

May Day Message from the WRP Namibia

The WRP Political Committee greets the workers of Namibia, Southern Africa, Africa and the world on this 1st day of May, Workers' Day, which symbolizes the bloody struggle for workers' rights over many, many decades. These rights included the right to organize and belong to unions, the 45 hour week, the right to withhold labour etc.

For Namibians this struggle culminated in the labour rights contained in the 1992 Labour Act.

Since 1992 however, these rights were rapidly eroded in rogue courts, new legislation drafted by corporate business and passed by the new regime, parading as the great liberator.

The Marikana Massacre on 16 August 2012 exploded the Southern African myths of the 'liberation movements' defending and furthering the rights of the working people.

NUMSA, the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa, formalized the concrete fact that the regimes like SWAPO and the ANC were agents of the capitalists against the working class. They stated, **“that unless the working class organises itself as a class for itself it will remain unrepresented and forever toil behind the bourgeoisie”**.

Now that these regimes have devoured the crumbs thrown to them by finance capital, mining, and commerce to pose as states, the SADC States have declared that they are on high alert after self-manufactured evidence surfaced of imperialist tendencies to destabilize them by regime change. Their trigger fingers are itching for a few more Marikanas to earn bale-outs from their masters.

But, the peace and stability which they claim is being threatened, is threatened by the unrelenting attacks on employment, labour and union rights, which these regimes are spearheading on behalf of the capitalists.

Their paranoid and neurotic threats underline in red the NUMSA declarations and should put the regional working class on high alert.

The Namibian regime is totally bankrupt as can be seen from the abandoned construction projects one month into the new financial year; from the piecemeal payment of teachers at the end of April, etcetera, etcetera.

They wish to make their crisis, the crisis of the working class. Oh!, how they wished they could have made it a tribal conflict of the working class!

The WRP's message is, dedicate this May of the year of the Great Workers' Revolution, 1917, to the Unity of the Working Class and to stay alert to build their independent fighting organs to defend itself and the Working People from the Ruin the capitalist ruling classes wish to bring upon the people.

March forward to working class unity in the Southern African Region, Africa and the World.

It is the only way forward to redemption!

Paul Thomas
Secretary of Publicity.

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY TO REBUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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Solidarity Statement with The Socialist Party of Zambia and Comrade Fred M'membe

We have heard from our comrades in NUMSA that a warrant of arrest has been issued for Comrade Fred M'membe of the Socialist Party of Zambia and that his wife and several workers connected to The Zambian Post Newspaper have been arrested in a violent raid on his house by scores of armed police.

This is the result of the Lungu government's determination to shut down an independent voice of opposition criticizing President Edgar Lungu, his Patriotic Front party and their followers.

It is an attack on freedom of the press, which is the cornerstone of any democratic society.

We agree completely with NUMSA, that as a working class party, "We have a responsibility to defend and advance democracy, human rights and full human freedom. We have a duty to defend and advance the interests of justice".

We wholeheartedly support the NUMSA call for workers internationally to show solidarity with workers fighting against tyranny and for democracy throughout Africa, and to boycott trade with Zambia.

Like NUMSA, we pledge our solidarity with all the working class and socialist forces in Zambia in general, and to the Socialist Party of Zambia in particular and to comrade Fred and The Post newspaper.

We support NUMSA in demanding the following from President Lungu of Zambia:

1. Stop, forthwith, the harassment of Comrade Fred, his wife and workers of The Post.
2. Fred M'membe's wife and all those detained must be released, immediately and unconditionally.
3. The warrant of arrest for Fred M'membe must be withdrawn immediately.
4. Ensure that Zambian tax authorities comply with the order to have The Post opened and operating normally, and to allow for the normal resolutions of the tax matters between the two parties.
5. The Mast must operate normally, without hindrance or harassment.

Bob Archer

Secretary WIRFI

20 February

Issue 6 of Die Werker out now.

Out now! The latest issue of Namibia's Proletarian Newsletter.

In [this edition](#):

Land

NUMSA & United Front

International Inquiry
Editorial
Former Judge

What Numsa decided in December 2013

What Numsa decided in December 2013

The Numsa Congress declaration explained: “The African National Congress (ANC) has adopted a strategic programme – the National Development Plan (NDP). The fault of the NDP is not that it is technically flawed, or in need of adjustment and editing ... **Its fault is that it is the programme of our class enemy. It is a programme to continue to feed profit at the expense of the working class and poor.**” (My emphasis – RA)

It goes on to state: “The ANC leadership has clarified that it will not tolerate any challenge” and “Cosatu (the Confederation of South African Trade Unions) has experienced a vicious and sustained attack on its militancy and independence ... Cosatu has become consumed by internal battles by forces which continue to support the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) with its neo-liberal agenda and those who are fighting for an independent militant federation which stands for the interests of the working class before any other”.

Referring to the 2012 massacre of miners at Marikana, the declaration says: “**the state attacked and killed workers on behalf of capital**”. It goes on to outline a campaign to support the victims of the massacre and punish those responsible, situating the massacre in the context of

imperialist exploitation: "Marikana was a deliberate defence of mining profits and mining capitalists!".

The declaration notes: "The treatment of labour as a junior partner within the Alliance is not uniquely a South African phenomenon. In many post-colonial and post-revolutionary situations, liberation and revolutionary movements have turned on labour movements that fought alongside them, suppressed them, marginalised them, split them, robbed them of their independence or denied them any meaningful role in politics and policy making."

The declaration summarises a political way forward: "There is no chance of winning back the Alliance or the SACP"; "The working class needs a political organisation"; "Call on COSATU to break with the Alliance!"; "Establish a new United Front"; "Explore establishment of a Movement for Socialism" ("NUMSA will conduct a thoroughgoing discussion on previous attempts to build socialism as well as current experiments to build socialism. We will commission an international study on the historical formation of working class parties, including exploring different types of parties – from mass workers' parties to vanguard parties. We will look to countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia and Greece ... This entire process will lead to the union convening a Conference on Socialism"

The declaration says Numsa will "set a deadline for this process" and "look for electoral opportunities". It lays down a number of steps cutting ties with the ANC and the SACP.

It goes on to propose a campaign over the rampant corruption of Jacob Zuma's presidency, pointing out that this corruption goes hand in hand with "the continuation of neo-liberalism".

A sizeable section of the declaration deals with the crisis within the union confederation Cosatu, outlining the questions of principle involved.

The declaration also re-positions Numsa as a trade union as

“shield and spear of workers”, pointing to the need to confront the fragmentation of the workforce through outsourcing and seeking to organise all workers in given workplaces and along supply chains.

A final section outlines a practical campaign, including taking forward the “Section 77” campaign to reverse neo-liberal policies and “address the plight of the working class and poor”. Cosatu had adopted this campaign but failed to pursue it energetically. Numsa pledged to act against the Employment Tax Incentive Act, and organise a “rolling mass action” with a detailed list of concrete demands, for example: beneficiation of all strategic minerals, a ban on the export of scrap metals and the rebuilding of foundries, an increase on import tariffs on certain goods, nationalisation of the Reserve Bank, exchange controls and other demands culminating in the nationalisation of the mining industry.

(For the texts of the congress resolution and declaration plus material to place them in a historical context, see the Workers International pamphlet *Movement for Socialism: South Africa's NUMSA points the way*, ISBN 978-0-9564319-4-3).

[A reply to Martin Jensen: The Numsa Moment – Has it lost Momentum?](#)

A reply to Martin Jensen: *The Numsa Moment – Has it lost Momentum?*

By Bob Archer, Jan 2017

Since the end of Apartheid in the early 1990s, South Africa

has officially been ruled by a Triple Alliance of the African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party (SACP) and Confederation of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). At its Special National Congress in December 2013, the South African metalworkers' union, Numsa, called for an historic break with the Alliance and adopted a series of initiatives. What they proposed – and how these initiatives have fared – deserves serious and sustained discussion, not just in South Africa and the region, but right around the world. To that extent, Comrade Jensen's article raises important questions which deserve a response.

The decisions of Numsa's Special National Congress (summarised alongside this article in *What Numsa decided*) should be studied carefully by all who wish and hope to see a renewal and re-awakening of the workers' and socialist movement internationally and are seriously considering what methods of political work this involves. Numsa's initiative urgently requires critical thought about the habits and working methods of working-class and socialist activists, in the prosperous nations of the "West" as much as in Africa and elsewhere.

Martin Jensen hails the Numsa turn but is critical about how Numsa has selected its practical proposals and taken them forward. He also criticises those of us who welcomed and forthrightly promulgated these initiatives.

Workers' International responded very positively to the Numsa Special National Congress and its decisions. No doubt Cde. Jensen includes us among those guilty of "impressionism":

"While many socialists correctly supported Numsa's important watershed political decisions and got directly involved in their realisation, they failed at the same time to recognise the historical and current weaknesses of the union and assist in overcoming them. A combination of impressionism and overzealousness saw many socialists jumping in without critically appreciating the challenges of the period and

limitations of Numsa and its leadership”, he says.

What should Numsa have done? Cde. Jensen thinks above all that Numsa should have opened the door to collaboration with the dissident former youth wing of the ANC, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). He also criticises Numsa for failing to get involved in the widespread student unrest this year.

(Just a thought: One group of people identifies the Numsa turn as a politically and strategically essential break and decides to encourage that political development in every way possible, undeterred by difficulties and without setting themselves up to lecture the comrades involved about supposed shortcomings identified from outside. A second group compares the numbers whom the EFF can mobilise for a rally or demonstration with the numbers Numsa can turn out and sets aside the – quite important – question of the class nature of the forces involved in order to give priority to the EFF. Which group best deserves to be described as “impressionist”?)

Cde. Jensen has other criticisms of the action programme which Numsa developed in December 2013, describing it as “hardly the issues that could have captured the imagination and concerns of other workers” and taking Numsa to task for failing to co-ordinate a campaign for a living wage with Cosatu and above all for not timing strike action to coincide with AMCU, the break-away from the South African mineworkers’ union.

Cde. Jensen outlines an alternative set of actions saying: “The 6-phase rolling mass action should have been changed to ensure that issues more important to the working class, with a greater preparedness on their part to struggle around, such as for decent housing and service delivery, jobs for the unemployed, free quality education, etc.”

So Cde. Jensen proposes that Numsa’s carefully-planned campaign to organise and guide workers into becoming the backbone of a defence of their class interests (and of the

common interests of the wider masses) should be liquidated into precisely the kind of demagogic generality which EEF practises.

The 1 September 2016 Numsa Press Release (reporting a well-attended meeting of the Steering Committee to form a new Trade Union Federation) soberly explains: "Our country is the headquarters of service delivery protests and sadly the media is no longer reporting these protests. They have been relegated to traffic reports when they disrupt motorists' travel plans! Sadly despite the occurrence and breadth of these protests they remain fragmented and isolated to the shame of all of us on the left. This is a challenge we hope to address through the creation of the new federation".

But instead of prioritising the strategic move to create a new federation, Cde. Jensen would prefer the Numsa leaders simply to tail end the demagogues of EEF. Impatiently he waves aside (and distorts) the careful and systematic re-construction of the unity of the workers' movement which Numsa and its allies have been carrying out, complaining that:

"the Numsa leaders, its allies and former Cosatu General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi ... focused on confining the political battle to the Cosatu CEC, the mainstream media and the courts. It meant that the outset in 2011, the workers of the majority of unions in Cosatu were excluded from the important political battle, isolated and disempowered. As mere spectators they did not grow politically and lacked the confidence to challenge and replace their corrupt leaders. Numsa's call for a united front and a 'movement for socialism' should therefore have fallen on fertile ground if serious and consistent leadership was offered", Cde. Jensen continues, but: "Alas, this was not to be".

"Our trade unions are still bureaucratic and conservative lifeless shells, not prepared to fight and participate in broader struggles of the working class", Cde. Jensen asserts,

throwing in for good measure “bureaucratisation... , union chauvinism and not connecting with other trade unions ... conservative collective bargaining arrangements ... participation in the capitalist economy through its investment company” and “the social distance of the union leadership from its members...”

And yet it is within and through this “bureaucratic and conservative lifeless shell” that working-class political life (and thought) has actually asserted itself!

Does Cde. Jensen have any real idea about how workers reach decisions and organise – essentially, how the working class thinks collectively? The flip side of “union chauvinism” is the democratic rights and participation in decision-making of workers who belong to different trade unions. Their membership of this or that trade union and confederation (wherever and whenever it arises, and whatever it appears to be) is not a trivial matter, nor should anyone “over-enthusiastically” try to override the decision-making process of each independent trade union.

Numsa has been in a constant dialogue with the leaderships of other unions and has demonstrated consistently to the memberships of these unions its principled efforts to find the way out of the failure of the NDR

Actually the movement around Numsa has brought together a Steering Committee which this summer claimed a meeting of 31 unions. As representatives of their own rank-and-file membership, the Numsa leadership were right to carry out a systematic and thorough struggle for their rights in what was the central organisation of workers in South Africa – Cosatu. The middle class radical undertakes splits and schisms in the movement readily, even light-mindedly on the basis of this or that “impressive” news item, some or other theoretical dogma, or more often personal or clique considerations. This is not the way to build workers’ organisations rooted in principles.

The Numsa leaders are precisely providing “serious and consistent” leadership. Cde. Jensen offers a kind of political ambulance-chasing after whatever events appear to be the most impressive at the time.

In arguing his case, Cde. Jensen touches on many important issues. However, he gets many of these issues wrong and in other instances deals rather superficially with genuine problems which require a little more thought.

Let’s start with the really big one:

“Numsa’s biggest impediment that stood in its way and still stands in its way of realizing revolutionary objectives is its history and culture of reformist politics” with “its roots in the formation of the union in 1987 that brought together various radical and conservative trade union political tendencies and necessitated by unification compromises of the unions’ leadership”, says Cde. Jensen.

From the heights of his revolutionary consciousness (or “sober analysis of the overall relation of forces” as he calls it), Cde. Jensen seems to think that the best help he can give Numsa is: “Stop being reformist and start being revolutionary!” No doubt he hopes this advice will fall “on fertile ground”. The more experienced among us may well be less sanguine. Did not Karl Marx himself say of this approach: “If that’s Marxism, then I’m not a Marxist!”

All the same, Cde. Jensen stumbles upon a number of important points when trying to explain why Numsa (indeed the whole trade union movement in South Africa) became mired in the politics of Stalinism and the “National Democratic Revolution”. The thing is, does he really grasp the significance of what he describes?

MAWU and other unions were born in bold, independent struggles by black workers against a South African capitalism embedded in white minority rule and the Nationalist police state. In

these struggles these workers naturally asserted their class independence of the bourgeois/tribalist ANC and its Stalinist supporters in the South African Communist Party. Where the ANC and the SACP promulgated the Freedom Charter, MAWU developed the Workers' Charter with explicitly socialist demands. The Workers' Charter is not a mere empty dogmatic call to revolution, but it is very far from being a reformist programme. (The two documents are conveniently available for study and comparison at <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/1912>)

Cde. Jensen rightly identifies the period of the collapse of Apartheid and the installation of the ANC in power as a key moment for the workers' movement in South Africa. He points to the damage which was being done to the movement even as the apartheid regime collapsed: "By the early 1990s, with the collapse of the Eastern Bloc 'socialist' regimes and the political reforms of the Apartheid government the union had become seeped (sic) in various reformist approaches to its work that saw it shift away from the radicalism and militancy of its main predecessor, MAWU..."

And yet for all its "reformist approaches", Numsa was the union which led determined and vigorous opposition to the GEAR plan.

Does Cde. Jensen understand the full significance of what he raises? He returns to the matter (perhaps not seeing that it is the same issue) towards the end of his article, calling for "an honest and thorough assessment of the state of class struggle and balance of class forces" as a basis for deciding "on correct tactics and courses of action to achieve maximum working class unity".

"Since the Numsa moment and still now" (but in reality since the early 1990s!) "the mass organisations of the working class remain weak or simply non-existent. The general level of class consciousness has remained low. The 'Left' is still weak –

small, fragmented with limited implantation within the working class. Our trade unions are still bureaucratic and politically conservative lifeless shells, not prepared to fight and participate in broader struggles of the working class”.

Actually this blanket description of trade unions expresses an ultra-left prejudice endemic among petit-bourgeois socialists. It is a hint that Jansen himself is not immune to the “impressionism” he condemns in others.

With that exception, the points raised are important. But the timescale matters: these general political conditions didn't fall from the heavens in December 2013!

Cde. Jensen soon gets onto this, saying: “This weak state of working class organisation exist in the context of the continued neo-capitalist ascendancy after more than two decades of economic and political attacks against the working class that has created new structural divisions within it”.

In reality, the core of this “continued neo-capitalist ascendancy” has been the assault on the working class, in its most concentrated form on the political leadership of that class.

The collapse of the workers' states in the USSR and Eastern Europe has gone hand in hand with a sustained and co-ordinated attack on Marxism at every level and from every quarter. This has seen more than a few former Marxists turn their coats and become abject evangelists for capitalism.

Behind the “structural divisions” which Cde. Jensen rather blandly evokes lurks the reality that working-class populations with their organisations and working-class leaderships have been broken up, dispersed and thoroughly trampled upon. Where they could, the bourgeoisie has destroyed these bodies and the social structures which underlie them; where they cannot, they have poisoned the minds of their leaders with the idea that capital is all-powerful and above

challenge.

This has left scars on the workers' movement which will not heal overnight or on the basis of chasing after the numbers of the student movement or the EFF. Numsa's leaders have been all-too conscious of the effects of neo-liberal policies: – de-industrialisation, the fragmentation in the workforce, the dilution of workers' organising scope and rights and all the rest of it. The practical proposals adopted at the December 2013 Special National Congress were carefully designed to roll them back. But Cde. Jensen thinks they are “hardly the issues that could have captured the imagination and concerns of other workers”.

What Cde. Jensen says about the “creaming off of several layers of leaders of the mass movement from the early 1990s by the ruling class who offered them lucrative jobs in the state and companies owned by white monopoly capital” is well-put. It must be added that many of the revolutionary workers who had come to the fore in MAWU were at that time deliberately sidelined in the movement and some of them openly threatened with violence and their lives put in danger by ANC thugs.

These questions are central to the whole matter of what has happened to the workers' movement and therefore how and by what steps it can recover. Cde. Jensen is impatient to unite the EFF and Numsa in a movement which will somehow empower the masses to achieve “decent housing and service delivery, jobs for the unemployed, free quality education, etc.” It's all so simple! It is also more than a little light-minded. The key question is not adding together numbers to the most possible demonstrators can be called out onto the streets, but how a movement and a leadership can be built in the course of struggle.

There is starting to be a recovery of working-class struggle and socialist consciousness, but it is emerging very tentatively out of the very conditions of the previous defeats

and setbacks the movement has suffered. The real danger exists that petit-bourgeois “revolutionary” Marxists sects see these still fragile beginnings – such as the Numsa turn, Bernie Sanders run in the US Democratic Party primaries, the movement which put Jeremy Corbyn into the leadership of the UK Labour Party, Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece – and think they are simply an audience for their dogmas, a sphere in which they can build their own groups. At the same time they are impatient, demanding that the movement should produce better results and move faster than it actually can. They are not able to see the working class going through a stage in its own political development.

The dogmatist insists that every development in class-consciousness has to reflect and follow some abstract ideological purity.

The trade unions in South Africa came under sustained pressure to be “bureaucratic and politically conservative lifeless shells”, but it is within the trade unions that workers have collided head-on with the reality that within the Triple Alliance and the government of South Africa the ANC leadership promulgates the policies of the capitalist ruling class and attacks the rights and the very existence of workers, and that the leading lights in the SACP provide a threadbare theoretical justification for what the ANC leadership is doing.

Cde. Jensen emphasises one side of the matter: workers are held back because of the damage suffered by revolutionary socialist consciousness. But the struggle to overcome that damage is (despite the “impressions” that individual academic Marxists may form) actually taking place through Numsa and Irvin Jim’s insistence that the promises of the National Democratic Revolution should actually be delivered, their obstinate comparing of the results of ANC-Triple Alliance rule with what was promised.

The promises made by the ANC and SACP in the early 1990s were a deception. The tribal elites in the ANC leadership had reached a fundamental agreement with imperialism and the big mining interests that these interests would remain intact. It took a quarter of a century, but over time it became clear to more and more workers and their leaders that they were being conned. The benefits expected and promised from the National Democratic Revolution were not being delivered because there was no move to carry out an NDR. Instead the government has been inflicting neo-liberal attacks on workers and the masses and protecting the interests of big monopolies.

The development in political consciousness reflecting this could not happen in the way a university-trained rationalist might expect, where individuals contemplating the world cogitate about the matter and conclude that the Marxists were right and the National Democratic Revolution is wrong.

The whole dynamic underlying the Numsa turn became very apparent in Numsa General Secretary Cde. Irvin Jim's Ruth First memorial lecture delivered at Wits University, Braamfontein, on 14 August 2014 (see: <http://www.numsa.org.za/article/uth-first-memorial-lecture-delivered-numsa-general-secretary-cde-irvin-jim-thursday-14-august-2014-great-hall-wits-university-braamfontein/>).

This is a detailed indictment of the experience of a quarter of a century of Triple Alliance rule. Cde. Jim starts by paying homage to Ruth's First's dedication to the struggle as a Marxist who "perfectly understood the necessity to fight simultaneously racial, patriarchal, national and class oppression, domination and exploitation."

He salutes her as one of those SACP members who helped to frame the ANC Freedom Charter, and goes on to contrast the slogans of the Freedom Charter with the reality of Triple Alliance rule

“The Freedom Charter says:

- The People Shall Rule: I argue that the people are not governing ...

- All National Groups Shall have Equal rights

How far have we gone in this regard? Substantively, South African society is structurally incapable of delivering equal rights to all national groups. The system of colonialism, which continues to this day, was based on defining national groups on the basis of race. And so, it came to pass, that Africans remained at the bottom of the food chain ...

- The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!

Nalena abayifuni! There is complete refusal to share the country's wealth! Some said it will happen over their dead bodies ...

- The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!

Estimates are that black people own between 13–16% of agricultural land in South > Africa. Only 10% of the 30% land earmarked for land restitution has been transferred to black farmers, the target date for the 30% is 2014. At this pace, it will take 100 years to transfer 50% percent of the land back to the people ...

- There Shall be Work and Security!

In the past 20 years, there has been no work! In 1995 the unemployment rate was 31%, in 2013 it had risen to 34% ...

- The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!

... It is estimated only 3% of the children who enter the schooling system eventually complete with higher grade mathematics. 24% of learners finish schooling in record time. The pass rate in African schools is 43%, while the pass rate in white schools is 97%.

- There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!

There is no security and comfort in the houses of the working class!"

And so on for all the other demands of the Freedom Charter, what was promised is compared unfavourably with what has been achieved.

Trotskyists (including Workers International) warned beforehand that this would be the outcome.

Is it enough now to stand on the touch-line bragging that we were right and the working class allowed itself to be dominated by an illusion? Surely not.

It is in interrogating the experience of 25 years of Triple Alliance rule that the workers' movement of South Africa starts to find a way back to its revolutionary roots. It is in the persons of the Numsa leadership and their supporters that this interrogation is taking place. Vague references to "revolution" on Cde. Jensen's part, far from assisting their development, serve to repel the more thoughtful, organised trade union activists away from Marxism rather than attracting them to it. Practical advice (bad advice) to tail-end the demagogues of EEF will not enhance the reputation of the Marxists who give it, but will bring the science of Marxism into disrepute. As Numsa says -

Following Marx - it is only the organised class-conscious working class that can lead in making the socialist revolution.

Workers' International has enthusiastically supported the Numsa turn because it will enable South African workers to test to the limit the theory that the Freedom Charter can bring them satisfaction. And this new movement is standing clearly and consciously against the bourgeois "class enemy" politicians of the ANC.

There is a clear parallel with the British trade unionists

(mainly in the United Left group in Unite) who have made up their minds to test to the limit the theory that the working class can find a way to socialism through the election of a left-wing Labour government. Theoretical purists, their eyes fixed on the appearance of the movement, form the "impression" that these workers are "reformists". And so they are, except that nothing stands still. The determination of these activists to put their convictions into practice in the interests of their class and against the class-collaborators in the trade unions and the Labour Party is the condition for a rebirth of socialist consciousness.

The responsibility of Marxists is thoroughly to support and promulgate and practically advance such developments (usually against sectarians and dogmatists who try to impose their quack remedies and verbal radicalism on the movement).

The conditions exist for unity in action between those of us who are convinced that the future of working people lies in the ending of capitalism and those many people who hope a more limited aim can still bring results, and who certainly are dominated at best by social-democratic and Keynesian conceptions. The basis for unity in action is that these movements are gearing themselves up to fight on the class issues involved. Within that unity in action lies the potential for a development in consciousness.

The Numsa initiative has brought together a Steering Committee to form a new Trade Union Federation. 31 trade unions attended the meeting of this Steering Committee on 30 August this year, which the following day issued a highly interesting Press Release.

(<http://www.numsa.org.za/article/numsa-welcomes-fawu-decision-leave-cosatu/>).

The first thing to say about this press release, which really does deserve attentive study, is that it starts from a thorough consideration of "The Current Political Situation and

What it Means for the Working Class: Global Balance of Forces". This glance around the horizon says in the first sentence: "... conservative forces are attempting to consolidate their power all over the globe and here in South Africa."

Unlike Cde. Jensen, the leading group in this initiative starts by grappling with the international development of the class struggle.

Turning to South Africa, the Press Release makes the comment reported above about service delivery protest, but goes on to say:

"We remain firmly opposed to corruption by the elite political class. We are however acutely aware that the theft of our wealth, is not just by a few rogue families, but the entire capitalist class".

It continues: "Despite shifting huge amounts of capital off shore, big business is still sitting on R1.5 trillion in our banks as part of an investment strike, which they conveniently blame on political and economic uncertainties, but is actually to force more neo-liberal concessions from government".

"Agency" and the EFF

Cde. Jensen points out how "the thousands of EFF members are mere spectators to their leaders' parliamentary shenanigans and occasional letting off steam mass marches". It is true that the young supporters of EFF are denied any real role and power in the direction of their movement (in which Marxist rhetoric is mixed up with Black consciousness). For some reason, Cde. Jensen thinks the Numsa leadership could simply rush into a "principled" united front with this EFF.

But Numsa and its allies are actually engaged in a break with the petty-bourgeois politics of the ANC and the Triple Alliance. They are involved in the profoundly important historical job of probing the actual experience of the programme of National Democratic Revolution under ANC rule.

Cde. Jensen believes that the insistence of the Numsa leadership on carrying through systematically the break in the Triple Alliance and Cosatu and the organisation of the biggest possible new trade union federation is a purely conservative reflex which "meant that from the outset in 2011, the workers of the majority of unions in Cosatu were excluded from the important political battle, isolated and disempowered. As mere spectators they did not grow politically ... Only during the last phase when it became clear that Numsa would be expelled and Vavi dismissed, did the leaders convene shop stewards council meetings to engage the rank and file about some (!!) of the issues and even then the unions on the other side were excluded".

Cde. Jensen reveals here a stunning inability to understand vital aspects of actual working-class organisation and consciousness.

First of all, he wants working-class leadership to have as the ready-made starting point of its struggles the worked-out "revolutionary" understanding of all and everything that he, Cde. Jensen, has in his head, when he knows (in his calmer moments) that the whole movement itself has undergone a degeneration from which it must struggle to recover.

He knows that the politics of Stalinism which predominates in the Triple Alliance is wrong, but he cannot see the essential point about the Numsa turn: that it is a break in the carefully-constructed domination of the workers' movement by Stalinist and reformist conceptions under the pressure of actual events in the class struggle. At one extreme this break is expressed in the killing fields around the Kopje at Marikana, at the other (and this is equally important) at the very top of the trade union movement and in the break-up of the Triple Alliance.

On the one hand Cde. Jensen concedes: "the tasks of Numsa and its allies were enormous"; on the other he criticises "Numsa

and its allies” for the slow progress, systematic procedures and careful attention to their own ranks, the body of the rank-and-file Numsa leaders and their development, etc. In the middle of a big political and theoretical struggle, Cde. Jensen urges the Numsa leadership to rush off into an alliance with the EFF who embody the same petty-bourgeois politics with which they are at odds in the ANC and the Alliance.

The 1 September Press Release has a different approach. It expresses extreme concern about “the growing numbers of citizens disengaged with electoral politics. More than 21 million adults of voting age did not even participate in the elections ... there is a crisis of political representation, and our people are less clear about who exactly can best represent their interests”.

It confronts frankly the difficulties the trade union movement faces: “In a staggering indictment of Union powerlessness, the employers now set 54% of all wages without any negotiation with workers, either through their union or bilaterally directly with workers” ... “The share of wages in the national income (GDP) has continued to plummet well below 50% from 57% in 1991” ... “More jobs have been shed. In the last three months of 2015 alone 21,000 manufacturing jobs were lost, with another 80,000 gone in the first three months of this year.” ... and: “According to statsSA a staggering 54% of our population lives in poverty”.

From this, Numsa turns toward laying the foundations of a new workers’ movement which “will pay more than lip-service to crucial principles and that will instead offer a vibrant, inclusive and tolerant space for workers to discuss the challenges they face. We hereby pledge that workers will not be expelled for holding different views to the leadership or the majority of other workers! The Constitution that we envisage will not be a throwback to times gone by but will instead be a living document that guides our actions”, including “a real attempt to build women’s leadership and

counter both informal and institutionalised discrimination and sexism”.

This path inevitably brings great theoretical and practical challenges which will not be solved by hot air or academic condescension.

In finding its way forward, this movement will need to cast a critical glance back at its own history in order to benefit from the theory and practice, mistakes and triumphs of past revolutionaries as a foundation for its own creative work.

The task is urgent!
Bob Archer, Jan 2017

The Numsa Moment – Has it lost Momentum?

Martin Jansen

This critique is offered for the union ahead of its next national congress in December 2016 as food for thought towards unlocking Numsa’s historical task that present possibilities for unifying the working class in struggle, increasing its confidence and steering us towards socialist revolution.

In an interview last year, Floyd Shivambu, the EFF’s Deputy President, had this to say in response to Numsa’s reluctance to build unity with them, 1 “What we know is that efforts to start a rival socialist or workers’ party will dwindle into insignificance and will not benefit the working class and workers whom our ideological allies claim to represent.” It has been three years since the historic Numsa moment and it appears that the EFF leader’s claim is true. For three years we have not seen any significant mass campaigns or struggles

led by Numsa, let alone grassroots mass democratic organisations emerging that have captured working class interests. What are we to make of this?

The “Numsa Moment” was hailed by socialists locally and internationally as the biggest political breakthrough in Southern Africa since the late 1980’s. Numsa’s special national congress held during December 2013 committed itself to fight and campaign for the most pressing political tasks confronting the working class. These included – to fight and campaign for a militant, independent and unified Cosatu that would of necessity break from the Tripartite Alliance and lead in the establishment of a new United Front (UF) that will coordinate struggles in the workplace and communities against neo-liberal policies such as those contained in the ANC government’s National Development Plan (NDP) and at the same time explore the establishment of “a movement for socialism”. The latter involved a comprehensive study of working class parties all over the world to identify elements “of what may constitute a revolutionary programme for the working class”. Importantly, Numsa’s *organizational* break with the ANC and SACP was of huge symptomatic and symbolic importance and reflected a sharper working class response to the global economic crisis and rising class tensions in South Africa.

While many socialists correctly supported Numsa’s important watershed political decisions and got directly involved in their realization, they failed at the same time to recognize the historical and current weaknesses of the union and assist in overcoming them. A combination of impressionism and overzealousness saw many socialists jumping in without critically appreciating the challenges of the period and limitations of Numsa and its leadership.

By the following year the union initiated a flurry of activities and events to implement its resolutions. This included national and international conferences and a 6-phase programme of “rolling mass action”. The latter focused too

narrowly on issues and concerns of the union instead of common issues of all workers and other sections of the working class. The critical Phase 1 of the rolling mass action plan had as its main focus the Employment Tax Incentive Act; beneficiation of all strategic minerals, a ban on the export of scrap metals etc.

These were hardly the issues that could have captured the imagination and concerns of other workers, let alone impoverished sections of the working class. It is hard to fathom why Numsa at the time did not take up the challenge of leading Cosatu's Living Wage Campaign that, with the right approach, could have won over millions of workers in a common

1 Amandla Magazine, Issue No. 42 October 2015, p16.

struggle. This could have connected directly with the struggle of the platinum mineworkers under AMCU and their demand for R12500 per month. Instead, soon after a five-month strike by the mineworkers, two hundred thousand Numsa members went on strike separately in support of their own wage demands.

This was a missed opportunity for building the UF. Moreover, the 6-phase rolling mass action programme should have been changed to ensure that issues more important to the working class, with a greater preparedness on their part to struggle around, such as for decent housing and service delivery, jobs for the unemployed, free quality education etc. Unsurprisingly, the 6-phase programme has not seen much rolling mass action and faded into oblivion.

Overall, Numsa's key weakness in attempts at implementing their political resolutions was that it underestimated the tasks at hand and overestimated its own strength and ability. While the fact that it claimed to be the biggest union on the continent with over 300000 members, together with correct political decisions presented great potential for political and organizational advances, this by itself was far from

enough to accomplish what is required during this period.

Reform versus Revolution

Numsa's biggest impediment that stood and still stands in its way of realizing revolutionary objectives is its history and culture of reformist politics. This legacy of reformism has its roots in the formation of the union in 1987 that brought together various radical and conservative trade union political tendencies and necessitated by unification compromises of the unions' leadership.

By the early 1990's, with the collapse of the Eastern Bloc "socialist" regimes and the political reforms of the Apartheid government, the union had become seeped in various reformist approaches to its work that saw a shift away from the radicalism and militancy of its main predecessor, MAWU, ten years earlier. By this time the Numsa leadership from the various strands had converged around the SACP as its political home and accepted National Democratic Revolution (NDR) as its theoretical perspective for achieving socialism in South Africa and the need for engaging with white monopoly capital and the state for "radical reform" that would move towards a "mixed economy", "high skills and high wages" for workers and an internationally competitive South African economy.

The central vehicle for achieving this by Numsa and its leadership was the Tripartite Alliance and deploying much of its top leadership into the state, including senior government posts by the likes of Alec Erwin who became the minister of trade and industry in the Mbeki cabinet that led the anti-working class neo-liberal programme. In recent years the union and its leadership was even part of the "die for Zuma" bandwagon believing that he would lead an anti-neo-liberal ANC government and revert back to the social democratic and Keynesian RDP and Freedom Charter.

While the 2013 Numsa Moment marked a shift to the left by

Numsa, coming on the back of ANC government defeats of Cosatu around E-Tolls, labour brokers, the youth wage subsidy, the NDP and the violent state attacks of the Marikana massacre, the farmworkers' strike and several service delivery protests as well as the extreme levels of corruption of the state – we did not see a simultaneous fundamental shift away from the reformist politics of the union and its leadership. The union still remained committed to the Stalinist two-stage theory of socialism in the form of the NDR and views as its programme the vague and reformist Freedom Charter.

The Numsa leadership still yearns for the SACP of the era of Joe Slovo instead of bad man Blade Nzimande (current SACP General Secretary and Minister of Higher Education). And yet it was the very Slovo who led the rejection of one of the key tenets of Marxism-Leninism, the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessity to usher in socialism. It was the self-same Slovo who introduced neo-liberal measures of privatisation into the government's housing policy. It was the same Slovo who proposed the "Sunset clauses" during the negotiations with the Apartheid ruling class that led to the democratic counter-revolution, the results of which are all too clear to see after over 20 years of bourgeois democracy.

Illusions of Restoring the Capitalist Economy to favour the Working Class

The union still believes in "transforming the economy in line with the Freedom Charter objectives" and believes that South African capitalism can be saved by "broad-based industrial development". It still views as its road to socialism using the failed social democratic politics and method of radical reform through pressurizing and "engaging the employers and the state". These approaches are reformist efforts to transform capitalism along social democratic lines. This internationally discredited class collaborationist approach has misled working classes of other countries for decades. Not

only is this view fundamentally incorrect, it is also misplaced since it seriously misunderstands where capitalism is today that makes widespread significant material reforms in favour of the working class extremely unlikely.

Various Numsa leaders have since the early 1990's sowed this illusion, promoting and leading industrial restructuring to ensure that the South African capitalist economy can be "more competitive". Numsa leaders like Alec Erwin and Adrienne Bird were the prime movers of this reformist approach and ended up directly serving the interest of capital within the Mbeki government.

Prospects for a return to social democratic measures are at an all-time low. Capitalism cannot be reformed in this period of advanced systemic decay. Reformism is itself an expression of the pressure of the ruling capitalist class on the working class and some of its leaders and the union should not continue to succumb to these pressures. A prime example of this phenomenon was when in the wake of the 2008 – 2009 economic crisis, Vavi in symbolic show of unity with white monopoly capital, jointly at a press conference with Bobby Godsell, called on workers to accept wage freezes in order to save jobs and capitalism.

In line with its "red revolutionary character", Numsa needed to reject and decisively break from the notion of reforming capitalism since it only serves the interests of monopoly capital and further impoverishes the working class. It cannot be reformed in this period of advanced capitalism. Continuing to hang onto this reformist illusion unnecessarily postpones the revolutionary struggle for socialism. **It is only a revolutionary overthrow of the system that can resolve this crisis in favour of the working class.**

A thorough Political Review was Required

The union, together with its allies and supporters and

involving rank and file members, needed to prioritise having the fullest possible political review of its history and politics. In this way it could have enabled us to learn the lessons and chart forward a revolutionary course that should have informed the mass work required for developing the UF and socialist party.

This review should also have entailed an examination of the union and its own operations and all the factors that inhibit and undermine its ability to direct a revolutionary path for building strong mass working class fighting organisations.

This includes problems such as its own bureaucratization (despite its proud legacy of "worker control"), union chauvinism and not connecting with other trade union and rank and file members and working class communities, its conservative collective bargaining arrangements, its participation in the capitalist economy through its investment company, the social distance of the union leadership from its members with the top union officials earning the salaries of senior managers and top state officials etc.

In fact, three years later and there is still very little evidence of Numsa's own over 300000 rank and file members having been politically inspired and stirred into action by the Numsa moment.

The Current Period, Numsa and the United Front

In order to give Numsa and its allies a clear idea of the tasks in relation to building the UF, the entire union and its allies, especially the rank and file, require an honest and thorough assessment of the state of class struggle and balance of class forces. This will enable us to decide on correct tactics and courses of action to achieve maximum working class unity and strong mass organisations in the process of struggle at local and national levels.

Since the Numsa moment and still now, the mass organisations

of the working class remain weak or simply non-existent. The general level of class consciousness has remained low. The “Left” is still weak – small, fragmented with limited implantation within the working class.

Our trade unions are still bureaucratic and politically conservative lifeless shells, not prepared to fight and participate in broader struggles of the working class. This characterization includes the nine unions that originally allied with Numsa, with some of them still in Cosatu and others like the Food and Allied Workers union (FAWU) that has joined to form a new federation.

This weak state of working class organization exist in the context of the continued neo- liberal capitalist ascendancy after more than two decades of economic and political attacks against the working class that has created new structural divisions within it.

Despite the lower middle class also being severely affected by neo-liberalism, its intelligentsia has become disconnected from the working class and disillusioned with radical politics and even shifted to right-wing and conservative politics.

This loss of this “class ally”, traditionally socially and politically close to the black working class in South Africa during the Apartheid era, has in turn had a detrimental effect on working class politics and its capacity to organize. This came on top of a huge creaming off of

several layers of leaders of the mass movement from the early 1990’s by the ruling class who offered them lucrative jobs in the state and companies owned by white monopoly capital.

But at the same time the capitalist system remains in deep crisis, especially since the economic collapse of 2008. Since then the ruling class has intensified neo-liberal measures against the working class internationally and in South Africa, thereby forcing more and more people to resist and to organize

against the attacks on their living standards and to seek radical solutions.

This means that unlike the 1980's in South Africa, the building material for immediately constructing a mass fighting UF did not exist in abundance and the tasks of Numsa and its allies were enormous. At the same time the Numsa juggernaut had to be politically and organizationally re-orientated to lead and implement the tasks to build the UF and lay the basis for a socialist movement. This could only be achieved through a process of intense organized class struggle and political clarification towards revolutionary Marxism.

The state of the working class during this period can therefore be characterized by a few important features, namely;

- □ Increased structural divisions and atomization of the working class due to the impact of neo-liberalism and a growing insecure precariat constantly in survivalist mode.
- □ Low levels of class consciousness and confidence to consistently engage in class struggle
- □ Weak and low levels of mass based organization
- □ A waning political hegemony over the working class by the ruling tripartite alliance
- □ A growing rebellion against neo-liberalism and deteriorating living and working conditions

But despite this there has been a readiness on the part of the masses to struggle. It is the result of a build-up of frustration over many years with the impact of neo-liberal austerity measures on their lives, deteriorating living standards and disappointment with the corrupt and anti-working class ANC government who they had placed their hopes in for a better life for over two decades.

It is these factors that asserted itself in the revolt of the

Platinum miners against the NUM bureaucracy and the wild cat strikes of both the miners and the farm-workers during 2012 – 2013. They are also the underlying cause of the uninterrupted local protests in every part of the country and more recently the #FeesmustFall student movement.

Both this pent up discontent within the working class and the intensification of class antagonisms are intimately linked and were the underlying causes of the constant attacks by the ANC on Vavi and Cosatu at the time, as well as Numsa's break with the ANC and SACP and its eventual expulsion.

Numsa's call for a united front and a "movement for socialism" should therefore have fallen on fertile ground if serious and consistent leadership was offered. These were ideas whose time had come but a sober analysis of the overall relation of forces was required. It is within the rank-and-file of the unions that the pent up discontent runs deepest and the Numsa and UF leadership should have organized that this section of organized workers could rub

shoulders with the youth, unemployed and women who have been in the forefront of the township and village protests country-wide.

What was therefore required was a reassertion of working class political and organizational independence through mass united front campaigns around the burning questions of the day. Alas this was not to be since 2013.

- ***Missed Opportunities for Building the United Front***

The UF approach also meant that Numsa had to do everything in its power to remain within Cosatu and do battle with the reactionary leadership to win over the ordinary members of the other unions to join the UF around the Living Wage and other campaigns. Instead of engaging the rank and file members of the right-wing ANC supporting unions through its own rank and file, the Numsa leaders, its allies and former Cosatu general

Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, instead focused on confining the political battle to the Cosatu CEC, the mainstream media and courts. It meant that from the outset in 2011, the workers of the majority of unions in Cosatu were excluded from the important political battle, isolated and disempowered. As mere spectators they did not grow politically and lacked the confidence to challenge and replace their corrupt leaders. This is where the real battle should have been since these workers had been suffering for more than a decade under their unions' leadership who instead of leading struggles, covertly sided with the employers for unmandated wage settlements – especially in the public sector – where they appeased their ANC government masters. Only during the last phase when it became clear that Numsa would be expelled and Vavi dismissed, did the leaders convene shop-steward council meetings to engage the rank and file about some of the issues and even then the unions on the other side were excluded.

For the Numsa leaders and their allies in the Cosatu CEC at the time, the old union adage of, what you don't win on the battlefield will not be won in the boardroom, seemingly did not apply.

▪ ***The Crisis and immediate Possibilities for the mass UF***

Why could Numsa and the myriad of smaller left formations that initially formed the "United Front" not have entered into a principled united front agreement with the EFF around common political goals? This would have enabled Numsa and other union members connecting with thousands of militant black working class youth in common struggles and opened up revolutionary possibilities. Instead the thousands of EFF members are mere spectators to their leaders' parliamentary shenanigans and occasional letting off steam mass marches. With such a mass united front in struggle, both the EFF and Numsa leaders' anti- white monopoly capital rhetoric could have been tested and advanced.

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that the main tenets of the Numsa moment, i.e. the struggle for working class unity (the UF), for a *revolutionary* and socialist workers' government, and the creation of revolutionary socialist or workers' party (the movement for socialism) remain relevant. They are interrelated and interdependent aspects of the same process: the self-emancipation and liberation of the working class. However, Numsa has not come close to achieving any of the formations it committed itself to in its 2013 congress political resolutions. This, despite many opportunities presented during the past three years.

- ***Opportunities for the Numsa Moment to live up to the challenge***

The student protest movement that unfolded over the past year signaled the beginning of the end for the ANC regime. Notwithstanding the weaknesses and crudity of their methods, by directing their demands towards national government and activating a national movement, the students have demonstrated tremendous political tenacity. The rest of the working class has taken notice and has drawn this lesson. In future we are likely to see local communities that have engaged in hundreds of militant local struggles around "service delivery" for over a decade, seeking unity with each other and building a national resistance movement similar to the UDF of the 1980's. This prospect needs conscious intervention and support in order to be realized and currently only Numsa, its allies and the EFF offer this possibility.

The World and South Africa are experiencing deep and widespread socio-economic and political crises and the situation has degenerated beyond barbarism, especially for the working class and poor. Inequality, the concentration of wealth and poverty are at unprecedented levels. The resultant class conflicts have produced wars, extreme violence, terror and suffering by a rampant western imperialism led by the US, without any alternative revolutionary working class resistance

and political leadership. The challenges to the working class abound – with on the one hand, US imperialism setting up military bases in all the regions of the African continent and elsewhere and at the same time within the trade union movement conservative social democracy dominates. South Africa and many countries in the region are faced with political crises, with all the governments of the traditional nationalist parties having lost credibility after years of corruption and repression. However, no revolutionary alternative exist for the masses to belong to and pursue the struggle in line with their historic interests and mission.

The stakes here are high, with the ANC government facing a crisis and implosion. Their hold over the state has increasingly come under threat. In the context of an economy still overwhelmingly dominated by white monopoly capital and the state being the main instrument of wealth accumulation for the ANC aligned new black section of the bourgeoisie, they will resort to extreme measures to hold onto state power. It is not coincidental that the discredited Zuma presidency has ensured that the state security cluster is led by his most trusted allies. Failing a mass revolutionary response supported by strong organization, working class resistance and opposition will be vulnerable to violent repression by the ANC government. Time is not on our side. The need for a genuine mass united front and revolutionary socialist movement or party is even greater now than in 2013 and cannot be postponed.

Despite its shortcomings, Numsa and the Numsa Moment remain the only real short-term prospects in South Africa for the struggle to form a mass socialist alternative in the process of struggle in response to the crisis and the right-wing backlash that it represents, pregnant with dangers to the working class on all fronts. The union needs to recognize that the real mass working class united front is on the horizon to challenge neo-liberalism and our rulers. It needs to connect

with the student movement and local working class struggles to ensure real revolutionary achievement and realise the full potential of the Numsa moment. For this to happen, *its ordinary members* will need to drive tectonic shifts in its politics, organizational culture and orientation – towards the masses, a genuine united front, a mass working class party and socialist revolution.

Jansen is the director and editor of Workers' World Media Productions. He wrote this article in his personal capacity.

Message and publications from: The United Fishermen of Namibia

Dear Comrades,

We have been advised by cd Hewat Beukes that we could send the following documents to you as you are in the same organisation, The Workers International. We hope you will assist in any way in our international campaigns of struggle against the international capitalists and our capitalist government. These documents we have sent to NUMSA with whom we wish to establish brotherly and sisterly links. We also want to establish similar links with your workers.

[The United Fishermen 2](#)

[The United Fishermen 3](#)

[The United Fishermen 5](#)

Mbapewa Kamurongo, Matheus Lungameni

On behalf of the Steering Committee

Issue 5 of Die Werker out now.

Out now! The latest issue of Namibia's Proletarian Newsletter.

In [this edition](#):

1. Fishermen
2. Miners
3. Reparations
4. Jeremy Corbyn
5. Letters
6. land

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Namibia's Ex-combatants

By Hewat Beukes 11 June 2016 at UN PLAZA, Windhoek

Introduction

The struggle for what is today known as Namibia started in 1884 with the advent of German colonialism. At first it started with the southern peoples, the Nama, Baster, Damara, the Herero and the Bushman where the Germans had immediately seized land. The groups initiating the struggle against the German were first the Nama followed by the Herero. The Baster

later followed.

These struggles against the Germans culminated in the extermination wars against first the Nama and Herero in 1904-8 and thereafter the Baster in 1915.

In 1919 the League of Nations ceded the administration of the 'territory' including Ovambo and Kavango lands with the Caprivizipfel' to South Africa. Having been driven out of South Africa by ever expanding colonial annexation and land expropriation, the Khoisan in specific the Rehoboth Basters were the first to resist. Since 1919 they filed petitions to the League of Nations to object against South African colonialism. In 1923 an uprising of the Herero and Baster was looming in Rehoboth, but the town was encircled by South African troops with machine guns and canons. The Baster and Herero were disarmed, the Herero banished from Rehoboth and more than 40 'ringleaders' of the Baster were to die by firing squad. A last minute intervention by the League of Nations staved off the execution. By then the Herero had lost virtually all their land and the Baster 2 thirds of their land.

The resistance continued on the political level with frequent petitions to first the League of Nations and then its successor in 1945, the United Nations Organisation (UNO). Civil resistance was continued by the nationalities led informally by Hosea Kutako of the Herero. He would later commission Baster, Herero, Ovambo emissaries to the UN to argue the case for Namibia and present the demands for in particular the land and self-determination of the nations of Namibia.

In the meanwhile a new evil had arisen under South African colonialism. Contract labour. In 1943 as a measure to institutionalise slave labour from the populous northern areas of Ovambo and Kavango lands, the South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA) was established by the South

African Administration. It brought young men from the north under conditions tying them to specific employers (owners/hirers) in the south in particular the mines, but also to the farms. Farmers and even small businesses of all races and tribes in the south used the facilities of this slave system.

Farms became killing fields for many of these young workers.

Together with skilled and semi-skilled labour from the south they built the Namibian infra-structure and untold profits and wealth for the mining bosses, commercial business and a fledgling industry including fishing.

The toll on them was horrendous. Besides the horror on farms, fathers and youngsters were broken from the families in humiliation and deprivation. It was the most complete system of deprivation and dehumanisation.

By 1960, the following social-economic and political demands and expectations, expressly and implied, led in the national demand for self-determination:

1. An end to contract labour and proper wages and labour conditions;
2. An end to restriction of movement and pass laws;
3. A restoration of landed property of the Herero, Nama, Damara and Bushman;
4. The right to self-determination of all nationalities in the territory now known as Namibia, including the independence of the Caprivi.

In 1959 there was the Old Location Uprising. SWANU leaders such as Kaukwetu played distinctive roles in directing the masses led by Damara and Herero women.

The sixties saw SWAPO initiating a token guerrilla war on the insistence of the AOU. This was not a serious attempt as illustrated by the fact that the Commander-in-Chief Sam Nujoma

and his second-in-command Lukas Pohamba from Lusaka visited the South African Army and Intelligence at the international airport in Windhoek from where they went to Pretoria after which they returned to Zambia.

REPRESENTATION

By 1970 the nation was politically represented by tribal chiefs, SWAPO was an Ovambo tribal organisation, SWANU a nationalist organisation supported by workers and lower middle class elements. Workers were embroiled in labour struggles in particular the contract labourers but by 1978, there was a fully-fledged national workers movement led by the Rössing miners articulating broad workers' demands.

In 1971/2 contract labour staged a national General Strike which ignited the whole of the Southern African sub-region and led to 4000 youth fleeing in its aftermath to Zambia following persecution and torture by northern tribal authorities.

In 1970, in an attempt at a United Front, the National Convention was convened on 13 November 1970 in Rehoboth by the tribal chiefs, the Volksparty, SWAPO and SWANU. In response thereto the UN declared SWAPO the Sole and Authentic Representative of the Namibian Nation.

This was a clear renunciation of the Right to Self-Determination of the Namibian People.

Again, in 1975 after the declaration of the Namibia National Convention as the successor of the National convention the UN reiterated the status of SWAPO.

But, already a crucial incident had occurred earlier in 1974. Chief Clemens Kapuuu commissioned by the NC visited Europe and the United Nations to argue the case for independence for Namibia. While in Europe he sought the assistance of Peter Katjavivi the West European Representative of the SWAPO. While hosting the Chief and his delegation, Katjavivi blocked his

access to African, European and Caribbean Governments by slandering the Chief as a South African agent. The Chief met closed door upon closed door and was informed of SWAPO's Sole and Authentic Representation status.

This broke up the National Convention. The Chief returned and joined the South African initiative to ostensibly lead Namibia to self-determination through what would become the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance in 1976.

This opened the door to forced conscription of Namibians into the Territorial Army.

There would have been no successful forced conscription if it was not for this particular event offset by SWAPO's Sole and Authentic Representative status.

The malice of this act by the UN and the imperialists is seen in the fact that at the time they conferred Sole Representative status on SWAPO, PLAN and SPYL were in political struggle on the following issues:

1. SWAPO was in alliance with UNITA and South Africa against MPLA.
2. The SWAPO leaders were selling provisions (clothes, food, medicines, weapons) donated for the guerrilla war stored in massive warehouses as wholesalers while PLAN fighters were dying in the camps of hunger, went barefeet and many were without weapons.
3. SWAPO had no political programme.
4. SWAPO was not the representative of the Namibian peoples.

The foreign missions and the United Nations in Zambia were aware of the full extent as the SWAPO leadership's inability to be the Government of Namibia.

SWATF, PLAN and the agreements for DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION

It is within the above historical background which the question of the SWATF and PLAN must be viewed.

With the clear denial by the UN and the imperialists of the Namibian peoples' right to choose their own representatives, tribal chiefs saw their only way out of a prospect of dominance by a tribal force itself as accepting the prospect of at least limited self-rule by the colonial power.

A result was forced conscription which saw teenagers and young men forced into the army most against their will, some out of joblessness, and a few out of choice. They were from the working class and poor peasantry.

The war itself was a low intensity war. More SWAPO members were killed by the SWAPO leadership and the SWAPO leadership in collaboration with South African than died in the war. The war reached some degree of seriousness only because of the commitment of fighters who thought they were fighting a just cause. Those who excelled were killed, because the war was not meant to be serious.

(Cassinga in 1978 and 1 April 1990 alone caused an estimated 1500-2000 deaths.) Thousands more were killed and thousands were not accounted for.

Nevertheless, this 'war' is the stuff from which the SWAPO leadership manufacture enduring myths: the war (meaning they as freedomfighters) brought independence. SWAPO was not part of the negotiations, in any event, not a decisive participant: The terms of independence were determined by the 5-Western Powers and negotiated with the Soviet Union, and South Africa. The period 1976-89 had seen a giant working class rise in South Africa in solidarity with the Namibian working class who were fighting pitched battles and brought the South African economy to its knees. By 1989 4 million workers could down tools at any one time.

South Africa could no longer rule under Apartheid and it found

in the SWAPO leadership the tool to continue its rule.

Thus, since 1982 they worked out the conditions under which Namibia would become independent. SWAPO as a condition to be allowed to rule Namibia agreed to every condition guaranteeing the continued rule of the colonial ruling classes.

The issue of the SWATF and its demobilisation and reintegration were merely technical issues.

These modalities were contained in the 1982 and subsequent agreements and in terms of the Labour conventions of Namibia. Severance pay, pension and insurance had to be paid out. Jobs had to be created, preferably by integration into a Namibian Army.

SWAPO reneged on these terms immediately upon taking over government.

The reason why they did so and why they could so were twofold:

1. The need to enrich themselves as quickly as possible, and,
2. The lack of leadership amongst the demobilised soldiers.
3. The lack of good faith from the side of the brokers of the agreements.

A black irony started to emerge. The issue of PLAN and SWATF were treated as a moral dichotomy: the one was a freedom-fighter and the other a murderer.

However, most PLAN fighters and former SPYL members were barred from benefits as slandered as spies.

Today, both groups remain on the edge denied income and work.

The criteria for conciliation, benefits and the coveted War Hero status took contradictory forms: Aupa Indongo a billionaire and known collaborator with South Africa has been anointed as War Hero with street names in Windhoek, police

spies and former collaborators are SWAPO parliamentarians: Elton Hoff, a demobilised SWATF is Supreme Court Judge, etcetera, etcetera.

The problem which the soldiers and the PLAN face is that they have no clear programme to counteract the denial of the SWAPO leadership on the following:

1. No effective counter-propaganda;
2. No effective action plan;
3. No clear set of demands.

Our position is clear as contained in our manifesto. We support the soldiers not only for compensation but as a section of the working class of this country which is being exploited and oppressed.

We will continue to propagate their position as part of our overall programme for the working class to take political power.

[Appeal: Help fund our work in Southern Africa](#)

Dear Comrades,

WE are launching an ambitious [Appeal](#) to members and supporters to raise funds for our work in Southern Africa.

It is there that the global re-awakening of the workers' socialist movement is most concentrated and advanced, and where material resources are most needed if the movement is to make the progress which it can and should make.

The Workers Revolutionary Party in Namibia has won a position where all oppressed and exploited groups in the country turn to it for help in their struggles.

This is possible because of the party's thoroughgoing understanding of the role the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) government plays as a caretaker for imperialism, based on corrupt rule by a narrow tribal leadership imposed in a deal between the Soviet Union and various imperialist powers in the early 1990s. This regime is both a mockery of democracy and a copy-book example of milking public assets in collusion with imperialist financial interests.

The heart of the WRP(N)'s work is among the country's miners. The Party's leadership has worked closely over many years with the TCL miners in their campaign to get back the pensions stolen from them when the company which employed them was liquidated. It has united with the most advanced leaders of the current mine-workers with the aim of making their union (Mineworkers Union of Namibia – MUN) an effective and class-conscious weapon of the country's working class. Meanwhile, the WRP collaborates with other present and former miners and smelter workers campaigning to protect their homes threatened by financial chicanery by former mine-owners in cahoots with the government and in pursuing claims against their employers for work-related illnesses.

The WRP(N) also stands four-square with:

Railway workers trying to track down the theft of state property;

Road workers protesting against bullying, malpractice and neglect of health and safety by their foreign employers contracted to develop the country's road network;

Fishery workers on the Atlantic coast who have been on prolonged strike against diminishing wages, overwork and

dangerous conditions. From being the best-paid workers in the country, they have become among the lowest-paid, while government-sponsored corruption lets foreign businesses ransack the rich fisheries around Walvis Bay;

Home-owners defending their homes against collusion between crooked lawyers and financiers who try to dispossess them;

Young people demanding access to homes;

Small farmers protecting their traditional lands against seizure by business interests;

Ethnic groups who suffered under German colonial rule seeking access to the compensation pocketed by SWAPO ministers;

Bushmen too now have a WRP(N) member among their leaders.

Former soldiers seeking access to their pensions, also stolen by SWAPO ministers;

Former Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) fighters seeking acknowledgment of and compensation for the deaths and other sufferings inflicted on them by the SWAPO leaders during liberation.

The WRP(N) won two parliamentary seats in the 2014 elections, but is denied the official resources which should accompany this electoral success. The party has had to spend a good deal of time fighting off a state-inspired sham "breakaway" which seriously impeded its work.

Nevertheless it held a very successful second congress in 2015 and is now developing a network of branches and conducting a serious programme of theoretical education in Marxism for the new forces coming into the leadership of the Party.

And the WRP is now in touch with the United Front established by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and is preparing to collaborate in its work.

A decisive political break in South Africa

NUMSA launched the United Front initiative in connection with the decisive break with Stalinism in which it is engaged. NUMSA has correctly declared the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to be bourgeois parties and called for a Movement for Socialism to build a Marxist workers' party.

What they have established is a genuine United Front bringing community groups together with trade unions led by the working class. Its purpose is to stand up for real working class communities in the context of extreme inequality, exploitation of workers, unemployment (especially among young people) and mass poverty.

NUMSA's aim in building the United Front (and a Marxist workers' party) is to transform the National Democratic Revolution of 1994 (which left the working class out of the picture and maintained the imperialist exploitation of South Africa intact) into a socialist revolution led by the working class.

The United Front has appealed directly to Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International for political, practical and material assistance in standing United Front candidates in South Africa's local elections on 3 August.

We are sure these developments inspire and encourage our sympathisers and supporters as they do us. We have a target of £5,000 and very little time. Please give generously.

How you can donate

1. Use the button on the top right hand corner of the *workersinternational.info* home page marked 'donate', making clear that your donation is for the Southern Africa Appeal.

2. To transfer from your bank account, send donations to:

Unity trust Bank
Account: *The Correspondence Society*
sort: 60 – 83 – 01
account: 20059400

3. Send cheques made out to Correspondence and marked on the back “Southern Africa Appeal” to : PO Box 68375, London , E7 7DT, UK.

Yours in solidarity,

Bob Archer

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