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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).

What next for Greece (and Europe)?

THE SYRIZA-led Greek government made a bid to reverse the appalling and humiliating conditions laid upon the country by the Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund).

The fiasco that followed deserves careful consideration by all trade unionists, socialists and working people more broadly.

SYRIZA is a coalition built around forces coming from the Euro-Communist sector which several decades ago split from the old KKE (Greek Communist Party). They promised a new kind of “left” politics, breaking the mould of sectarian wrangling over ideological shibboleths. (In the process they junked a number of political principles also, in particular the

understanding of the basic conflict in society between capital and labour).

With the shock of the country's bankruptcy and the fateful "Memoranda" reverberating around Greek society, with masses of people going, in real confusion, into semi-permanent occupation of the city squares, it was the coalition which became SYRIZA which captured the popular mood.

They drew from the intellectual tool-kit of Keynesian theory the idea that the economy could be launched into a new period of growth by the correct policies on the part of governments and the EU.

They presented the matter as an intellectual debate with an "elite" seduced by neo-liberal dogmas which had somehow reached political power pretty well everywhere, whether in the hands of formerly "socialist" or frankly conservative politicians.

Enough popular support mobilised for a "better" capitalist policy, in the SYRIZA view, could reverse the situation and kick-start growth and protect living standards.

There are also attractive sides to what SYRIZA was offering: an attempt to find what united people instead of what divided them, a listening ear to what people were saying rather than the sectarian propagandist broadsides, a very practical approach to dealing with the mass poverty and collapse of welfare structures which followed government acceptance of the Memoranda.

The Solidarity Clinics and cost-price farmers' markets and food and toy banks in working class districts were both very much needed and started to generate a cadre of party activists. The Solidarity For All welfare network at the same time created a framework for an international solidarity movement with the people of Greece.

From a ramshackle coalition of left groups, SYRIZA became an organised political party with a political programme of socially progressive measures and the aim to reverse the Troika-imposed economic destruction of the country (The Thessaloniki Programme).

On this basis the party provoked a general election in February of this year in which they won enough seats, together with a small conservative anti-austerity grouping, ANEL, to form a government. (Certainly not a single one of the groups claiming to be Marxist revolutionaries could have come even close to dislodging the vile bunch of puppets masquerading as a Greek government up to that point).

The problem is, the leaders of the European Union are not simply an accidental grouping with this or that ideological outlook. They are the political representatives of a particular social class – the bourgeoisie. In capitalist society, this is the class which owns (and actually personifies) the big concentrations of capital.

“You might as well have sung the Swedish national anthem”

It is their position as the public spokespersons and administrators of capitalist society which gives these monsters their utter conviction that they are right and that the biggest popular majority vote in the world is wrong. How do these masters of the work know they are right? The money tells them. They put into words and action what finance capital actually means.

In the current issue of the British Labourite magazine New Statesman, the main Greek negotiator trying to persuade in the bourgeoisie to make some concessions, Varoufakis, describes:

“... the complete lack of any democratic scruples, on behalf of the supposed defenders of Europe’s democracy. The quite clear understanding on the other side that we are on the same page analytically – of course it will never come out at present.

[And yet] To have very powerful figures look at you in the eye and say 'You're right in what you're saying, but we're going to crunch you anyway' ... there was point blank refusal to engage in economic arguments. Point blank. ... You put forward an argument that you've really worked on – to make sure it's logically coherent – and you're just faced with blank stares. It is as if you haven't spoken. What you say is independent of what they say. You might as well have sung the Swedish national anthem – you'd have got the same reply. And that's startling, for somebody who's used to academic debate. ... The other side always engages. Well there was no engagement at all. It was not even annoyance, it was as if one had not spoken."

To try to “make the other side engage”, the SYRIZA government sought popular support in a referendum. Already repayment deadlines had been missed without any new agreements being reached, and the supply of liquidity to Greek banks was switched off. The referendum was held under conditions of a fiscal blockade which threatened to gradually strangle the country as effectively as any naval blockade in history. Nevertheless a 61% vote to reject the Troika's exactions represented a high-water-mark in SYRIZA's popular support.

But it only made the EU “institutions” more intransigent. Prime Minister Tsipras himself now went to the EU with a set of proposals which represented abject surrender.

He promised to reform the tax system, accept increases in Value Added Tax (VAT), increase the pension age, increase employee pension contributions, cut back on early retirement and do away with benefits for the very poorest pensioners, sell off remaining state assets, cut state spending and take steps to destroy trade union rights.

But it now was not enough for the European bourgeois leaders. They were furious that the Greeks had had the gall to elect a

government which rejected their measures for Greece; they resented the fact that the SYRIZA government cracked open a chink in the curtain of capitalist “austerity” and gave working people even the hope of something different. This had to be stamped out completely.

They insisted on a much clearer set of commitments on all these issues, spelled out in chapter and verse, and the right to have their creatures sit in on the drafting of the legislation to be rushed through the Greek parliament (using the votes of opposition parties, who of course had always supported these measures).

Why do the bourgeois leaders of the world who pull the strings which move the EU institutions – including Europe’s national governments and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) insist on nothing less than abject surrender?

Why would they risk the possible repercussions, which could include Greece defaulting on her debts and even the break-up of the euro currency bloc? We know this from the fact that the IMF (no doubt egged on by the US government) warns that Greece’s debt burden is devastating and beyond recovery.

It is their own crisis of the capitalist system which urges them on regardless of the consequences. The upheavals in the world of finance which surfaced after 2007 were a huge systemic shock, but they were a real expression of the underlying crisis of imperialism.

By some estimates, the total amounts lost in, around and following the crash were truly massive.

On October 1 2012, the Wall Street Journal summarised the assessment of the former chief credit officer of Standard and Poor’s rating agency Mark Adelson:

“An attempt at sizing up the economic impact produced varied and sobering results, with losses attributed to decline in

world gross domestic product and household wealth, and other measures focused on the financial sector including bank write-downs and the increase in government support.

“The \$10 trillion to \$12 trillion drop in value of world stock markets and the \$5.7 trillion to \$12.8 trillion plunge in US output in the decade to 2018 give the best overall look at the costs, however, he said. “These numbers suggest total costs likely to run \$5 trillion to \$15 trillion ...” (<http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2012/10/01/total-global-losses-from-financial-crisis-15-trillion/>)

The only solution which the capitalist masters of the world can find is to turn on the masses of working people and strip them of all the progress they have gained in the past.

By the way, the “bailout money” from the institutions mainly does not end up in Greece. As economics correspondent Philip Inman wrote in the UK Guardian newspaper on 29 June 2015:

“Only a small fraction of the 240 billion euros (£170 billion) total bailout money Greece received in 2010 and 2013 found its way into the government’s coffers to soften the blow of the 2008 financial crash and fund reform programmes. Most of the money went to the banks that lent Greece funds before the crash. Unlike most of Europe, which ran up large budget deficits to protect pensioners and welfare recipients, Athens was then forced to dramatically reduce its deficit by squeezing pensions and cutting the minimum wage”.

Capitalist society works through the creation of surplus value by labour and the “valorisation” of that surplus value, its conversion into new capital re-invested into new ventures for yet more profits.

This social formation – capital – which historically played a progressive role in the development of the productive forces,

has now for a century been at the heart of the economic crisis as a barrier to their further development. That crisis rumbles on; it has not been overcome. In the attempt to solve it, the bourgeoisie must try to increase the portion of surplus value which it pockets at the expense of the portion which is claimed by the working class and working people more broadly.

Working class struggle has wrested significant concessions from the ruling class in terms of wages, welfare and pension rights, and normal expectations that the state will provide health, education and legal rights and facilities and the chance of a decent home in a reasonably healthy environment.

All these things were enshrined in political and legal arrangements through which workers and others could assert their needs.

So in order to be able to strip working people of the share of surplus value which they have been able to take previously, either in the individual wage packet or as a "social wage", the bourgeoisie has to attack, undermine and de-nature all these arrangements, which include socialist (or Labour) political parties and, where they can, trade unions.

And this has been the basis for the degeneration of reformist socialist parties across Europe. Greece's PASOK, the German SPD, the Parti socialiste in France, Labour in the UK and all their like have been politically hollowed out and de-fanged over decades.

But the decline of reformist parties has not been matched by a collapse in the illusions and expectations of masses of people in Europe.

Despite nearly forty years of continuous attack, despite the massive and savage increase in productivity and the closure of many industries relocated overseas, in many respects the assault of capital is only beginning.

One has to envision the depth of what the new Conservative government is planning in the UK to have any grasp of the scale of social conflict the bourgeoisie is proposing across Europe: savagely stripping away the vestiges of a welfare system; systematically re-engineering the health and education services to turn them into objects of profit for business; massively depriving people of access to a decent home; ongoing destruction of the whole legal system which provided some sort of safeguard for the poor and the weak; an onslaught on human rights legislation.

“Austerity” is a word often bandied about, but it hardly covers what is actually proposed. The way working class life and communities have been under-mined and the decay and collapse of social-democratic and “Communist” political parties has led to a tendency to accept that “there is no alternative” and often a backward scapegoating of claimants, the unemployed and migrants.

Individualism has made progress among working people who a generation ago would have stood (and did stand) firm in defence of class rights. Old working class areas of the UK have shown an appetite for voting along nationalist lines. Social fragmentation weakens the possibility of resistance and undermines traditionally powerful methods of struggle.

In the economic and social witches’ brew that is Europe, the initial steps in the political recovery of the masses has been marked by these factors.

Loudly denouncing the sell-out on the part of social democracy, the leaders of the new formations such as SYRIZA, the section of the French Communist Party which re-engineered itself as the Parti de Gauche, PODEMOS, Die Linke and the rest demand very little that is not – traditional social democracy, pure and simple!

As (generally) followers of the late John Maynard Keynes, they

do not call for a socialist revolution, but capitalism with its contradictions contained, smoothed over, managed and regulated by state intervention.

Their critique is not of capitalism as such – they are indeed not at all interested in abolishing it – but of “neo-liberal ideologues” who have allegedly inspired all the problems we face for some subjective reason.

Nevertheless, precisely because of this actually very moderate outlook, these parties are the vehicles through which the working people of Europe have started their political revival.

People are obliged to enter the path of struggle, but their first steps are hampered by profound illusions on the one hand and a profound disillusionment caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and of hopes of a socialist future on the other.

They will have to overcome both handicaps, but that will only be achieved along the road of resistance they are increasingly adopting.

The challenge for Marxists is to identify and put forward proposals for action which lead the way to a confrontation with the system as a whole.

The future revolutionary leadership of the masses will be built in the unity and mutual struggle of the Marxists and the forces who come forward to conduct the present fight which is focussed most sharply on Greece.

This leadership will have to free itself from illusions that working people “share” any “values” with a bourgeoisie whose true values are exposed every minute in their relentless drive to impoverish, disarm and disempower us.

Bob Archer – July 2015

Stalinist witch-hunt paves the way for violent repression

Commemorating the 20th anniversary of the death of Joe Slovo, South African Communist Party General Secretary Blade Nzimande evoked Slovo's memory ("... a living embodiment of our Alliance!") on January 6th this year as a stick to beat political opponents in the working class movement, whom he accused of wanting "to become media heroes through unprincipled attacks on the ANC".

"The good example set by Slovo epitomises the importance of unity in the struggle for liberation, the unity of our Alliance; the unity of our broad movement; the unity of the working class; the broad unity of our people!"

(To what extent this Alliance is really "united" is described in detail in other articles in this dossier.)

Nzimande quoted from Slovo's "seminal work" *The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution*:

"The classes and strata which come together in a front of struggle usually have different long-term interests and, often, even contradictory expectations from the immediate phase. The search for agreement usually leads to a minimum platform which excludes some of the positions of the participating classes or strata."

(We also look in detail in another article at the way the leaders of the "Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917" saw the active and leading role of the working class in revolutions in which other oppressed labouring classes were

involved, and indeed how their views on this really developed alongside their growing understanding of what was then the early decades of imperialism.)

Nzimande carefully skirted around the fact that the “classes and strata” with whom the SACP/ANC leaders made a common front at the beginning of the 1990s included the big international mining corporations and people like the billionaire participants in the Bilderberg conference. He glibly asserted: “As Slovo states ... the working class did not simply melt into the Alliance once it was created. The working class did NOT ‘abandon its independent class objectives or independent class organisation’.”

And it is true that the working class has not “abandoned its independent class objectives”, but it has had to turn to its militant trade unions to fight for them, since the SACP is not an “independent class organisation”. The SACP certainly does not fight for real “independent class objectives”, as the reply of COSATU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi to SACP Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Cronin (also discussed in another article), for all its very diplomatic language, makes abundantly clear.

Nzimande continued: “Worker participation in the ANC is one of the important ways in which our working class plays its role in the democratic revolution. But above all, the tripartite alliance, moulded in the revolutionary underground, between the ANC, the South African Congress of Trade unions (SACTU [now Cosatu]), and our SACP, represents a framework which expresses the political interests of our working class in the broad front of struggle”.

His problem is that 20 years on from the end of the apartheid regime, and following the police killing of 34 platinum miners at Marikana, this assertion has become threadbare. No wonder many of the more thoughtful workers, even if they still think the “National Democratic Revolution” was a valid way forward,

have now reached the conclusion that to say the least “the Alliance has been captured and taken over by right-wing forces”.

So where does this leave Nzimande and the SACP leadership? They can only respond as every Stalinist leadership has responded, with slander and libels, preparing the way for attempts at physical repression.

Nziomande’s speech repeats Slovo’s slander of “workerism” against the many workers, who actually built the mass trade union movement in the decades leading up to 1990, and who believed that “inter-class alliances lead to an abandonment of socialist perspectives and to a surrender of working-class leadership”.

But “the abandonment of socialist perspectives and ... a surrender of working class leadership” by the SACP leadership is precisely what Zwelinzima Vavi describes at length in his letter (discussed elsewhere in this magazine).

And since the SACP is clearly (in deeds if not in words) completely untroubled by any “socialist perspectives” of any sort, but in practice supports an ANC government which pursues capitalist policies in alliance with major imperialist interests, the struggle between them and the workers in NUMSA is the form the class struggle in South Africa takes.

Talking to Young Communist League members on 12 December, Nzimande made an amalgam of NUMSA with a “wave of demagoguery”, an “anti-majoritarian, often racist, liberal offensive whose object is regime change to dislodge the liberation movement from power”.

He linked the NUMSA leadership with the “neo-fascist, demagogic and populist” Economic Freedom Fighters, “a party which only brought hooliganism to Parliament”, and the “deeply divided” *Democratic Alliance (DA)* with a “white brat-pack”, and “our own factory faults”, i.e former members who have

abandoned the SACP. At other times the leaders of NUMSA have been accused of wanting “regime change”.

The amalgam is one of the fundamental methods of Stalinist terror. Political opponents (and sometimes loyal servants who happen to be expendable) have ever since the 1930s been systematically slandered by association before being subjected to show-trials, attacked, detained or murdered.

A recent article in the *Mail and Guardian* newspaper made disturbing reading (*Mystery document alleges Numsa is bent on regime change*, by Sarah Evans, 1 December 2014).

“As the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) prepares to launch its United Front,” the article starts, “a document accusing the union and individuals associated with it of plotting against the South African government to secure regime change has surfaced.

“The document, titled *Exposed: Secret regime change plot to destabilise South Africa*, has apparently been circulating since November 20. It is supposedly written by ‘concerned members within NUMSA’ who disagree with the broader union leadership’s plans to form a United Front.

“The alleged plot” (alleged by shadowy government supporters claiming to be members of NUMSA) “is led and facilitated by key leaders within various political organisations, institutes of higher learning, international companies and civic groups, both locally and abroad.

“Some of the people named in the document as ‘plotters’ include former intelligence minister Ronnie Kasrils, Professor Chris Malekane, Professor Peter Jordi and Moeletsi Mbeki, brother of former president Thabo Mbeki. Various international “plotters” are also named, from countries including Germany, Venezuela and the Philippines.

“At least two individuals named in the document, Professor

Patrick Bond of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Azwell Banda, a former Zambian trade unionist, have been the victims of crime recently, in what appears to be attempts to intimidate them.

“Banda’s car was broken into last week and Bond’s office was ransacked and his hard drive was stolen last Sunday. It appears as if a second break-in was attempted, but this time only the lock to his office was damaged.”

Fears on the part of NUMSA supporters are not fantasies or idle threats. Nzimande told the rally at Slovo’s graveside:

“The strategy to divide Cosatu, including attempts to separate it from the Alliance” (it is the SACP which sent its supporters into Cosatu to expel NUMSA, as Vavi complains!) “represents a classic imperialist strategy to defeat revolutionary movements ... The initiative led by the Numsa leadership fits perfectly into the same imperialist strategy to try and dislodge the ANC-led Alliance from power. It is therefore important that we understand the idea of a ‘united front’ and ‘workers’ party’ from this political angle.”

It will soon become urgent to build international capacity to defend NUMSA, its leaders and members and the United Front it is establishing from a state-inspired Stalinist witch hunt. Fortunately the United Front provides an excellent framework for explaining and mobilising such support and discussing the way forward. Real unity between those who struggle in a principled way for the interests of the oppressed (and not unity with the imperialist exploiters) can and must contain and accommodate real diversity as activists and organisations establish a clear understanding of their past, present and future while struggling together for that future.

Millions of trade unionists and socialists in the UK, the United States and elsewhere supported the resistance to the apartheid regime and support the aim of a socialist South

Africa. It will become essential once more to inspire a great and powerful international movement in working class organisations around the world in defence of the South African working class. We in the UK have a central responsibility in this as subjects of the former colonial power.

At the same time it is essential to mobilise all possible support for the work that NUMSA is promoting, and the United Front that is developing in South Africa itself.

Beyond that it is vital to extend this work beyond the borders of South Africa, initially into neighbouring countries in Southern Africa and subsequently across the whole continent.

Bob Archer, January 2015

Two opposed conceptions of the socialist revolution: A response to Irvin Jim

A fresh wind really has started to blow from South Africa, where the leadership of the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) has responded positively to the growing resistance of the masses against the African National Congress (ANC) regime and the situation following the massacre of platinum miners at Marikana in 2012.

NUMSA proposes to:

(1) Break the trade unions away from the ruling alliance with the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) because that alliance has been “captured by hostile forces”

(2) Commission an international study of the history of

previous attempts to establish working class political parties in different parts of the world in order to prepare to form one which can defend the interests of working people today

(3) Establish a united front of struggle with all who are suffering and resisting under the present pro-imperialist government.

In a few short months since taking these decisions, NUMSA has successfully organised political schools for its militant activists and also held an international seminar attended by a range of left-wing political and trade union activists from different parts of the world. More recently they have managed to achieve united-front actions to defend manufacturing jobs and employment in the country and made great progress towards organising an actual united front as an instrument to take forward the struggle of the broad masses of South Africans.

The NUMSA website and other sources now provide a rich stream of material in the discussion arising from this turn.

The union is at the heart of an increasingly fierce political and organisational struggle as the panicking supporters of the ANC-SACP alliance use a familiar range of strategies to silence and isolate this threat to their class-collaboration with the imperialist interests which are bleeding South Africa and her human and material resources.

Late last year they bureaucratically forced through a decision to expel NUMSA from the Confederation of South African Trades Unions (COSATU) – a body which NUMSA activists helped to establish in previous decades in the teeth of apartheid oppression! Workers' International stands foursquare with NUMSA and her allies against this undemocratic move to silence her.

A campaign of slander and intimidation against NUMSA and her supporters is now developing (cf. "Reinstate NUMSA in its rightful place in the leadership of COSATU" in *Workers*

International Press no. 9.)

This present article seeks to contribute to the discussion NUMSA has forced open, with particular reference to two speeches by union general secretary Irvin Jim: his introduction to the NUMSA political school last January and the lecture he gave at Witwatersrand University in commemoration of the SACP activist Ruth First, murdered in 1982 by terrorists in the pay of the apartheid state.

(The text of Comrade Jim's address to the NUMSA Political School on 26 January 2014 is available at <https://www.facebook.com/polotiking/posts/691125047574724> . His Ruth First Memorial Lecture of 15 August 2014 can be read at <http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=9329>).

A major strength of Comrade Jim's speeches is his excoriating critique of how the ANC/SACP regime has failed to deliver on the promises it made to the masses when it took office in the early 1990s ("the 1994 democratic breakthrough" according to ANC legend). It bears constant repeating: The ANC/SACP made certain very specific promises when it persuaded workers in NUMSA to shelve socialist aspects of their programme, including nationalisation of industry under workers' control; **it has not delivered**. Read these explosive speeches and form your own conclusions.

A necessary discussion

South African workers and their own leaders in the organisations they control, such as NUMSA, have been trying to force the leaders of the SACP and the ANC to make good on the promises they made in the early 1990s, when government rule in South Africa was peacefully handed over from the apartheid Nationalist regime to the Alliance. The hope was dangled that the constitutional handover would start a National Democratic Revolution (NDR) which would gradually pave the way for a more radical socialist transformation of society. It seems

inevitable that the present positive and necessary flowering of political discussion in South Africa should take the form of trying to hold the political leadership of the movement around the SACP to make good what it promised then.

The conception of the NDR was rooted in the Freedom Charter adopted by the SACP and the ANC in the 1950s. But long before that they were the conceptions of the "official" Communist movement which dominated working class politics around the world for a very long time.

There are great and profound issues to air and clarify. What is special about the "NUMSA moment" is the union's determination to mobilise on a mass basis to engage in this process at the highest political level possible.

At stake are two conflicting views of the way forward for the working class and broader masses in colonies and former colonies like South Africa. (But a further note is necessary here. The Stalinist view already separated such countries off from the rest of the world in a "Third World". The opposing, Marxist, view is an internationalist one which sees capitalism in its imperialist phase as an international phenomenon and the working class as an international class, while understanding that each country embodies a unique combination of the system's essential features.)

One strategy, the "two-stage" theory, explained that the first stage was for the country to achieve its independence. In the case of South Africa, which was independent but ruled by a White minority apartheid dictatorship, the first stage was to achieve majority rule and remove the various forms of discrimination under which the Black majority suffered. Action on a "second stage" of carrying out a socialist transformation of society was to wait until the newly-liberated nation could build up the economic and social resources needed for that task. The Freedom Charter adopted in the mid-1950s lays out this view.

The theory of permanent revolution, on the other hand, explains that the two stages are in Lenin's word "entangled", that although they are different, they are carried out in an uninterrupted process.

Unless working people organise and play the decisive role in dismantling imperialist rule in its various guises, the job will be botched and incomplete and dangerous remnants of the old oppression will remain.

Meanwhile, the conditions of world imperialism mean that most countries cannot hope to replicate the way capitalism in Western Europe (and then exported to North America) evolved through a series of stages over many centuries. A gradual development from feudalism to small-scale capitalism via manufacture and trade towards the factory system and finally a fully-fledged "modern" finance capitalism is not an option today. And the exceptions here prove the rule: Countries which have apparently achieved this have done so in a leap, either because like South Korea they had an important role in the West's Cold War strategic arrangements, or because, as in Japan and now China, their rulers have developed methods of super-exploiting labour to an extreme degree.

Hopes of a new arrival achieving balanced national development of society and economy today under capitalism are an illusion. The real way forward involves nationalising industry and finance under workers control and socialist methods of planning, and the scope of the plan must be international. The continent of Africa is one sustained essay on this topic from the negative side.

Nevertheless, at the decisive moment, when the apartheid regime faced collapse and a new page was turned, it was the ANC and the SACP whose policies, based on the Stalinist conceptions underlying the Freedom Charter, prevailed and won the support of the trade unions.

Comrade Jim insists that the Freedom Charter written in the 1950s is and remains a valid "mass line" for South Africa. He attempts to justify this by copious reference to Lenin's 1905 pamphlet *Two Tactics of the Social Democracy in the Bourgeois Revolution*.

Lenin and Leninism really can guide our revolutionary socialist movement today. But in reading Lenin's writings we should take his life and work as a whole which combined very solid continuities with momentous changes and development, and we need to read his various works and understand the tactics he proposed within their historical context.

Lenin the social-democratic leader

Comrade Jim seems perplexed that some critics of the ANC have described the Freedom Charter and the whole conception of a minimum and a maximum programme as "social democratic". In his Ruth First lecture he insists:

"Ruth First was killed for the Freedom Charter! Yet today, we are told that the Freedom Charter was influenced by the social-democratic fashion of the 1950s. Others even say the Freedom Charter is now irrelevant. Did Ruth First, and many others, die for fashion ...?"

Of course not! Ruth First, like many countless others, died at the hands of the bourgeoisie as a fighter in the class struggle. But the fact that she was deliberately murdered by the other side does not of itself mean that the political line and tactics she chose were correct.

The conceptions of "minimum and maximum" programme underlying the Freedom Charter absolutely are drawn from the – long outdated – arsenal of social democracy.

This must be known to Comrade Jim. Addressing the NUMSA Political School in January this year, he quoted effectively from a well-known author on the subject who was, at the time

he wrote the pamphlet quoted, a leading member of the Second International and of the Russian **Social Democratic** Labour Party, an author who at the time had a lot to say about the question of maximum and minimum programmes. Jim said, for example:

“Lenin makes this absolutely clear in his *Two Tactics*, when he says: ‘A Social-Democrat must never for a moment forget that the proletariat will inevitably have to wage the class struggle for Socialism even against the most democratic and republican bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. This is beyond doubt. Hence the absolute necessity of a separate, independent, strictly class party of Social-Democracy. Hence the temporary nature of our tactics of ‘striking jointly’ with the bourgeoisie and the duty of keeping a strict watch ‘over our ally, as over an enemy’...” etc.

When he wrote this, in 1905, Lenin (like all the serious Marxists of the day) was a declared social democrat. Lenin wrote the pamphlet *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* during the Russian Revolution of 1905. The pamphlet explains the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party’s programme and tactics intended to take that revolution forward and showed how they could guide the working class in Russia. He emphasised (in 1905!) how profoundly he identified at that time with “International Social Democracy”:

“When and where did I ever claim to have created any sort of special trend in International Social-Democracy *not identical* with the trend of Bebel and Kautsky? When and where have there been brought to light differences between me, on the one hand, and Bebel and Kautsky, on the other—differences even slightly approximating in seriousness the differences between Bebel and Kautsky, for instance, on the agrarian question in Breslau?”

It must be said that what Lenin proposed in 1905 utterly puts to shame the ANC-SACP alliance in terms of its sweep and ambition.

Lenin against the theory of stages!

In 1905, Russia was a sprawling empire in which the majority of the population were small farmers working the land under very backward conditions. Barely forty years previously they had still been serfs, the property of their feudal landlords. In 1905 they were still paying redemption payments (in other words buying their freedom by instalments) as well as rent for the land. The political system was autocracy: The Romanov Tsars ran the whole empire through a bureaucratic and military machine ideologically backed by the Orthodox Christian clergy.

What stands out in Lenin's handling of the question of programme and tactics even in 1905 is his refusal to rigidly separate the maximum and the minimum programme. This is one expression of the difference between him and other prominent leaders of the Socialist International who were later themselves openly "captured by hostile forces". He was, it is true, absolutely convinced that the 1905 Russian Revolution had the historical job to abolish tsarist autocracy based on serfdom and replace it with a bourgeois society. He says in *Two Tactics*:

"It means that the democratic reforms in the political system and the social and economic reforms, which have become a necessity for Russia, do not in themselves imply the undermining of capitalism, the undermining of bourgeois rule; on the contrary, they will, for the first time, really clear the ground for a wide and rapid, European, and not Asiatic, development of capitalism; they will, for the first time, make it possible for the bourgeoisie to rule as a class."

Against those who want to wait with folded arms while this happens, he quickly adds:

"But it does not at all follow from this that a *democratic* revolution (bourgeois in its social and economic substance) is not of *enormous* interest for the proletariat. It does not at

all follow from this that the democratic revolution cannot take place in a form advantageous mainly to the big capitalist, the financial magnate and the 'enlightened' landlord, as well as in a form advantageous to the peasant and to the worker."

After all, he says, in tsarist Russia:

"The working class suffers not so much from capitalism as from the insufficient development of capitalism."

But it was never his view that the working class should just stand idly by and wait for the bourgeoisie to carry out its mission: It is to the advantage of the bourgeoisie, he says, if the movement:

"... does not too resolutely sweep away all the remnants of the past, but leaves some of them, i.e., if this revolution is not fully consistent, if it is not complete and if it is not determined and relentless."

"On the other hand," Lenin went on, "it is more advantageous for the working class if the necessary changes in the direction of bourgeois democracy take place by way of revolution and not by way of reform; for the way of reform is the way of delay, of procrastination, of the painfully slow decomposition of the putrid parts of the national organism. It is the proletariat and the peasantry that suffer first of all and most of all from their putrefaction. The revolutionary way is the way of quick amputation, which is the least painful to the proletariat, the way of the direct removal of the decomposing parts, the way of fewest concessions to and least consideration for the monarchy and the disgusting, vile, rotten and contaminating institutions which go with it."

But the whole point of the handover which ended apartheid and brought majority rule in South Africa is that it deliberately avoided a revolution! That is why the Black population still suffers from all the aspects of "putrefaction" which Comrade

Jim describes in detail in various speeches.

Later Lenin adds:

“We cannot jump out of the bourgeois-democratic boundaries of the Russian revolution, but we can vastly extend these boundaries, and within these boundaries we can and must fight for the interests of the proletariat, for its immediate needs and for the conditions that will make it possible to prepare its forces for the future complete victory.”

He therefore recommended that workers and socialists should take their struggle into provisional governments in order to carry out the bourgeois revolution in the most thorough way possible.

Even in 1905, when he was still a Social Democrat, even when he firmly denounced any idea of the immediate possibility of a socialist revolution in Russia, Lenin castigated his Menshevik opponents who crudely divided the revolution up into “stages”. Denouncing their “theory of stages”, he explained:

“they have forgotten that the revolutionary pressure of the people will meet with the counter-revolutionary pressure of tsarism and that, therefore, either the ‘decision’ will remain unfulfilled or the issue will be decided after all by the victory or the defeat of the popular insurrection.”

By 1917, Lenin’s views had undergone a significant shift. However, today’s activists can still draw strength from what he wrote in 1905 because it is permeated by the spirit of active and practical struggle. He wrote: “The outcome of the revolution depends on whether the working class will play the part of a subsidiary to the bourgeoisie, a subsidiary that is powerful in the force of its onslaught against the autocracy but impotent politically, or whether it will play the part of leader of the people’s revolution.”

And part the answer to this “whether” depends on the

leadership which the workers' party provides. The pamphlet *Two Tactics* is literally about two different approaches. Lenin contrasts them:

“One resolution expresses the psychology of active struggle, the other that of the passive onlooker; one resounds with the call for live action, the other is steeped in lifeless pedantry. Both resolutions state that the present revolution is only our first step, which will be followed by a second; but from this, one resolution draws the conclusion that we must take this first step all the sooner, get it over all the sooner, win a republic, mercilessly crush the counter-revolution, and prepare the ground for the second step. The other resolution, however, oozes, so to speak, with verbose descriptions of the first step and (excuse the crude expression) simply masticates it.”

The resolution “steeped in lifeless pedantry” was the one adopted by Lenin’s opponents in the RSDLP who formed the Menshevik faction. In 1905, Lenin stretched the politics of social democracy, of the Second International, as far as they would go to make them serve the interests of the working class.

In South Africa, it turns out that it was the leaders of the ANC and the SACP who were actually “steeped in lifeless pedantry”. Rather than trying to “mercilessly crush the counter-revolution”, they made an accommodation with the sources of counter-revolution’s paymasters in the big mining monopolies and banks. Instead of fighting to “mercilessly crush” the practitioners of apartheid, the SACP and ANC leaders organised “truth and reconciliation” processes to protect them.

That is why South African society continues to be scarred by inequalities in every shape and form as well as social deprivation and violence, particularly against women.

It turns out that the SACP leaders who loved to quote certain texts by Lenin were closer to Lenin's reformist, Menshevik opponents than they cared to admit.

The Fate of Social Democracy

The first Russian revolution of 1905 happened on the cusp of momentous changes in world capitalism, developments which faced the Socialist International with challenges it could not deal with. So when World War I broke out 100 years ago in 1914, it was revealed that the majority of Europe's socialist leaders had been "captured and taken over by right-wing forces". They supported the interests of their "own" imperialist bourgeoisie (and dynastic regimes) against workers ruled by other imperialists, and urged them on into the carnage. This set the seal on the political collapse of social democracy. Whatever long after-life it has had in western and northern Europe, it has never reverted to its potentially revolutionary days in the last decades of the 19th century.

One of Lenin's responses to the outbreak of the world war was to devote considerable time to producing a handbook on the new stage reached in the development of capitalism.

His pamphlet *Imperialism* noted the end of the:

"... old free competition between manufacturers ... Capitalism in its imperialist stage leads right up to the most comprehensive socialisation of production; it, so to speak, drags the capitalists, against their will and consciousness, into some sort of a new social order", where "production becomes social, but appropriation remains private".

It was because the epoch thus ushered in is an "epoch of wars, civil wars and revolutions" that the Socialist International entered a crisis and the majority of its parties, having sunk to the level of "passive onlookers" and increasingly "steeped in lifeless pedantry", turned out to have been "captured and

taken over by right-wing forces” when World War I broke out, followed later by the revolutionary wave that started in Russia.

The policy of waiting for the development of capitalism to build up the numerical strength of the working class, while the socialist movement attended to its level of organisation and political maturity, hoping that the crisis of the system would ultimately make revolution inevitable, collapsed as a political project.

This was because the arrival of the imperialist stage of capitalism signalled the need to actually carry out the socialist revolution despite the unevenness of development between different countries.

A leader of the Socialist International such as Karl Kautsky, a man who had previously been Lenin’s mentor and ally and had fought shoulder to shoulder with him, changed his approach to imperialism. He came to view this imperialist phase as a passing policy of the capitalists, a set of measures which could be reversed by political pressure and agitation, without a revolution. Lenin decisively broke with such leaders, asserting that imperialism is a definite stage of capitalism, and moreover, the stage which makes necessary the socialist revolution. (From this point of view, Lenin’s work on imperialism also forms a basis for understanding specific features of economy, society and politics in South Africa.)

And Lenin was right! World War I led to the collapse of tsarist autocracy and the 1917 Russian Revolution.

April Theses

Lenin’s guidance for the Revolution of 1917 is summarised in the *April Theses*, written on his journey back to Russia from exile. Lenin then believed:

“(2) The specific feature of the present situation in Russia

is that the country is *passing* from the first stage of the revolution – which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie – to its *second* stage, which **must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants.**” (My emphasis – B.A.)

He therefore insisted:

“(3) No support for the Provisional Government” which he describes as a “government of capitalists”, and “(5) **Not a parliamentary republic ... but a republic of Soviets of Workers’, Agricultural Labourers’ and Peasants Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom ...** Abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy ... Confiscation of all landed estates ... Nationalisation of all lands in the country ... The immediate amalgamation of all banks in the country into a single national bank, and the institution of control over it by the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies.”

He knew: “It is not our *immediate* task to ‘introduce’ socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of product at once under the *control* of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies”.

This is both a continuation of his approach in 1905 and a huge significant change. And the October 1917 Russian Revolution started to achieve the goals he set.

Back in 1905, in *Two Tactics*, Lenin had talked about a time in the distant past when:

“... the slogans advocating mass agitation *instead* of direct armed action, preparation of the social-psychological conditions for insurrection *instead of* flash-in-the-pan methods, were the only correct slogans for the revolutionary Social-Democratic movement.” But even then, in 1905, he already warned that:

“At the present time the slogans have been superseded by events, the movement has left them behind, they have become tatters, rags fit only to clothe the hypocrisy” of liberal politicians and reformist socialists.

The “socialist” enemies of the Russian Revolution

Now the whole policy and programme of the Socialist International had been “superseded by events”. Leaders of the Socialist International supported the “war effort” of their “own” bourgeoisies and tried to impose a class truce on the working class, a cessation of hostilities against their own employers. The end of the war brought revolution in Russia, the collapses of the German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires and revolutionary movements of international scope. In Russia, the revolution established a government of Workers’ and Peasants’ Soviets. In these events, the leaders of the old Socialist International opposed the Soviets and organised troops to suppress revolutionary movements throughout Europe. When momentous political changes are actually happening in a seismic shift, clinging to a separation of “minimum” and “maximum” programme partly reveals, partly fulfils a process in which a whole movement has rotted from within.

The Communist International

Up until 1914, Lenin had tried to make the revolutionary action which the new situation at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries required fit into the social-democratic division into “minimum programme” and “maximum programme”. He had “stress-tested” the politics of the Socialist International to its limits. That whole organisation and its programmes had become tatters and rags fit only to clothe its hypocrisy.

Lenin, the Bolsheviks and their allies rescued Marxism from the wreckage of the Socialist International and took it forward in the formation of Communist Parties and the Communist International. How these organisations faced up to

the task of world revolution is recorded in the minutes and other documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International, which are now widely available for study and should be carefully studied as part of the movement which NUMSA is setting afoot.

Among the many problems the Communist International carefully addressed was the task of winning over workers and working-class organisations which were still dominated by social-democratic policies and leaders. Two vital tools in this work were the policy of the **united front** and the development of **transitional demands** as a bridge across which working people could cross over from reformism to revolutionary politics.

Stalinism and social democracy

Lenin died in January 1924. Under a show of continuing his work, his successors in the leadership of the Soviet Union and the Communist International abandoned the struggle for world revolution. They established a bureaucratic regime in the Soviet Union and claimed that it would be possible to achieve socialism in that country alone. This happened under specific conditions under which hopes of a rapid spread of revolutionary overthrows were disappointed. It is not simply a matter, as Joe Slovo explained in his *Has Socialism failed*, written in 1989, (and Zwelinzima Vavi repeats today) that Communists in government got accustomed to the harsh practices of civil war and the habit of issuing orders. Trotsky and his followers in the Left Opposition and later the Fourth International analysed and explained the many factors involved in the degeneration of the Soviet Union and above all the reactionary nature of the political line that came to dominate in the Comintern. The crux of the political degeneration was the policy of building socialism in a single country.

From being the world party of socialist revolution, the Communist International started to abuse the huge respect and enthusiasm the Russian Revolution had evoked in working people

to control and dominate the Communist movement. It inculcated into its members unswerving loyalty to the Soviet leaders and the view that the way forward lay in an accommodation with capitalism under the slogan of peaceful co-existence (although there were occasional but devastatingly destructive ultra-left lurches).

Vavi lifts a corner of the blanket of confusion which Stalinist history-writing has spread over the Spanish revolution (See *Vavi wades into the discussion*, p.11). But did you know that in the mid-1940s Stalin tried to hold back the revolution in Yugoslavia, accepted the suppression (in which the British army played a big role) of the Greek revolution, told his supporters in Vietnam to crush a revolt against the restoration of French rule once the Japanese occupiers had been defeated and actually put pressure on the Chinese Communists to collaborate with the bourgeois Guomindang?

A good example of Stalin's policy in relation to colonies and semi-colonies of imperialism was his support for Ghandi in India. An entire library of books would be needed to trace how Stalinist influence in the huge wave of revolts against imperialism has systematically ended with local bourgeois puppets of imperialism running corrupt and dictatorial regimes.

Stalin and his supporters could only justify what they did by actually returning to the "tatters and rags" of social democracy. The policy of building socialism in a single country is itself a social-democratic one. So is the idea that, despite Lenin's insistence that imperialism is a new and final stage of capitalism, there is still such a thing as a benign, non-imperialist capitalism within which working people can reach an accommodation.

Today's activists should study for themselves the history of the movement in China in the 1920s and Spain in the 1930s in order to understand what it meant for the masses in these

countries and the parties of the Communist International to be guided by these “tatters and rags”.

Then for Britain, for example, Stalin is supposed to have personally crafted the “British Road to Socialism” after World War II, supporting gradual progress through parliamentary reform and fostering illusions that working people could see their needs met under a parliamentary bourgeois state with a mixed economy (part state-owned, part private).

How cruelly history mocks these “tatters and rags”! The Soviet Union has collapsed and many of its leading lights rushed to join the thieving mafia which has taken over. All over the world, including the “industrialised” West, workers bear the brunt of the capitalist onslaught that seeks to dismantle all the gains they made after 1945.

This after-life of social democracy was far from being just a political fashion. It was a deliberate policy to disarm the working class and dupe it into accepting a future under capitalism, a “Faustian pact” as it has aptly been described.

The theory of a “democratic” revolution as an initial stage in the socialist revolution is also just such “a tatter and rag” and it too has been tested to destruction in South Africa since the accommodation of 1990-1994. The process is ripping apart the very force which fought might and main to impose it, the South African Communist Party in alliance with the ANC.

The Left Opposition and then the Fourth International stood against the degeneration in the Soviet Union and in the politics of the CPSU and the Comintern. These comrades fought to rescue and develop the work of the Russian Bolsheviks and the Communist International in its early period. Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International continues that tradition in the struggles of today. That is why we have a distinctive and positive contribution to make in the great project NUMSA has called into being.

Bob Archer

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**Out Now! July 2014, issue
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Inside this issue:

Documents of the struggle in Namibia. pp.1 – 5

Hewat Beukes interviews Tangeni Nuukuawo a leader of the 1971-72 general strike in Namibia: (Extract from the pamphlet *Movement for Socialism*)

Cracks in the facade of world capitalism: Two articles by *Balazs Nagy*

Strengthen and broaden the movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Letter to a trade-unionist by *Radoslav Pavlovic*

Medieval barbarities: *Roger Silverman* replies to discussion of his article *What does Modi's victory mean?*

Social movement trade unionism: *Bob Archer* reports on a conference