel Zelaya and his family into lifelong exile from his homeland - first flying him to Costa Rica. Zelaya shifted his base to Nicaragua and for 3 months campaigned from outside the borders of Honduras to return as his homeland's elected head of state. His reappearance in Tegucigalpa has exposed the fractures and infighting within the illegal regime. This deepened the crisis of legitimacy of the dictatorship, forcing them into talks to reach a political settlement with Zelaya. Of the nine issues being negotiated, the main sticking point is the unconditional reinstatement of Zelaya as the country's elected president. Agreeing to this demand would represent an ignominious defeat for the crisis-ridden dictatorship. This outcome is set to revive the pre-coup momentum to radically reconfigure the course of modern history of Honduras; for the aspirations and actions of working people to consciously shape a new society.

The coup regime is illegitimate and without legal standing internationally. It violates the democratic and human rights of Hondurans. Global

condemnation of the coup is at the same time a profound act of solidarity with Hondurans fighting for genuine democracy. Inside Honduras, resistance to the coup is gaining confidence and militancy. The scale of street protests and strikes are growing, despite the imprisonment, torture and murder of activists. The chief reason for this heroic and broad-based resistance movement against the coup is clear: the coup represents an attack by the elite and their imperialist allies on the popular demand for a constituent assembly.

Opposition to the coup erupted instantaneously. Anti-coup protests did not only grow in size and confidence, but swiftly became more organized. The National Resistance Front Against the Coup d'Etat (FRN) is the front which mobilizes the forces to defeat the coup. It unites political organizations (like the UD and factions of Zelaya's party), trade unions and other popular movements (brought together under Coordinator of Popular Resistance). The total combined membership of these formations amounts to roughly 100,000 people.

The large trade union federations in the country, the Unitary Confederation of Honduran Workers (CUTH), General Workers Central (CGT) and Confederation of Honduran Workers (CTH) probably form the best organized force inside the FNR. Workers in these trade unions have embarked on a series of open-ended strikes around the following set of demands (issued in a statement to mobilize for the August 6 strikes):

1. The reestablishment of the democratic institutional order
2. The return of Mr. Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales to the presidency of the Republic.
3. The installation in Honduras of a Constituent National Assembly
4. That the repression against the Honduran people be ended.

These demands sum up what the FNR classify as their immediate and medium-term platform. Short-term concerns, the immediate reinstatement of President Zelaya and ending the brutal repression, naturally dominate at present. But the political situation is in constant flux, shifting daily as negotiators try to reach an agreement on the November elections. In its circular distributed on October 21, Communiqué Number 30, the FNR declares:

*“We reiterate that the Honduran people will not recognize the campaign and the results of the electoral process of the 29th of November while the dictatorial regime that the oligarchy sustains through armed force continues...”*

*“We reiterate our unbreakable will to install a democratic and popular National Constitutional Assembly with which we will refound the country and rescue it from a minority economic class that exploits the working class.”* ●



# THE PLIGHT OF THE TAMILS IN SRI LANKA

The Tamil minority of Sri Lanka find themselves in a desperate situation following the military defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by the armed forces of the Sri Lankan state. In the end stage of the more than 30 year civil war conducted against the Tamils, the army mercilessly bombed an area of a few square kilometres, where the Tigers sought refuge together with tens of thousands of terrified and hungry civilians. To try to understand the plight of the Tamils, particularly in the north and east of the country, it is necessary to delve into the history of the people of Sri Lanka. The facts about Sri Lankan history given here come mainly from Danielle Sabai's article in the June 09 issue of International Viewpoint.

Before colonial occupation, there were three kingdoms on the island, a Tamil one in the north and two Sinhalese kingdoms in the South. The Sinhalese, Buddhist by religion formed and still form the biggest community, constituting 75% of the population. The Sri Lankan Tamils, who originate from the island, form 18% of the population and are mostly Hindu but 7% are Sunni Muslim and 3% are Christian. When the British colonised the island they brought into the country more than a million Tamils from Tamil Nadu (India) as labourers, working the plantations. They have been called plantation Tamils. The British colonisers integrated the separate kingdoms into one administrative structure and they foisted the Christian religion on the population. Christians enjoyed favoured status and although representing no more than 10% of the population at independence, made up a significant part of the elite of the country. The elite came from both the Sinhalese and Tamil communities.

At independence, the Sinhalese nationalists, based on their belief that the Sinhalese population had suffered during colonisation to the benefit of the Christian minority and the Tamils, were determined to achieve a dominant position in post-colonial society. It is true that there were inequalities between the Tamil community in the north and the Sinhalese community, in terms of education, income and jobs. Thus, because the education system in the northern region was more developed, there was proportionally a bigger percentage of Tamils in the higher professions, as compared with the other communities.

The economy of Ceylon (name of Sri Lanka until 1972) following independence in 1948 was marked by its colonial heritage. It rested on a system of big plantations, growing tea and tapping rubber, oriented towards export. Industry was poorly developed and industrial products had therefore to be imported. The plantations were mainly owned by Sinhalese proprietors and they together with the Tamil upper classes saw no reason to overthrow the economic structure inherited from the colonial era. Politically, the Sinhalese elite, obtaining the votes of the majority Sinhalese as well as the support of the Tamil elite, were able to grasp state power on the basis of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism.

Successive post independence governments de-franchised Tamil plantation workers and made the majority of the working class stateless. A consistent campaign of discrimination was aimed at Tamil speaking people. While English remained the language of the rulers, Sinhala was made the sole official language as a device for discrimination. Sinhala colonisation schemes were established in Tamil areas to create communal disharmony. Tamil students and graduates were discriminated against.

The Tamil elite began to break away from the Sinhalese parties. By peaceful means and through parliamentary votes, the Tamils would first demand equal rights inside a united state and would then launch a campaign for a federal solution. Later, the Tamil groups demanded recognition of the Tamil people as a separate nation, with the right to self-determination, a guarantee of territorial integrity and safeguarding of the rights of Tamils outside of their independent territory. The response of the government was a strengthening of the central state, military repression and the organisation of pogroms against the Tamil community. A left wing movement, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party had made a fundamental mistake and joined the Sinhala chauvinist government. This policy of the left was criticised by a faction within the party, which later broke away from it and formed the Nava Sama Samaja party, which from its inception defended the right of self determination of the Tamil people. The failure of the left, the repression of the Tamils and the absence of economic perspectives typified by rising unemployment, led a section of the Tamil youth to militant action and the formation of armed groups. Among these was the LTTE, formed in 1976.

The LTTE embarked on guerrilla warfare and in the 1990s increasingly had recourse to suicide attacks. It did not authorise political activity inside the Tamil community under its control nor did it seek support from the workers movement in Sri Lanka. The government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who came to power in 2005, supported by Sinhalese extremists, began a "war on terror" ending in the defeat of the LTTE. Global capital, satisfied with his neoliberal policies and to repress social unrest, gave him first 3.5 billion dollars in aid and promised him a further 4.5 billion dollars.

During the war, 2 million civilians were surrounded in the north east of the island and 20,000 died in the last days of the war. 300,000 displaced Tamils are in government camps and political prisoners in detention camps exceed 9,000. The demand is that the war crimes committed by the Sri Lankan government are investigated. There are campaigns for the release of Tamils in government camps and for the release of political prisoners or that they are brought before the courts. Also, for the Sri Lankan army to vacate the north of the island, allowing resettlement of the displaced Tamils. The struggle of the Tamils for self determination remains. ●

## AS A GENERAL ELECTION LOOMS IN BRITAIN, WHITHER THE LEFT?

With a general election due to be held within the next nine months in Britain, the New Labour government under Gordon Brown faces a big defeat at the hands of the Tories. As public debt rises to unprecedented levels, the government has the choice of either raising taxes or cutting public spending or both. It is not likely to raise corporation or other taxes that hit the wealthy for fear of antagonising its friends in big business. After having condemned the Tories for their announced policies of making substantial cuts in public spending and services if returned to office, Gordon Brown has had to admit that he too will cut public spending. He has however sugared the pill by saying that the cuts will be more considered and less sweeping than the Tory cuts! It has to be said at this point that New Labour's massive spending not only to save the banks but to try to stimulate the economy was preferable to the Tory policy of letting the market forces act freely, saving jobs that would otherwise have been lost.

What is clear is that the bourgeois parties in the British Parliament, are intent on making the working class pay for the financial crisis caused by the bankers and financiers of the US and Europe and which has led to the serious global recession. What is also clear is that they do not have credible policies to tackle global warming. Unemployment is near the 2.5 million mark and is likely to reach 3 million next year, more than 10% of the workforce. Large numbers of workers in employment face short time, freezing or contraction of wages and reduction in pensions. When the cuts in public spending and services planned by the ruling party kick in, unemployment will increase even further. Having been bailed out by public finance, the bankers have returned to business as usual and are busy rewarding themselves with huge bonuses.

New Labour was roundly defeated in the European Parliament elections held a few months ago. Over a million fewer people voted for the party than in the 2004 European elections. It received the same number of seats in the parliament but a smaller percentage of the vote than a hard right party, the UK Independence Party (UKIP). The Tories, who topped the poll, only increased their vote by 1%. The British National Party (BNP) for the first time, won 2 seats in the European Parliament and it and UKIP, with their xenophobic and racist policies, are a big threat to the cause of the workers and society as a whole. The turnout for the vote was 34.4%, nearly 10% lower than the European turnout as a whole. Large numbers of voters, who in the past would have voted Labour were so disenchanted with the party's neoliberal policies, rather than vote

for another party did not turn up to the polls.

The Greens increased their vote from 6% to 8.6% but only won the 2 seats they held in the previous parliament. The radical left was unable to take advantage of the disaffection of the voters with the traditional parties and paid the price for years of division. The organisation, Respect, which had been weakened by the split with the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) two years previously, was not able to contest the elections. The left platform it supported, No2EU, received 1% of the votes and Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party 1.1%.

The initiative taken by the trade union, the RMT, together with small radical parties like the Communist Party of Britain and the Socialist Party, in creating the No2EU platform for the European elections, while commendable was a temporary pact and put together too late to build anything worthwhile. Since the elections, the SWP has sent an open letter to the left to unite in the face of attacks against the workers and the fascist threat and suggested a conference of the left parties committed to building unity. This issue has to be addressed by the left even though there may be insufficient time before the elections to put into place a common organisation to contest the elections. The basis for such unity will have to be the defence of the working class against the massive attacks planned by the ruling class, with further unemployment, wage reductions, public spending and service cuts. The bankers and employers must be made to pay for the crisis. In particular, there has to be a large rise in corporate tax, the top rate of income tax and a tax on currency speculation.

At the grassroots level in some parts of the country such as Wigan, de facto alliances of left wing parties, Respect, Socialist Party and the SWP, as well as local independent parties are springing up around the fight against local school closures, privatisation of public services, job and service cuts as well as around other issues. They have united around the People's Charter, which incorporates a series of demands that the radical left accept. These include public ownership of banks, insurance companies, energy, transport, water and telecommunications, reducing working hours to create more jobs, with investment in green technology, scrapping the Trident nuclear programme and cancellation of third world debt. It is time that these parties at a national level come together and build a broad based socialist party, which will be able to defend the interests of the working class and challenge the bourgeois parties. ●

# VISIT OF THE USA SECRETARY OF STATE TO AFRICA

Hillary Clinton is the US secretary of State. Rightfully she should be assigned the title of main warmonger in the world. The September 6-7 missile attack on Afghan civilians (killing, according to news reports, about 70 people) in Kunduz elicited all sorts of apologies from the German and US governments – both major members of NATO. Their retort is a standard one: 'Taliban fighters were the target; we apologise for civilian casualties' etc.

As a continuation of its war agenda through diplomatic channels, the president, Barack Obama and the secretary of State visited a number of African countries, basically dictating and reaffirming to the governments of these states what the expectations of the US government and corporate giants are regarding policies on economic and military affairs.

News reports at the time of her visit zoomed in on the controversial Africa Command (Africom) – that is, the establishment in 2007 of the African component of the US global military command structure. This structure became operative in April 2008 and is, according to its architects, aimed at "closely supporting the African Union's goal of enabling African nations and regional organisations to provide security for people of Africa and protect African sovereignty". They maintain that their strategy is one of "conflict prevention and interagency" coordination; the idea is to prevent conflicts before they start. To give it a more acceptable face, it is meant to operate together with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the foreign affairs department of the US government. The question though is, what does all this mean in reality for the African masses?

Many African governments, for their own reasons no doubt, take a stand against the establishment of US military bases on the continent. On the one hand they request US economic assistance but balk at the idea of a physical military presence of the imperialist hegemon. Why? This year has seen a number of massive revolts in some African countries – Madagascar, Guinea, Gabon – to name a few. In these uprisings a common refrain from the opposition was their opposition to the operations of French, British and US corporations and interests in their countries and their cosy relations with the ruling elites. No doubt African rulers do not wish to create reasons inside their countries for the populations to revolt against, and overthrow them. For the US government it is also not such an urgent need to establish bases and have US military

personnel stationed at these bases. The withdrawal of troops from Iraq is being done exactly because the same job can now be performed by the new Iraqi Military. These withdrawn troops then become available for deployment to other parts of the world where a greater need for their raping and pillaging exists. Therefore, if the dirty work of the US administration can be done by surrogate or proxy forces in regions such as western and southern Africa, then so much better for them. This will in any event quieten down the critics of US military operations outside of the USA, in the USA.

The US government in any event has "base access agreements" with various African governments (from the time of the Bush administration), through which they can gain access to military facilities in these countries in the event of these being required. In the event of these being used it will provide a platform to the US military to conduct combat operations, surveillance and other military operations in the country or region concerned. Behind the scenes there is ongoing military cooperation between virtually all African countries and the US military establishment: the International Military, Educational and Training programme (IMET), provides for the professional training of African military officers. Then there is the African Contingency Operations, Training and Assistance Programme (ACOTA) which allows, amongst others, for the participating forces to engage in policing operations against unarmed civilians. So all this 'opposition to the presence of US bases' is just so much rubbish and makes the servants of US, French and British imperialism sound 'progressive'.

For the US ruling class the access to oil and natural resources of Africa is defined as a "strategic national interest". This access it is gaining through its War on Terror which provides it with a convenient excuse to extend its murderous terror campaign in South West Asia to the African continent. The 2006 invasion of Somalia, using the Ethiopian armed forces as a surrogate is but one example of this. Also, the US ruling class sees it as a high priority to counteract the growing Chinese influence on the continent. Taken as a whole, these developments portend greater insecurity for the African masses as US military involvement on the continent – overtly and covertly – raises the spectre of the US's permanent war establishing a foothold on the African continent. ●

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## *From The Archives*

*From "Imperialist Conspiracy in Africa" I.B. Tabata, 1967*

### **Africa: Part of Mankind**

Our first task is to know ourselves, who we are and what we are. We have no need to be apologetic about our being. We have no need to prove our being. We have no need to prove ourselves, least of all to the ex-colonialists. We are part of the human species; we (i.e. our States) are born at a particular stage of development, the product of a particular conjuncture of historical forces in the development of mankind. In the context of world economy that has long outstripped its national boundaries, and a highly developed means of communication, no one country or people can live in isolation, uninfluenced by the processes that are actually world-embracing. Africa is part of that world, with all its contradictions, its convulsions, its uneven development. We cannot escape the logic of this situation. We cannot retreat into an isolated limbo of our own blackness. We have to face up squarely to our problems as they are, to the enormous problems of belonging to that world. As an inseparable part of it we have our contribution to make, though, due to the accident of history and the machinations of imperialism, we belong to a backward continent that has a big leeway to make up. This does not mean that we have to be slavish imitators of a civilisation that is in the process of playing itself out; nor does it mean that we require centuries to catch up. The very fact of belonging rules this out. What we have to bear in mind is that there is no need to go outside the mainstream in search of something uniquely African or some other mystique as a way out of our difficulties. Mankind possesses a body of knowledge which is our heritage. It has accumulated an arsenal of ideas from which we can draw our weapons to forge the path of our development. But first ➡

➡ of all we must clearly define which of the ideas are suitable for our progress. To do this we must be aware of our position and how and why it came about. ....

We have said above that mankind has a body of knowledge that is our heritage. It is up to us to choose which ideas are necessary for our progress. The world is divided into two economic systems, the capitalist-imperialist and the socialist system. Africa has to choose which of these is suitable for its own development. The choice itself will decide the overall strategy that must be followed in the day-to-day development. It has to be borne in mind that in the present epoch the world productive forces are bursting asunder the capitalist integument, with all its social and political relationships. Other continents, which only yesterday were regarded as backward, have forged an extremely rapid development along the socialist path. Today they are regarded as world powers. From purely economic considerations, it is impossible for Africa to lift itself up by its own bootstraps and attain real independence, unless it takes the socialist road. ...

If socialism is the path we must follow to achieve progress and independence, we must acquaint ourselves more and more with the analytical tool of the dialectic. If we use it properly, our difficulties, which at the moment seem to be insuperable, will be seen as not beyond our capabilities. In a fast-changing world the process of learning too, is accelerated. And at this stage of the world conflict between the two systems, every trick with which imperialism assails us, and thinks to confound us, serves only to quicken our political consciousness. This is the process that is taking place in all the developing countries in Asia, Latin America and in the African continent. This is what it means to belong to the mainstream of human progress, to the world where the struggle towards liberation and true independence cannot be held back. ●

## APDUSA

### *THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES*

Despite the gain of political rights for all, the compromise of 1992 has not fulfilled the democratic aspirations of the labouring majority and they continue to suffer in conditions of abject poverty and subjugation to the will of the rich who command the economic resources of the country. In the ongoing struggle we therefore demand:

- The convening of a democratically elected **Constituent Assembly**, charged with the task of drawing up a new constitution, governed by the interests of the oppressed and exploited working class and peasantry, based on the demand for full, unfettered political rights for all with majority rule in a unitary state, the removal of all artificially created regional political boundaries, the liquidation of all special minority rights and privileges which militate against the interests of the majority. The Constituent Assembly must have full powers to discharge these duties, untrammelled by any directions and constraints designed to serve self-interested minorities.
- A resolution of the **land question** in accordance with the needs of those who work and live off the land. This means the destruction of all existing tribal and feudal relations in the rural areas and the nationalisation of the land, without compensation. A new division of the land and its management, which excludes forced collectivisation, the payment of rent and the expropriation of small peasant farmers, must be undertaken by committees that are democratically elected by and answerable to the people.
- The **expropriation** of all major industries, banks and institutions of credit and their management by the state and representatives of the workers in the interests of the population as a whole.
- The revision of labour legislation for the liquidation of all discrimination against the worker. This also means:
- The **right to work**, which must be implemented both via the institution of necessary adjustments to the length of the working week to provide employment for all, without a reduction in wages, as well as by the institution of a progressive **public works program** with the full representation of the unemployed in its management.
- The fixing of a living **minimum wage** as well as a sliding scale to compensate for any price increases.
- The unconditional right to **strike** which includes the right of occupation of the workplace.
- Free and **compulsory education** for all up to matric with free books for the needy.
- Free **health services** for the needy.
- A single, progressive **tax system**, the abolition of vat and all indirect taxes that fall so heavily on the poor.
- The elected representatives of the people, at organisational level or in the local, regional or national political institutions of state, must be fully **accountable** to those who elect them and they must be fully bound by the demands and aspirations of the working class and its allies, the landless peasantry.

APDUSA calls for the self-organisation and united independent struggle of the labouring masses. We believe that the struggle can only advance decisively via the greatest ideological and organisational unity between the workers in the urban centres and the peasants in the rural areas under the leadership of the working class

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

Printed and published by the African People's Democratic Union of Southern Africa ; Email: apdusa@mail.org  
Contact: 021-9887182