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AFRICAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC UNION
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

20c

**THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS AND LANDLESS PEASANTS
SHALL BE PARAMOUNT !**

XENOPHOBIA, CRIME AND THE AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

*XENOPHOBIA - An unreasonable fear and dislike of foreigners and strangers.
RENAISSANCE - A rebirth in arts, literature and culture.*

The African Renaissance is touted by President Thabo Mbeki as the answer to the problems of our continent. His theory is that only when the peoples of Africa tackle their problems jointly, will there be hope for everyone. So it seems strange that there is this witch hunt of Africans that come to

South Africa to escape the wars and disasters ravaging their own countries. During the years of Apartheid, thousands of South Africans fled our country to escape persecution here. They were made welcome throughout Africa. It is a strange way to repay the hospitality of Africa, now that others have the same need.

According to the Mail and Guardian (April 7-13, 2000) "nearly 8000 illegal immigrants" were "arrested in the recent anti-crime blitz in various parts in Gauteng". The accusation that these refugees are responsible for the high crime rate and that they are taking away the jobs of unemployed South Africans, is merely shifting the blame. These refugees are being made the scapegoats for the government's inability to solve the problems facing the population.

The Star (Friday, April 7, 2000) relates a story of crimes committed by gangsters in two suburbs, Westbury and Sandton, in Gauteng. In Westbury, the criminals are known to the community. There is no indication that they are immigrants, illegal or otherwise. It is the same elsewhere - crime in our communities is a result of the socio-economic conditions of our country.

An African Renaissance will only be possible when countries put the interests of their citizens first. But in Africa, as in the rest of the world, the profit motive rules. As long as governments serve the interests of business, the ordinary citizens of Africa - the workers and the landless peasantry, will always be blamed and will always be the scapegoats for all that goes wrong.

In an article in the Sunday Independent (April 9, 2000) entitled "History being repeated in crude campaign against illegals" the reporter questions why President Thabo Mbeki has not disassociated himself and his office "from this gross violation of the human dignity of immigrants." He wonders whether this silence is an acceptance of this "gross violation". If that is the case, then the African Renaissance will be stillborn. ●

TRADE UNION BOSSES LEAD WORKERS ASTRAY

The Presidential Job Summit was launched with a big bang and announced job creation projects for the 35% officially recognised unemployed. The Tri-partite Alliance started with a proposal for public works programs in which unemployed workers were to be trained in certain skills to take their place in the informal market. These unemployed workers soon realised that the training they received did not guarantee a living for themselves and their families.

The trade unions are losing members due to company closures and the retrenched workers swell the ranks of the jobless sector. The trade union bosses have finally realised that the social contract brokered by them with the government and the captains of industry held no advantage for their members. The groundswell of protest from the workers forced them to counter this threat. They reacted in the same manner in which workers are being taken on one day strike actions that will culminate in a general strike on the 10 May 2000. According to these aristocrats this will put pressure on their partners in NEDLAC.

We thus find a situation where the members of parliament gave their support to the protesting workers on these rallies, but at the same time urging COSATU to come back to the negotiating table. The Minister of labour urged COSATU to suspend their strike action and negotiate the laws that will come into effect.

The APDUSA say that both actions of the government and COSATU will not solve the problem of joblessness. The strike action of COSATU is a tactic to divert the militancy of the workers into a path that will not contribute to creating jobs for all.

We say that public works programs should offer secure, permanent employment to workers at a living wage. In addition, more jobs can be created by the shortening of working hours without a decrease in salaries. In order to achieve this the workers must demand a break in the unholy tripartite alliance. The social contract that was brokered in NEDLAC should be declared null and void. This will enable all workers to unite on the basis of their class position. They must also go into alliances with all people's organisations where the slogan of "an injury to one is an injury to all" would come to full fruition. This will put us on the right track to smash the institutions of oppression and exploitation, and to build a new economic and political system on the ruins of the old. ●

THE SWEAT SHOP MENACE

Labour laws fail to protect workers

The growth of clothing manufacturing sweatshops in Durban spells a serious problem for workers in the industry and probably other industries as well. A report in Business Report (5 March 2000) relates how these sweatshops, which employ over 10 000 workers, successfully evade and ignore labour laws and regulations. The labour courts and the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration simply cannot cope with the number of labour law violations taking place. According to this report the leader of the SA Clothing and Textile workers union in KwaZulu-Natal, Mr Jabu Ngcobo says that these businesses pay starvation wages and when called to account they liquidate themselves and open up under another name employing the same workers as contract labour. There were 72 such cases last year.

There are no signs that the government plans to strengthen the labour laws and courts to eliminate this scourge. Instead there are signs that many of these sweatshops will be granted exemptions to continue their super-exploitative practices legally. Not surprisingly, this is welcomed by the KwaZulu-Natal Clothing Manufacturers Association. It is time for workers to learn that the law and the agreements with Government and the bosses offer them very little protection and they must look to their own power to defend their rights. ●

THE PLIGHT OF THE DISMISSED VOLKSWAGEN WORKERS

1300 workers from the Uitenhage Volkswagen plant of Volkswagen South Africa were dismissed recently after they went on strike when their union - The National Union of Metalworkers South Africa (NUMSA), ousted 13 of their democratically elected plant shopstewards.

It is reported that these workers have now joined the Oil, Chemical, General and Allied Workers' Union. One cannot help but question the wisdom of this move. They are now divided from their comrades and belong to a union that has no bargaining power with the management of Volkswagen SA. It would have been more correct to stay in NUMSA and demand that the union act on their behalf. They were paying members of NUMSA and as such are entitled to its full support. The dismissal of these workers is a signal of the danger facing all workers and those that are still employed need to unite in the struggle of those who have been dismissed.

The dismissed workers have called for support from other centres, both locally and internationally. APDUSA supports this call and says that not only trade unions but the community at large must be involved in the struggle of these workers. We must learn to use the power of international working class solidarity that was shown in the Liverpool dockworkers' strike. ●

ECUADOR - A POPULAR REVOLT DEFEATED

A popular uprising in Ecuador resulted in a new government being installed on 21 January 2000. The new government moved ahead swiftly to implement the same "dollarisation package" which inspired the toppling of the old government. Is the new government any different from the old? Clearly, it never shed the capitalist orientation of its predecessor.

The transition from the old Mahuad cabinet to the new Noboa cabinet was not smooth. Within the government, opposition parties [Izquierda Democrática (ID), a centre-left party and Social Christian Party (PSC), a right-wing outfit] had been calling for Gustavo Noboa to replace Jamil Mahuad as head of state. But the force overthrowing Mahuad did not arise from inside but outside parliament. A popular uprising during the week ending January 21, ousted Mahuad from power. At the head of this mass movement stood the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE), an organisation of Ecuadorean peasants.

What is CONAIE's goal? "With the support of unions and civic organisations, Conaie has begun to set up 'popular parliaments in

provincial capitals (in Cuenca, it is presided over by the local archbishop). The aim is to set up one for the country as a whole in Quito, as an alternative legislature." (Latin American Weekly 11 January 2000). In the middle of a deep and lengthy recession, the dollarisation-package triggered the revolt. Indeed, dollarisation is the brainchild of the IMF. Included in the package are: placing control of the financial system under a body connected to Washington; allowing the private sector controlling stakes in state enterprises; repaying the debt which already swallows 42% of government spending; bailing out private sector victims of the economic crisis and corruption; and labour reforms. So, the Ecuadoreans revolted against neoliberalism!

During that week in January, thousands of marchers descended on Quito, the capital city, effectively defying a nationwide state of emergency. On the 21st, about 3000 militants burst into the presidential palace (Congress). President Jamil Mahuad fled, leaving the country, probably with the aid of the army. Antonio Vargas, Conaie's leader, then declared a "government of national

salvation". But this "people's power" lasted for only a few hours. What went wrong? Vargas entered a loose alliance with General Carlos Mendoza, head of the military. This trust in a bulwark of the old state machine sealed the defeat of the "revolution". General Mendoza meanwhile received instructions from the White House in Washington and the United Nations to "restore civilian rule", meaning installing Vice President Noboa as head of state. The army turned against the popular uprising and people had to flee Quito. (International Herald Tribune, 24 January 2000) In short, on Friday power shifted into the hands of the people, just to be handed back to the "old ruling class" a few hours later!

Since 1990, this South American country had no less than eight such rebellions. Despite the latest setback, CONAIE and its grassroots allies vowed to battle on. About 74% of the 12.47 million population support Conaie's call for a referendum to dissolve Congress and the Supreme Court. Beyond that, however, a program for working people to seize and hold on to political power remains vague. ●

THE ICFTU CONGRESS

The problem of building international working class solidarity against globalised exploitation

About 1200 Trade Union Leaders attended the 17th Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (I.C.F.T.U.). (Business Report 28 March 2000). The theme of this congress was: Globalisation, Social Justice in the 21ST century and the future of the role of the Trade Union in the next Millennium.

The congress decried the terrible effects of Globalisation on the peoples of the underdeveloped and developing nations as well as the onerous burden of financial debt that they have to carry.

The confederation also recognised that there has been a decrease in union membership over the past years, since members'

expectations were not met. Economic power resides in the hands of a small group of individuals and companies and most of the time these companies are violating hard won trade union rights. The I.C.F.T.U. response is that it must become an efficient pressure group to counter this attack on trade union rights within the framework of capitalist democracy where the bourgeois class holds power.

We of the APDUSA have said that Globalisation is busy opening up the borders of all countries and is effectively uniting the bourgeoisie of the world. The trade union movement is still largely divided according to national and industrial boundaries. It

is our task to destroy these artificial barriers and not merely pay lipservice to international solidarity. All trade unions should act as a unit internationally if a sister union is being attacked. We must realise that the trade wars amongst the bourgeoisie are not about the interests of the workers but about who will exploit them the best. Today the workers of Volkswagen S.A. are being retrenched, while a mine in England will close tomorrow.

It is becoming urgent for all workers to unite in an international trade union federation to defend themselves on the basis of the slogan of non-collaboration with the bourgeoisie. ●

SASCO FIGHTS NEOLIBERALISM

The South African Students Congress (SASCO) held a workshop "Revitalising the Fight against Neoliberalism" at Wits University on the 18th March. At the first session, the chairman outlined the threat faced by both the workers and students at the university as a result of the plans of the university authorities to privatise services such as transport, cleaning, catering and the residences. If put into operation the plans would entail the loss of 600 jobs for workers. The faculties would be slimmed down, lecturers would lose their jobs with fewer of them to serve the students, who would be forced to pay higher tuition fees. The chairman urged the students and workers at the university through their organisations, SASCO and NEHAWU to strengthen their alliance in the fight against privatisation.

The guest speaker was Dale McKinley of the SACP, who said that the challenges facing the students were harsh and that they should not be hampered by the incorrect perception, that only they were being attacked. In S.A. over the past five years, the workers, the students and the SACP had failed to defend their position against the attacks of the capitalists. They shared a common struggle. The GEAR policy affected the whole educational system and must be resisted. He said the SACP had a strategy but did not use it. The left must have its own plans for the institutions of higher learning.

A member of APDUSA in the audience asked whether the SACP, by championing the ANC as the organisation in the leadership of the national liberation struggle, had denied itself an independent role in the struggle. The speaker himself had quoted instances in which members of the SACP in government were carrying out the policies of GEAR. One could not oppose and promote GEAR at the same time. Was it not time for the SACP to break with the capitalist policies being pursued by the ANC government and join the forces of the left fighting against the government? McKinley's reply was that his

branch (Johannesburg) of which he was chairman had challenged the leadership of the SACP to use the strategy of the party and if it did not and there was a split in the party, so be it. However, it could not leave the tripartite alliance, which embraced large numbers of workers and join up with some small left organisation. ●

PENSION FUND DISASTER

Many municipal workers may find themselves without money on retirement. According to the Saturday Argus (25/03/2000) some smaller municipalities are dipping into workers' pension contributions to ward off bankruptcy. This is illegal and the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) has now called on Provincial Local Government Minister, Sidney Mufamadi, to take urgent action to prevent this blatant theft. Anne Weeks (spokesperson for SAMWU) said that they also call on workers to report these illegal activities.

Thabo Mokwena, chief executive of the South African Local Government Association (the national representative body for organised local government), said the organisation was well aware of the illegal dipping into pension funds to pay operational costs. However, they do not have a comprehensive list of municipalities which were guilty of this illegal activity. They claim to have sent out an urgent directive to local authorities, not to dip into pension funds. They also claim to be sending teams to assist struggling local authorities with advice on how to restructure debt and how to find innovative ways on how to collect arrears in rates and taxes.

We as communities need to demand much more accountability from our representatives at local government level. We must enforce transparency, so that these type of actions cannot happen. We need to play a much more active role in the running of local governments. We must ensure that it is run for the good of all concerned residents. If not, we must strive to put people in place that will. ●

Letters

COSATU (WITS) PROTESTS JOB LOSSES

Comrades

You came out on the 12.04.2000 to mark your protest against continuing job losses. That was marvellous. You marched in your thousands from Library gardens to the Department of Labour then to the JSE. That was glorious. You toyi-toyied tirelessly and listened to speeches. After that you dispersed with honour.

Post-mortems of the event came in from various circles. Most people agreed that workers heeded the call in great numbers. Some estimated the number of workers who participated at more than 60 000. The most common complaint that I heard was about the speeches of the leadership. People observed that the national leadership did not mention the ANC Government and its GEAR policy as the main culprit in these job losses. Some observed that other speakers stressed that the march was not directed against the government but against big business. But they said nothing about the government's privatisation scheme, its role in the Egoli 2002 plan, the public service wage issue and the pending wage freeze,

retrenchments in parastatals, etc. The only reference to GEAR was made when Vavi spoke about that the macro-economic policy that should be changed because it is not working. The other thing that Vavi lamented on was the criticism of COSATU by the bourgeoisie through its newspapers.

What needs to be said here is that the behaviour of the leadership and the Tripartite Alliance is clearly having a negative effect on COSATU activities. The COSATU leadership always seems to look over its shoulders as if requesting approval from the Alliance. There has been consistency in this regard. One concludes that the leadership wants trade union activity to remain on a non-political level. Yet, by so doing they do not want to reveal that by remaining in the alliance they are in fact binding COSATU members to the decisions of the ANC government.

It must be clear to workers that the ANC government is a capitalist one. It is the one that lays the basis for political policies on behalf of the capitalist class. Check for instance its position on the LRA. Will they side with workers or with business? All workers must attend the May Day rally at the FNB stadium and in all other areas. You must note in particular the speeches made and whether they will address these issues.


A Worker Comrade in APDUSA

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