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

## BEYOND THE WEEK OF THE LANDLESS

The Week of the Landless, organised by the Landless Peoples Movement (LPM), was held at Shareworld, an abandoned entertainment centre in Soweto, at the same time as the UN's WSSD. But the high point of this event was when landless people joined the largely urban anti-privatisation movement in the "red march" of Saturday 31 August. This protest march completely overshadowed another march organised by the ANC-alliance.

When the 10 000 strong, militant crowd arrived at the official WSSD venue in Sandton, they refused to give a hearing to an important government official, in the full glare of the world media. Not only were the marchers protesting against government policies, but more significantly, there was unity in action between town and country. The question now is: Can unity be forged around a political programme, which could lift the struggle against neo-liberalism to a new plateau in this country?

The LPM succeeded in raising the profile of the fight for land and an overturn of outdated agrarian relations in this country. It achieved this with enormous aid from the National Land Committee (NLC), a NGO network based in Johannesburg with affiliates in most provinces. The NLC's "support" for the LPM goes further than the money and buses it supplied to bring about 5,000 landless people to Shareworld. It retains a decisive voice in the process to develop the LPM's platform. LAMOSA, another 'movement of the landless' established by the NLC several years ago is now well on its way to become a "land sector NGO" in its own right. After the Week of the Landless, some of the NLC leaders faced disciplinary sanction from within the network for sloganeering about a land expropriation campaign spearheaded by the LPM.

While the LPM was officially launched at the World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban in 2001, it still lacked a representative leadership, constitution and a clear platform. Before the Week of the Landless it was widely publicised that one of its key tasks would be to tie these loose ends together. Consolidating the LPM, however, remained an elusive goal. With NLC-staff acting as election officers, it is not clear who crafted the

complex and cumbersome process to elect LPM office bearers. A handful officials had been elected when charges of voting irregularities exploded toward the close of the second day. Various attempts to resolve the impasse failed and chaos ensued for the rest of the week. The NLC director eventually intervened and lashed out at "agent provocateurs and reactionary elements" for disrupting proceedings. But even this desperate effort could not prevent most provincial delegations from returning home before the 'red-march'.

Landless people came to the Shareworld gathering from both urban and rural localities across our country. LPM membership is in fact drawn from the countryside as well as urban areas (mainly squatter camps). Its rallying cry, "Land, Food and Jobs", suggests the movement even has some connection with the unemployed. Most of those present were young people. The youth electrified the atmosphere with songs and slogans in the main poorly lit conference arena. This incredible youth presence ran directly counter to the popular perception that "our youth do not want land". Nevertheless, the LPM cannot be all things to all people and it would be wise to recall that the ICU of the early 1920s crumbled on precisely this point.

Two other significant events took place during the week, namely an international solidarity session and the 'awareness workshops'. Several guests from peasant movements elsewhere, including the MST from Brazil, presented solidarity messages. The speeches highlighted the fact that the common struggle for land created a bond among the landless from different continents. Speakers referred to themselves as peasants and their fight as an "agrarian struggle". This precise language was completely absent from the few speeches by the LPM (or rather NLC) officials. It seems the current leaders are obsessed with modelling the LPM on peasant movements in South America and sadly failed to draw lessons from peasant revolts in Pondoland, Witsieshoek and Sekhukuniland almost 5 decades ago.

An eagerness to understand the complex issues defining the world today marked the workshop

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sessions on the Friday morning. It was a golden opportunity to arm people with ideas for Saturday's march. Topics ranged from broad themes such as globalisation and privatisation to lively discussions on challenges confronting fishing communities and threats to our environment. By far the best attended workshop was the one dealing with 'communal tenure', focusing on new legislation, the Communal Land Rights Bill (CLRБ), released for public comment two weeks before this gathering. The CLRБ is the government's market-led approach to deal with land hunger, utter underdevelopment and outmoded forms of political rule persisting in the former Bantustan territories. Like all the other laws underpinning the 'willing-buyer willing-seller' land reform program in this country, it will leave the peasantry worse-off. The agrarian problem can only be resolved through an alliance between the landless peasantry and the working class, which must destroy the capitalist system and pave the way to build a system based on workers democracy. ●

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## LOOKING BACK AT THE WSSD

The World Summit on Sustainable Development, was held in South Africa in September with all the expected fanfare. World leaders flocked here, ostensibly to review and renew the pledges that were made in Rio de Janeiro ten years ago. Non-governmental organisations vied for the right to sit in the discussions as representatives of "civil society". Not surprisingly it was the grouping centred around the ANC apologists, COSATU and SANCO, that was eventually given the right to officially represent the South African population in so-called civil society summit.

In taking stock and putting this summit for sustainable development in its proper perspective, we firstly note that at the end it was roundly condemned as a total failure. It has made no contribution to the struggle to eliminate mass poverty around the globe, much less to repair damage to the environment and to protect it for the future. Indeed, it was clear to all but the conveners and apologists for this summit - the capitalist super-powers and the profit hunting multinational corporations, that it was nothing but a summit to market the fading myth that capitalism represents the only hope for the human race.

By contrast, the protest march from Alexandra Township to Sandton exposed the stark contradictions in capitalism. The people of

Alexandra township live in a mire of miserable poverty while Sandton, which is just a few kilometres away, is one of the richest suburbs in Africa. While the "world leaders" were ensconced in the Sandton convention centre, with all its luxurious facilities, protected of course by the South African police and security forces, the protest marchers found it sufficient to make their point in winding their way through the dusty streets of Alexandra township.

The multi-national business corporations of this world, who with their insatiable greed for bigger and bigger profits, are chiefly responsible for the social and environmental crisis, were the first in trying to deny their responsibility. Then we had the political leaders of the major capitalist powers, America in particular, exposing their arrogance by telling the people of the Third World that they are responsible for their own poverty. It was words such as these that sparked a lot of protest action at the convention centre itself. This action of the capitalists is an indication that they do not give a hoot about the destruction of society as long as they can continue to make the profits to sustain their selfish lifestyle.

Many activists saw the mobilisations around the summit as a potential starting point for the development of a mass based front that can act as a major force to pressurize the government for change in South Africa. Until now this has not materialised. But the massive demonstration against the forces that have contributed to the rape and pollution of the earth, the anti-globalisation, anti-capitalist slogans and the demands of the landless cannot be ignored. It was a truly international protest that was seen marching through the streets of Johannesburg. Town and country dwellers joined hands as equals against the capitalist system which exploits them and robs them of the right to land. This can be seen as a sign of a new revolutionary movement emerging. The rejection of Essop Pahad, who came to meet the protesters on behalf of the government, was another significant event. Suddenly a new consciousness was demonstrated. We have been getting used to the situation whereby the tri-partite alliance dupes people into believing that handing over of a memorandum to some leading light in government is a suitable, if not the only way to address their problems. But the alliance was not in control and the Pahad's and Mbeki's must have had a shock when a spokesperson for the protesters told Pahad to get off the stage. "The people have spoken comrade Pahad". she said. This time it was clear that the people were not prepared to wait on this or that administrator to hand over their piece of paper that ends up in someone's dustbin. The people have started to make their demands upon themselves in order to find a solution to the crisis of capitalism themselves. ●

# UNEMPLOYMENT ON THE RISE

Unemployment in South Africa grew by a shocking 4.5% between February and September last year. A total of 7.7 million people were unemployed at the end of this period, according to figures released by Statistics South Africa and published in the Financial Mail 5/04/02. Out of the total economically active population this amounts to an unemployment rate of 41.5% which is far more than was officially acknowledged in the past.

The Presidential Jobs Summit of 1998, was supposed to give workers a say in addressing the problem of growing joblessness that followed the adoption of the government's GEAR economic policy. Needless to say its achievements were negligible. These days the behind-the-scenes agreements reached in the Millennium Labour Council (MLC) serve as a continuation of this policy of emasculation of the working class, economically, socially and politically. The ruling party and its capitalist co-rulers, in focussing on South Africa becoming a "leading emerging market", are dragging elements of the trade union leadership along in pursuance of this objective. This is having the objective effect of sowing further divisions in the ranks of the organised working class - divide and rule on the labour front.

In the meantime the unemployed masses contemplate how to survive in conditions of rising costs of living and other deliberate attacks on their very personal survival. They develop an economic dependence on their employed brothers and sisters. Together they have to face up to further retrenchments, evictions, water cut-offs, etc. Organised resistance to the plans of the ruling elite has seen united struggles being conducted against local authorities, big business enterprises, etc. Standing on one side we have the workers, employed and unemployed. On the other side, armed to the teeth and ready to act, stand the government and the bosses.

We of the Apdusa call for *the full representation of the unemployed in the management of a progressive public works programme*; also for *"the promotion of independent and democratic worker committees and unions which arise from the ranks of the workers themselves whether employed or unemployed."* The simple statement of political demands such as these is clearly not enough. The demands that workers raise are of critical importance in their struggles. Inasmuch as we demand action on the part of the government and the bosses for the redress of our problems, our demands more importantly place the responsibility on ourselves to organise in such a way so as to ensure progress towards total victory.

Our demands must serve as a guide to action in terms of both our immediate and long-term objectives. The "long term" does not translate into waiting on some unknown situation, on some unknown day involving some unknown participants. It means having a clear idea of our long-term objectives and on that basis determining the organisational requirements of our present struggles. Right now it is vitally important for the workers, employed and unemployed and the youth, to look beyond their immediate problems and with progressive political organisations jointly consider the road ahead. ●

# HOUSING CRISIS WORSENS

It seems that the government is incapable of seeing that the housing crisis is much deeper and broader than speeding up the rate at which match box sized "RDP" houses are being built. Even while hundreds of thousands of families are waiting for homes (and the number is increasing) we are witnessing the phenomenon of people who have been housed being kicked out of their homes.

The reason is that all the government and state departments concerned have very clear instructions from above that they must exercise fiscal discipline and balance their budgets at all costs! So they are using the harshest measures to collect arrears for rent and services charges. If this means kicking people out of their houses then so be it. The problems of the people concerned do not seem to matter. They are simply guilty of following a "culture of non-payment" which must be smashed as soon as possible. Of course, the banks and other private enterprises in the housing market, who the government has called in as the key providers of housing, are no less enthusiastic in hammering every cent that they can out of their hapless debtors. For them it is a vital question of maximum profits.

Despite court rulings that no family should be evicted from its home without alternate accommodation being provided, evictions continue apace, as well as the seizure of peoples personal belongings as a means recovering arrears. This has often led to ugly clashes between people, desperate to protect their meagre belongings and the right to shelter against the elements, and the police and armed forces called in to "enforce the law". In these clashes many have been arrested and locked up for "obstructing justice", trespassing and other such offences on the statute book.

No attention is being given to the stark reality that in the overwhelming number of cases people have fallen into arrears simply because they do not have the money to pay. To put the blame on the so-called culture of non-payment is therefore nothing more than a convenient evasion of the reality of poverty.

It should be glaringly obvious that the problem of housing is inextricably tied up with the problem of massive unemployment, underemployment and the landlessness of rural people seeking an escape in the ever growing squatter camps bordering the cities of South Africa. The solution should be just as obvious and it is clearly not simply an increase in the rate at which houses are being built. Yet the government refuses to square up to the task of housing the homeless and has abdicated this responsibility to banks and private enterprises.

For these reasons we call for a massive public works program to develop and service new residential areas with all necessary social amenities and to build houses that are fit for human occupation. This must be coupled with a meaningful land redistribution program that is driven by the critical needs of the landless in and from the rural areas and not by fanciful notions of willing-buyer, willing-seller arrangements in a "free market", or black economic empowerment for the benefit of a few. Otherwise the crisis around housing can only worsen and it will not help the government one iota to brand the growing resistance of people to its hopeless policies as the work of ultra-leftists. ●

# POLITICAL OPPORTUNISM PAR EXCELLENCE

The recent announcement by the constitutional court legalising floor crossing at the local government level could have been expected.

- Nowadays it is the markets that need to be pleased, not the voters.
- Nowadays businessmen turned crooks make the headlines regarding their close association with politicians who have been elected to represent the people. Or so they say.
- Nowadays people here in SA and elsewhere in the world are hardly offered any real alternatives regarding policy choices in the bourgeois parliamentary system. What fundamental differences are there between the ANC, the NNP, the DA, the UDM and others on policy matters? Very little. So the voters will eventually find themselves running out of choices. Whereto then?

Irrespective of who gets elected they will have to go along with the way the system forces these people to behave; they end up serving their own interests; and that of those classes who oppress and exploit the workers and peasants.

Apart from being told by these power and profit crazy elite to tighten our belts due to economic recession, we are subtly being sussed into accepting that the solutions to our problems can be found in endless debates in parliament and local councils. Yes, we need to demand from these elected officials that they act in our interests. If however, as we expect that whatever they do, our situation remains as pathetic as it is and becomes worse, we have no choice but to organise ourselves around our demands and start building our organisations for the purpose of taking the task of government into our own hands. ●



## From Around the World

### BRAZIL UNDER A WORKERS' PARTY GOVERNMENT

#### A Metal Worker President

The victory of the Workers Party (PT) in Brazilian national elections will not only have implications for the anti-capitalist struggle in Latin America, but the entire world. Militants from all over the world will be driven to take a fresh look at the 'parliamentary road to power' and how the PT actually governs. The key question is whether it will be possible to extend the Porto Alegre model of "participatory democracy" across Latin America's largest economy.

Betting against the PT was the rich American speculator, George Soros, who recently remarked in an interview: "In the Roman Empire, only the Romans voted. In modern global capitalism, only Americans vote. Not the Brazilians" (The Guardian, 20/9/02). The presidential candidate who was most favoured by financial markets to succeed Cardoso was Jose Serra of the Social Democratic party (PSDB). Mr Serra did not fare very well in the open debates, opting instead for old electoral mudslinging. Television advertisements promoting Mr Serra's campaign showed Lula da Silva, the PT's candidate, "inciting striking workers that allegedly led to subsequent tumultuous street protests two years ago". Other attacks centred on "Mr da Silva's lack of academic training and administrative experience, ridiculing the former metal worker and union leader for not having obtained a high school diploma". (Financial Times, 18/9/2002)

#### Neo-liberalism and Rightwing collapse

Ousted president Cardoso, once a passionate theorist of the anti-imperialist *dependencia* theory, crafted and supervised Brazil's neo-liberal economic plan. Central to this plan was replacing the devalued

currency (the *cruzeiro*) with the *real*, hence the new name, *Plano Real*. Foreign investment flowed into the country, which went hand in hand with large-scale privatisation, trade liberalisation and more "labour market flexibility". Unemployment increased while the employed faced huge wage cuts. Currency devaluation combined with expanding debt servicing and an imposed austerity further slashed social spending (The Economist, 29/7/2000). Last year Brazilians endured long periods without power as a result of electricity privatisation. Undoubtedly, the incessant economic crises since the Mexican crisis in 1995, deepened the misery and further undermined the credibility of the neo-liberal model.

At the time of the municipal elections in October 2000, this anti-neoliberal mood became manifested in a sharp increase in votes for the PT. Winning the mayoral race in Sao Paulo, the capital and biggest city, gave the PT a big boost. Tensions about how to tackle the critical economic situation and corruption scandals plaguing the ruling party, split the rightwing coalition. The worsening economic conditions, the dismal record of the Cardoso regime and the disunity plaguing the rightwing galvanised significant sections of the middle class to adopt certain anti-neoliberal slogans.

#### The PT Platform, Social Movements and the WSF

The PT used its strong showing in these municipal elections to launch its fourth attempt to capture the presidency. It won 187 municipalities, meaning that it now represented 25 million inhabitants, governing 15% of the Brazilian population. An assessment revealed that the PT won where alliances were forged with leftwing ➡

➡ parties, with a less impressive performance with liberal and social democratic party alliances. Generally, this signalled support for radical change, for the adoption and development of the Porto Alegre model of participatory government. The PT mayor of Arraguara (a city of 200,000 people in northern Sao Paulo state) explained their revolutionary approach to the participatory budget (PB) as follows: "If you have consultative assemblies, if you create mechanisms for indirect representation, hold discussions of this and that in forums, then you ARE mobilising the population; but you are not actually building a structure of power. Because where the PB is revolutionary that is what it is doing. It's beginning to build a power structure - an autonomous power structure within the society." (Edinho Silva, *Socialist Outlook* # 56, September 2002)

The PT is a mass workers party. It emerged from a general upsurge in militant worker struggles in Brazil, starting around the late 1970s. Trade unions gave birth to the party and it is still based on the unions. Brazilian workers regard the PT as their chief political weapon in the anti-neoliberal struggle. The party continues to support radical social movements

like the MST, the movement of the landless. The PT consists of a range of leftwing tendencies, with the majority centred around Lula da Silva's *Instituto da Cidadania* (Institute of Citizenship), described as a kind of NGO. For several months last year, dynamic and rigorous debates developed inside the PT on a platform and tactics for the 2002 elections. Lula's tendency won. While the militant left tendencies support Lula for president, they criticise his tendency's pseudo-realism and "programmatic adaptation", meaning his rightward drift. (International Viewpoint #334, p15; #335, pp24-26) And so, "Another Brazil is Possible" is the slogan that has emerged from the PT's leftwing.

The critique of Lula from within the PT is based on the worldwide crisis of neo-liberalism, including its crisis of credibility. Mass social movements, like the MST, infused the anti-capitalist struggle with a dynamic radical content. Moreover, since 2001 Brazil in general and the PT in particular, became associated with the revival of militant internationalism by hosting the World Social Forum (WSF). This rapidly unfolding context will pose decisive tests for the PT and its new president of Brazil. ●

## THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

Following the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in September last year, the US government declared a "long term war against terrorism". As a commencement of this war, it launched a bombing campaign against Afghanistan, which caused the deaths of thousands of Afghan civilians. It supported the armies of the discredited warlords of the Northern Alliance, which overthrew the Taliban regime. With the war of aggression against the people of Afghanistan still continuing, President Bush in his State of the Union speech in January, launched his "Axis of Evil" line - a proclamation of the right of the United States to 'pre-emptive' strikes against any regime of which it disapproved - Iraq, Iran and North Korea being specifically named.

In the case of Iraq the US has declared that "regime change at any cost" is the essential objective and that it "will act alone" if necessary to achieve this. At the same time it gives the Sharon government of Israel carte blanche to attack the Palestinians and occupy their cities on the West Bank. At no time has the US government been able to show that Iraq is in any way connected to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in the US. It put forward the notion that Iraq has "weapons of mass destruction", that it is capable of launching them against the US and that this constitutes a threat to the US. Scott Ritter, a former UN weapons inspector to Iraq affirmed that most of the biological and chemical weapons that it had possessed were destroyed by 1998 and those remaining in its possession would

not be of any use as their shelf life was three years. Even if Iraq still had such weapons, the US propaganda that Saddam Hussein is a threat because he is prepared to unleash these weapons against it is not credible when one considers the risk of a massive retaliation that he would be taking.

While the aggressive policies of the world's only superpower, the US unfold, resistance to these policies is developing throughout the world. The growth of the anti-war movement in Europe is a part of this world-wide resistance. In Britain last year the biggest anti-war demonstrations were attended by 100,000 people whereas on September 28<sup>th</sup> this year an estimated 450,000 people participated in a demonstration in London. A united front consisting of the anti-war movement, Stop the War Coalition, CND, the Muslim Association of Britain and a large number of trade unions supported the demonstration and played a big part in ensuring its success. The themes of the demonstration were "Don't Attack Iraq!" and "Freedom for Palestine!", which were reflected by the banners. However there were many home-made placards that took up other issues such as attacking Bush and Blair for being war criminals, demanding a regime change by removing Blair and declaring that a war on Iraq was really about oil. Opinion polls conducted nationally showed the majority of people in Britain were against the war. Many Labour MPs voiced their opposition to the war, as did delegates to the Trade Union Congress.

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40% of the Labour Party conference voted to totally reject any military action against Iraq.

It was not just in London that people took to the streets. On the day of the big demonstration in London, 50,000 took to the streets in Madrid, 100,000 took part in a demonstration in Rome,

which had a major anti-war theme and 3,000 marched in Athens, Greece.

Bush is determined to go to war against Iraq with or without the sanction of the UN. The chances are that he and Blair, his attack dog, will get a pro-war resolution from the UN. It is only mass opposition, which is building up in Europe, the US and across the globe that can stop the war. ●

## ***BUILDING THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM***

The World Social Forum (WSF) has given the international struggle against neo-liberalism an organised form, a platform and mobilisation tasks that are independent of significant gatherings of imperialism. Despite the unfavourable global political climate being fostered by Washington's war drives, a spectacular growth occurred in the number of participants at this year's gathering in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Three times as many activists attended WSF 2 than the first event in 2001!

WSF 2 also issued a "Call of Social Movements" and resolved to schedule next year's meeting again in Porto Alegre while WSF 2004 will take place in India. The document, "Call of Social Movements", takes stock of the main economic, political and social issues characterising the world situation at this juncture. It clearly illustrates how neo-liberal policies on a world scale only breed misery, starvation, wars, underdevelopment, excessive indebtedness, financial speculation and many other symptoms. In the opening paragraph it states: "We come together again to continue our struggles against neoliberalism and war, to confirm the agreements of the last Forum and to reaffirm that another world is possible". Further on, in dealing with Washington's war, it declares that "the opposition to the war is at the heart of our movement". Combined with this firm pledge to struggle is a clear statement of demands and what to fight for. A calendar of important future global mobilisations ends the statement.

After this call was made in February this year, it found resonance among activists across the world. Mobilisations around highly publicised meetings of the global ruling classes now place emphasis on open mass-based discussions of a program in addition to street demonstrations. It is becoming the catalyst for more inclusive and dynamic resistance. In line with the WSF's International Council resolutions, "plural and diverse" mobilisation committees are established in many countries. National and continental SFs evolve from the mobilisation committees, like the April 19 meeting in Bogotá paved the way towards a Colombian Social Forum. Such consistent work should have an enormous positive effect on WSF 3.

In April this year a WSF International observer mission consisting of representatives from the International Council (IC) and the Organizing Committee went to Palestine to monitor developments in the Middle East.

Italy, seen as the forefront of mobilisation against global neo-liberalism and war, is the place where a European Social Forum (ESF) will be launched later this year. Militants in England have initiated broad discussions to support the WSF process and prepare the terrain to build a British Social Forum. About 70 comrades attended a workshop in April. The meeting heard report backs from Porto Alegre. Experiences from Genoa 2001 were debated- a spectacular demonstration that gave birth to the Italian Social Forum. Other issues debated included the political basis of the

group, publicity and the practicality of getting people to and from Italy. The political basis of the ESF will be the appeal of Porto Alegre.

In Sidney, Australia, at the Second Asia-Pacific International Solidarity Conference on March 28-April 1, it was resolved to establish a SF for the Asia-Pacific region. The meeting also endorsed the "Call of Social Movements" and effectively took responsibility to mobilize for WSF 2004 in India. A follow-up meeting will take place in Manila, Philippines, in a year's time. The meeting attracted 750 activists from more than 30 countries.

Monterrey, Mexico, was the venue of the March 18-22 UN Conference on Financing for Development. The UN issued the "Monterrey Consensus" which set the lofty goal of eradicating 50% of the world's poverty by 2015. Seventy groups under the banner of the WSF held a parallel Social Assembly in Monterrey to start the Mexican Social Forum (FSM) convergence process. This gathering issued the "Social Proclamation of Monterrey". It states: "the so-called Monterrey Consensus...proposes an...economic model whose last priority is combating the causes of poverty." The American Social Forum meeting, scheduled for October in Ecuador, should be greatly enhanced by the FSM, Colombian Social Forum initial discussions and the Los Angeles (California, USA) mobilization committee. Militants in South Africa, where the United Nations' WSSD was held in August this year, must also be encouraged by these developments. ●



# Letters

## FARM-WORKERS AND LANDLESSNESS

Comrades

On my way back to Johannesburg from an APDUSA meeting in Queenstown in September, I found myself in the company of two farm-workers between Queenstown and Jamestown and then an elderly couple between Jamestown and Aliwal North. Our discussions centred on 'land invasions' in Zimbabwe.

The former two introduced themselves as father and son. The father was born on the same farm where his father was born and had died. The son was now working on the farm for one year after having been retrenched by a construction company in Vereeniging (Gauteng).

The son immediately took a great interest in the subject and stated that if they were to be in the position to overthrow the farmer and the land was taken over by the state (i.e. nationalised) they would have to continue to work the land as farm-workers, as they do currently, under the farmer. I asked, "will you not sub-divide the land amongst yourselves?" "No!", said he, "the government will have to give us the means to work that land and we shall divide the proceeds between ourselves and the government". "What about the unemployed in the village?" I asked. "We will invite them and divide only that land that we are currently not tilling and share the proceeds with them and the government". The father who was not saying much agreed with his son but emphasised that "these farmers know nothing about farming. It is us who know everything. They are useless!" This was by and large the conversation we had.

I tested the same views with the elderly couple who accompanied me between Jamestown and Aliwal North. The husband disagreed a lot with what is going on in Zimbabwe on the basis that "once the land has been given to the people what will they do with it since they have nothing? If the government were to give us an assurance that it will assist us, we can take this land, here, now!"

These discussions were quite interesting to me because they give a meaning to APDUSA's demand on the land question, which is:

***"A resolution of the land question in accordance with needs of those who work and live off the land. This means the destruction of 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."***

It is clear that the programme of the organisation is sinking into the minds of the peasants. What we must examine however, is the potential political influence of the migrant workers from the urban areas on farm-workers, in particular. Taking into account that many migrant workers in the urban areas are experienced in organisational matters, when losing their jobs and moving back to the rural areas, the question that arises is what impact will they have or can they have on the mobilisation of the country-side?

Eltee

## THE COSATU ANTI-PRIVATISATION STRIKE IN GAUTENG.

Comrades

After the first day of the two day strike called by COSATU at the beginning of October a group of striking workers debated their impression of it. Two issues dominated the discussions. One, the massive participation of workers and two, the double-talk of the leadership.

All participants were in agreement that there had been no adequate mobilisation for this strike. Only one belated pamphlet was circulated. The leadership clearly did not want this march but somehow were forced to have it. On this basis there was a common expectation from the more conscious workers and union officials that workers would not participate in large numbers. The COSATU leadership openly displayed this expectation in its panic a few days before the strike. In a statement to affiliates dated September 25, 2002 the leadership stated "We were shocked and extremely disappointed with the turnout for the demonstrations yesterday (24<sup>th</sup> of September march) against the SABC". COSATU National Office Bearers are now extremely concerned that this trend, which in fact started at the August 31 WSSD protest, may be a dress-rehearsal of a disaster waiting for the Federation on October 1/2, 2002.

Trade union officials had more grounds to believe that the strike would not be a success. Reluctance to heed the call extended to the factories. Reports indicated that in many factories there were mixed feelings about the strike. In some factories, Johnson and Johnson for instance, there was outright

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## **MORE ON THE ANTI-PRIVATISATION STRIKE**

Comrade Editor

defiance. "We will not take part in the march!" they vowed. "In that march the leadership will be telling us about the problems with privatisation - with which we agree - and, thereafter, telling us to 'Viva the Alliance!'. "What does this Alliance do for us?" or "What are we gaining out of this Alliance"?"

These are the most commonly asked questions by the workers. As it turned out these workers were proved to be correct. Speaking at the end of the march, in the presence of Sam Shilowa (Gauteng Premier, and member of the ANC), Zwelinzima Vavi (COSATU General Secretary), said: "we are not challenging the *bona-fides* of ANC, the ANC and the government are not the enemy only poverty and joblessness is the enemy". Workers reacted angrily to these words. A group of workers in another corner demonstrated their disapproval by removing and burning Shilowa's poster which was hanging on a pole advertising some meeting.

Nevertheless workers turned out in numbers. The puzzle before the debaters was, why and how come? One worker suggested that it was possibly because of the ANC's attack on the leadership of COSATU during the ANC Policy Conference. This attack angered workers so much that it acted as a mobilisation tool and induced workers to take a firm stand behind its leadership, in spite of their difference with the vacillation of this leadership.

Could this be true? Certainly, most participants in the discussion agreed with this explanation. Will it be an exaggeration, then, to assume that: these are the first signs of a phase where workers, irrespective of the conduct of their petit-bourgeois and largely bureaucratic leadership and at times even against its will, will take an independent initiative to pronounce itself? What do you think?

Eltee

### ***The interests of the workers and landless peasants are paramount!***

It is the aim of The APDUSAN to publicise the struggles of the long-suffering workers and peasants and to unite with them in the goal of a better life and equality for all. If you are involved in a struggle that you feel others should know about, please write to us at the address below.

The two-day anti-privatisation strike by COSATU has been the subject of controversy for weeks afterwards. Some have called it a success while others have branded it as a failure, each side quoting their own statistics to strengthen their own viewpoint. In my view, if one goes by the reports in the media alone, the strike was successful. Many people were made aware of the question of privatisation and its effects even though the Anti Privatisation Forum (APF) certainly did not receive one-tenth of the coverage.

Just before the strike the ANC branded it as a political action, accusing COSATU of using it to make a political attack on the ANC. COSATU was at pains to deny this. But the fact of the matter is that it was political. Private property is at the heart of capitalism; thus any opposition to privatisation becomes a political act – implicitly. The fight against capitalism is just an extension of the day-to-day struggles around the country – of which the anti-privatisation struggle is one dimension or facet.

On the one hand ANC claims that it received a blessing from the electorate in the last elections to continue along its chosen neoliberal path. On the other hand COSATU is saying that it will continue with its fight against privatisation. With these battles around privatisation continuing and increasing in scope and intensity, the broadening of the struggles will surely put the ANC's claim of having a mandate to the acid test.

When the ANC argued that it could not sanction a strike against itself it showed where it stands as far as the workers are concerned. We can now see and hear whose interests the ANC is protecting - its own, the government and the capitalists class, but not those of the masses who voted them into power. What happened to the idea "The people shall govern"? Right now, in the business of government, the working masses are left out in the cold with no one to represent their interests. It comes back to the question of what people understand and believe to be the best for themselves.

"None but ourselves can free our minds"

Anti-privatisation activist

**To all Correspondents:**  
*Please note that we are acquiring a new address.  
The address below may be used until further notice*