

# From the archive: An Introduction to Marxist Philosophy

*We take pleasure in reproducing the first instalment of "An Introduction to Marxist Philosophy" by the late Peter Jefferies (Geoff Pilling). Geoff was a University lecturer and expert on the history of political economy but also a Trotskyist revolutionary and active fighter for the Fourth International. Geoff would have been greatly heartened by the developments taking place in Southern Africa and elsewhere and would have wanted to contribute to the building of the workers movement there.*

*The text is taken from the pamphlet of the same name published by Keep Left, London, January 1975 and comprises a series of articles that first appeared in Keep Left the weekly paper the Young Socialists (A British Trotskyist organisation – Ed.), Sept. 29, Oct. 6, Oct. 13, Oct. 20, Oct. 27, Nov. 10, Nov.17, Nov.24, Dec. 1, Dec. 8, Dec. 15, 1973. (Corrections to the original appear in [ ] Editor)*

## **Chapter 1. Materialism and Idealism**

'PHILOSOPHY.' When many members of the Young Socialists see the word they will no doubt think of something which they imagine strange and difficult, something done by 'wise men', often with long white beards!

So the first thing to get clear about at the start of this series of short articles is that the study of Marxist philosophy is not at all peculiar or over-difficult.

In fact, it is true to say that *everybody* has a philosophy, whether they are aware of it or not, whether they have worked it out or not.

For, by philosophy we mean a general conception of the world and the relationship of man and his thinking to this world.

And all of us have such a conception of the world. If this is the case, you might ask, why do we need to *study* philosophy? Simply because we have to develop a *scientific* and *coherent* conception of the world and the changes taking place within it.

For the revolutionary party, this is a vital question. Only if all its activities are guided by such a conception can it carry out its tasks of leading the working class to power and the establishment of socialism – the greatest change ever undertaken by man.

In *Marxism* lies the highest struggle by man to grasp the nature of the world in the course of his continual struggle to change it.

Hence the urgent need on the part of *every* Young Socialist to begin a systematic study of Marxism, individually and as part of his or her branch.

Now, in considering philosophy, we can start by saying that throughout history those who have been concerned with philosophy have been divided into two great basic camps.

On the one hand there have been the IDEALISTS.

On the other have been the MATERIALISTS.

*Marxism belongs to this second great camp.* In fact Marxism has developed materialist philosophy to its highest, most adequate level.

When considering these two basic philosophical outlooks, we

come up against an immediate problem which we have to tackle at the start. In 'ordinary language' when we call somebody a materialist, we usually mean someone who is interested in money and material possessions, who is greedy, selfish and vain. On the other hand to be called an idealist is to be praised as somebody with high ideals, who puts the interests of others before himself and so on.

It is no accident that these words should be used in this way. Materialist philosophy has always been the object of abuse by the Church and by the ruling class generally. This way of using the word, is as Engels said, nothing but:

*'an unpardonable concession to the traditional philistine prejudice against the word materialism resulting from the long continued defamation by the priests. By the word materialism the philistine understands gluttony, drunkenness, lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, arrogance, cupidity, miserliness, profit hunting and stock exchange swindling – in short all the filthy vices which he himself indulges in private. By the word idealism he understands the belief in virtue, universal philanthropy and in a general way in a "better world" of which he boasts before others'. (Engels' 'Ludwig Feuerbach'.)*

So in considering the use of the terms we have to break from this *vulgar* understanding of the terms, used by the capitalist class to discredit materialism and Marxism.

In considering idealism and materialism we are considering the two fundamental answers to the question – what is the relationship of ideas to the world?

*Materialism recognizes that our ideas are derived from and reflect the material world. Idealism supposes, on the contrary, that everything material, the world, is dependent upon and reflects some idea which is outside the world.*

This is the *basic* opposition between these two conceptions and one which we must keep before us throughout this series and in

the reading material which goes with it.

Engels put the matter clearly in his famous pamphlet 'Ludwig Feuerbach' from which we have already quoted.

*'The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of modern philosophy, is that concerning the relation of thinking to being ... The answers which philosophers have given to this question have split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature and therefore in the last instance assumed world creation in some form or another ... comprised the camp of idealism. The others who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism.'*

For materialism, therefore, ideas are not something apart from the material world, but reflect the material world and the changes taking place within it.

By 'material world' we mean everything in the universe, or matter in its various forms— chemical, physical, biological.

We grasp the nature of this material world only through our five senses – touch, hearing, smell, sight and taste. The material world, acting on our sense organs, produces sensations. If we put our hand in the fire, we have the sensation of pain and take it out.

This ability to experience sensations depends of course on such things as nerves, retina and above all upon the brain. It depends therefore upon *material objects*. A damage to the brain seriously affects the ability to think; without the retina, sight is impossible.

If we understand this, it is clear that thought is a product of matter. Again we can quote Engels to sum up this basic starting point for materialist philosophy, this time from 'Anti-Duhring' (Part 1, Chapter 3)

*'If the question is raised: what, then, are thought and*

*consciousness and whence they come, it becomes apparent that they are products of the human brain and that man himself is a product of nature which has been developed in and along with his environment.'*

Or, the same point, this time from 'Ludwig Feuerbach':

*'... Our consciousness and thinking however supra-sensuous are a product of a material bodily organ, the brain. Matter is not a product of mind, but mind itself is merely the product of nature.'*

Let us end this opening article in the series by asking the question: Why is it important to grasp the basic point of materialism which we have examined briefly here and to think through every problem and question which we confront in relation to it?

Let us repeat the point once more: materialism understands that the material world exists independently of us and that this independently existing world is the source of all our ideas.

Of course the capitalist class, through their educational system, through the newspapers and television, teach quite the opposite. They teach that ideas are produced by the individual, in isolation from the world. And because of this, everybody is entitled to 'his own' ideas. And there is a further implication: if ideas are produced by the individual, in his head, then the world can be changed simply by changing the ideas in our heads.

This is of course the philosophy of individualism. It is *idealist* because it starts not from the material and social world, but from the individual as something apart from the world.

We will next discuss in more detail the nature of materialism as the Marxist world outlook and the changes which Marx

brought to materialism, compared with the earlier versions which existed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

## **Chapter 2. Emergence of Materialism**

The first systematic attempt to explain the nature of the universe in a materialist way was made in ancient Greece over two thousand years ago. The Greek materialists saw the world as consisting of hard, impenetrable material particles. They understood all change as arising from nothing but the motion and interaction of such particles.

This theory was revived and developed in modern times. It was however much richer in content than Greek materialism had been. For in the 16th and 17th centuries, scientists and philosophers tried to work out what were the laws of the interaction of these material particles, to present a picture of how all things, from merely physical changes to the life of man itself, were the result of the motion and interaction of the separate parts of matter.

*It is important for us to understand that the re-emergence of materialism in this period was a reflection of the rise of the capitalist class in struggle with the old feudal landowning class.*

In the feudal period, the Catholic Church – which as the predominant centre of culture and learning – had developed a natural philosophy in which everything in nature was explained in terms of its ‘proper’ place in the system of the universe, in terms of its supposed position of dependence and subordination within that system, and the end or purpose which it existed to serve.

The bourgeois philosophers, such as Bacon, Hobbes and Locke, destroyed these feudal, religious, ideas about nature. Regarding nature as a system of bodies in interaction, and rejecting all the feudal dogmas, they demanded an investigation of nature in order to find out how it really

worked.

These investigations went along with the geographical discoveries of the period, the growth of trade and transport, the improvement of machinery and manufacture. The greatest strides of all were made in the mechanical sciences, closely connected as these sciences were with the needs technology.

We can call these early materialist philosophers, *mechanical materialists* in that they looked upon the world as a giant *machine*. This was the standpoint of the great physicist, Isaac Newton. For him, like the early Greek materialists, the world consisted of particles moving about in empty space. But in his attempt to explain the precise workings of the universe, Newton was not concerned with the question of its origin and development.

He took for granted that it was a stable piece of machinery – created by God. Not how it *originated*, how it *changed*, but how it *worked*, was the question which pre-occupied him.

Such philosophers and scientists treated the universe rather like a giant watch. It consisted of many parts which fitted neatly together; once it was wound up it worked in a predictable, uniform way which was known exactly to watch makers.

This form of materialism was a great advance in man's understanding of nature. It represented a great blow against idealism and all religious conceptions of the universe, that is as something created by God.

The materialists of the 16th and 17th centuries tried to extend to the realm of the mind and society the same mechanistic conceptions which they used in their scientific investigations of nature. They sought to include man and his thinking in their mechanical conception of the world.

They regarded man himself as a machine. The doctrine was

looked upon as shocking by the Church, an insult to both man and God. But the idea that man is a machine whatever its limitations, was a great advance on the idea that man was a wretched of clay, inhabited by an immortal soul – the religious view of man.

But despite these great advances as against idealism and religion, mechanical materialism suffered from a series of grave weaknesses. We shall end this article by considering some of these weaknesses and next week show how the materialism of Marx – dialectical materialism – overcame these deficiencies.

The *first* question which the mechanical materialists could not answer was this: if the world is like a machine, who started up the machine? And because they could not answer this question they were forced to introduce the notion of a 'Supreme Being' as something outside the world who had set it in motion even if this Being no longer interfered with its workings. The mechanical materialists were thus forced back in the direction of God and religion.

*Second*, while the mechanical materialists recognized change everywhere, because they tried to reduce this change to a series of mechanical interactions – change for them was merely a series of endless *repetitions* of the same kind of processes.

Just like a machine can only work in a fixed manner, according to how it was made, so the world, for these materialists, worked in a fixed way; nothing *new* could emerge within it; there could be no *development* within it. We shall see later how modern materialism (Marxism) has gone beyond this limited conception.

*Third*, mechanical materialism could never explain the *development of man*. If human activity and thought was merely a mechanical reflection of the world, the question arose: how do man and thinking actually change? But as Marx was later to



show (a question we shall be looking at later) man is not merely a product of the world, but he struggles to *change* the world, in the course of which he also changes himself.

This failure to understand the relationship between man's activity, his thinking, and nature, meant that mechanical materialism had no *theory of knowledge*, i.e. of how man proceeds from error to truth, through the conflict between theory and practice. This, as we shall see, is a decisive question for the proletarian revolution.

In considering the limitations of mechanical materialism we should not fall into the trap of thinking they were a product of the philosophers and scientists concerned. For this would be itself an idealist method. No, the limitations of the mechanical view of the world arose from the limited development of science itself, [despite] the fact that the *mechanical* sciences had made the greatest advances.

Modern (dialectical) materialism could only arise with the further development of science which by the 19th century had begun to investigate more thoroughly the processes of interconnection and change within nature. It was on the basis of these developments that Marxism, a richer form of materialism was to be established.

### **Chapter 3. Hegel and Dialectics**

Now the home of mechanical materialism in the modern world was England. This English materialism was then taken and extended in France during the 18th century where it became the basis for the ideas which inspired the French Revolution.

But the next great development which occurred in philosophy was to take place in Germany at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century.

It is this development which we must consider in this article and its relationship to Marxism.

Before doing this, we must however say a little about economic and social conditions in the Germany of that period. Compared with France and England, [and] the other great countries of Europe, Germany remained relatively backward. Commerce and capitalism had failed to develop to anything like the extent they had in either France or Britain.

In particular, the bourgeoisie (capitalists) had not taken power as they already had in the seventeenth-century Cromwellian revolution in Britain or in the revolution which began in France in 1789.

Germany, in short, remained a backward, isolated country, still divided into a series of feudal and semi-feudal states.

It was this economic and social backwardness which left a profound mark on German thinking. The great German thinkers of that period had to look *abroad* for the inspiration for their philosophies and ideas; to France where the bourgeois revolution was taking place and to Britain where the growth of capitalist industry was proceeding with great speed.

But because material change was so slow in their own country, they inevitably tended to see change merely as change in the realm of ideas.

They tended, that is, to see change in an idealist manner.

(By idealism, we should remember from the first article, we mean the conception that all development starts from the idea; materialist philosophy understands that ideas are a reflection of changes taking place in the material and social world).

As Marx put it, 'In politics the Germans *thought* what other nations *did*. Germany was their *theoretical conscience*'.

The highest point of this idealist thinking was the work of the great German philosopher, Hegel (1770-1831).

Hegel was an idealist: for him the world started with the

Absolute Idea. History, for him, was the working out, the realization of, this Idea. This was clearly an *idealist* standpoint.

But Hegel's genius lay in his efforts to understand and grasp *how* this Absolute Idea developed. For Hegel, unlike the mechanical materialists in England and France, *nothing* was fixed or static.

Deeply influenced by the profound changes then taking place in France, Hegel insisted that *nothing* is immobile. Everything existing had to be studied not as it was at any moment but as it had come into being, in its process of development and change. Furthermore, Hegel grasped that everything was not merely the result of past changes, it also carries the germ of the future within it.

But how did change occur? We saw that the early mechanical materialists answered this by seeing movement and change as something *external* to the thing being investigated. The world was like a machine; it had been set in motion by some 'first impulse' (really another name for God).

Hegel understood however that change was not something *external* to the object, but arose from forces within the object itself. We shall examine this question in some detail in later articles, but at this stage we can only give an example of what we mean.

If we consider ourselves, or indeed any individual, we are a unity of two contradictory forces. For at any one moment in time we are both living and dying. Each moment that passes brings us a moment nearer to death while at the same time extending our life by that same moment.

It is the struggle between these two opposed forces, life and death, which is the source of all the changes taking place continually within us.

And so it is with everything in the universe. Nothing can exist in the material world in a static form. All matter exists in motion. And this motion arises from the struggle of opposites within the material world, including human society.

Hegel grasped that all change took place in this manner. This was his great contribution to philosophy. But as we have already said, Hegel was an idealist; for him these changes occurred within the realm of ideas. The world for him was merely a reflection of these changes. In believing that the world started from the Absolute Idea, Hegel held what was ultimately a *religious* view of the world. The 'Absolute Idea' was in effect merely another name for God

It was one of Hegel's most talented followers, Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) who started to consider Hegel's philosophy from the standpoint of materialism. Feuerbach rejected 'Absolute Idea' or 'Substance' or any of the metaphysical starting-points, and insisted that man as a natural being was the necessary starting-point of all ideas. He said that his philosophy 'generates thought from the opposite of thought, from Matter, from existence from the senses'.

In particular, Feuerbach insisted that all the various conceptions of God, including those of Christianity, were created by man himself. Not God had created man, but rather man had created God, in his own image. According to Feuerbach, a truly 'human' world would only be created once these false, religious, conceptions of the world were swept away.

But who was to do the sweeping away? Who was to change the world? It was in answering this question that Feuerbach's weaknesses were most clearly revealed.

For his answer to the question was 'man'. But what was man? A 'man' might be a King, a capitalist, a worker or a peasant. All four have the same organs, the same type of feet, brain,

etc. From a *biological* point of view they are part of the same species. But clearly, there are great differences in their *social position* and wealth.

These differences arise historically. Feuerbach's materialism did not extend to man's own history; i.e. to the struggle in which man makes himself.

In the same way: if we consider 'man' in primitive times he is quite different from 'man' today. Again we don't mean in a biological, but in a social sense. Man today lives in quite a different way; he eats different foods, uses quite different tools, and has quite different ideas.

Thus there is no such thing as *man in the abstract*. Man like everything else, in the universe (of which he is part) is in continual change. This conclusion owed from Hegel's philosophy.

Feuerbach was a materialist. He saw that man was a product of the material world; all his thoughts, ideas are a reflection of nature.

But man is not merely a *passive reflection* of nature as Feuerbach thought. Man does not merely react to the world around him – he is in conflict with it. Our ideas of the world, our struggle to understand, arises only in the conflict with it.

Thus, said Marx, change can never be a passive, an easy process. Change arises from struggle. There is no 'abstract man' because man, in his fight to survive in the world constantly changes himself, becomes a different man.

Marx, in other words took Hegel's dialectical method. He grasped that everything (including man) was in continual change and that this change arises from the struggle of opposites within phenomena. But unlike Hegel, Marx was a *materialist*. Changes in ideas were not the *source* of changes

in the world, but their *outcome*. The great task was not to 're-arrange' the world in the head, but to change it in *practice*.'

But if man 'in the abstract' cannot change the world, which force was to accomplish this change? This is the next question we shall consider. In doing so we shall outline Marx's conception of history, *historical materialism*; and the role of the working class within capitalist society.

#### **Chapter 4. Historical Materialism**

The preceding chapters were intended to discuss two important questions: first the nature of philosophical materialism, second the weaknesses of the 'old' mechanical materialism.

Marx was not however content merely to criticize the old materialist outlook. Above all he wished to apply the dialectical *materialist world outlook to a study of society and its history*. He saw his task as one of 'bringing the science of society ... into harmony with the materialist foundations and reconstructing it thereupon'. (Engels, '*Ludwig Feuerbach*.')

In doing so, Marx arrived at what has since become known as the *materialist conception of history* or *historical materialism*. This chapter will be concerned with an introduction to this theory. (At this stage everybody should read and study Marx's famous Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* [1859] in which this theory is outlined.)

What is the basic point in Marx's approach to the study of history? It is this: that the foundation for man's existence is to be sought in his continual struggle against nature for food, shelter and clothing. The study of history is a study of the conditions under which this struggle was carried out and the changes in consciousness or thinking to which it gives rise.

Here is how Marx's life-long friend and collaborator, Engels, put the matter when he spoke at Marx's graveside in Highgate cemetery in 1883:

*'Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact ... that mankind must first eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.; that therefore the production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art and even the ideas of religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must be explained, instead of vice versa as had hitherto been the case.'*

In other words, the study of history does not start from the ideas which men have held at certain times, nor from their 'motives' or 'intentions' but from the material conditions under which they have lived and worked. To explain changes in ideas we must begin from these real material circumstances.

The next question therefore is this: how does man actually produce these means for his survival? He does so of course, *in struggle against nature*, of which he is a part. He takes from nature his food, the means for his shelter and so on.

But we could also say that this was true of any other species of animal. A horse feeds on grass, breathes the air etc. So another question must be considered: if all animals, not merely man, are in conflict with nature, what distinguishes man from the rest of the animal world?

It is of course possible to point to many features which distinguish man from the other animals: the size and complexity of his brain; the use of speech; the shape and dexterity of his hand.

But the crucial question for us is this: man actually, *in practice*, over millions 'of years, separated himself from the rest of the animals *through the use of tools*. Man is above all a tool-making and tool-using animal. And it was through the use of tools that man as a species was able to subordinate the rest of the animal world to his needs.

From a *physical* point of view (strength, speed, sense of vision and smell etc.) man is *inferior* to many other animals. His *superiority* arises only from his ability to carry his fight against nature to a higher point than any other animal through the use of tools and equipment.

These tools and equipment, and the struggle to improve them (which gives rise to technology and science) Marxists know as the *productive forces*.

In primitive times these productive forces consisted (apart from labour itself) of the most simple implements: knives, spears, arrows chipped out of stone. Over thousands of years they have developed into the productive forces of today—atomic power stations, automated production processes, etc.

But how does man actually use these productive forces at different stages in history? We can get a clue to the answer by considering the nature of the productive forces in the world today.

Imagine that you are a steelworker, living in Sheffield. You have been trained in all the skills associated with this job. But how can you actually take part in the activity of steel making? How, that is to say, can you take part in the development of the productive forces?

All the equipment and machinery necessary to produce steel is under the control and ownership of one of the small number of firms that dominate the steel industry in that city. Unless you can get access to this plant, machinery and other equipment you will not be able to use your skills or to take



part in the development of the productive forces.

To put the matter concretely: only if one or other of the steel industry employers is willing to employ you for wages, can you, as an individual, take part in the struggle against nature, at least in the sphere of activity for which you have been trained. Now, as any worker knows, the owner of such a steel mill will only employ you if he calculates that he can make a profit out of you. If there is no profit for him there is no job for you.

So we have arrived at the following conclusion from this simple example: in order to develop the productive forces as a steelworker, you have to enter a definite relationship with the employer such that he extracts profit from the use of your ability to work.

In other words, you have to enter into a set of definite social relationships if you are to take part in the development of the productive forces. *And you have no choice!* How else can you make steel? It can only be made through utilizing the most advanced means of production which are owned and controlled by the capitalist class.

You cannot make steel in your back garden. And even if you could, it would be so insufficient that you would never be able to compete in selling it with that produced in the most up-to-date factories.

It is clear that the productive forces can only be worked through definite social conditions of production which men have to enter into, which exist, 'independently of their will and consciousness'.

But these social relationships have not always been the same. Like everything else they must be studied not as static 'things', but as *processes* changing over time.

Today, in all the big countries of western Europe, America and

Japan, we have capitalist social relations, through which production is carried out. The basic relationship is between the owners of capital, the capitalist class, and those who sell their ability to work (their 'labour power' as Marxists call it) as their only means of livelihood. But in the past quite different social relations of production have existed.

Next we shall examine briefly these past forms of society. We shall also consider the problem: why do certain social relations disappear at certain periods of history, often in the most violent fashion, to be replaced by new social relations of production?

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## **Workers' Front Croatia: An interview with DIMITRIJE BIRAC**

*'Yes, we want to abolish capitalism'*

*One of the founders of Workers' Front says: "Our final goal and the character of the party are anti-capitalist, and our current aim is to show that all the problems we talk about, such as unemployment and the collapse in production, are consequences of the socio-economic system, and not of the success or failure of this or that economic policy".*

**Q: Worker's Front has been organising for six months or so, but last week you decided to show yourselves in public. Who belongs to your organisation beside the linguist Mate Kapovic and the trade unionist Denis Geto?**

DB: Mainly young people, activists, workers, students, unemployed people. We will introduce some of them to show that it's not limited to a tiny group.

Our organisation is working along two lines: The first is to work on the infrastructures in different towns, the second is to form links with working people, to support workers' protest demonstrations and to get in touch with various trade unionists, particularly those who want to put up a struggle.

We are open to all those who are interested in changing society in line with our principles and transitional demands.

**Q: You have said the future party will not have a classic hierarchical structure, but is there a formally constituted leadership at the moment?**

DB: We think that it is necessary to function in a more democratic way, with rank and file members controlling the leadership. Of course there has to be an organised leadership, but for the moment it's still all coming together.

We still have a lot of work to do on the organisation and structure, but what we can say is that we are preparing a workers' trade union conference where we will try to bring together a number of militant trade unions.

We have meetings where we discuss uniting the workers movement, and in that sense we are in touch with trade unionists like Zeljko Luksic of HZ (Croatian Railways), Zvonko Segvic of Brodosplit shipyard, and trade unionists in the power and chemical sector independent union (EKN) and the "Feniks" Post Office union.

We have also been in touch with Mija Stanic about a referendum over the plans to raise money by selling or leasing off parts of the highway network.

**Q: Apart from a few positive comments, most of the media have**

## **ignored the appearance of the Anti-Capitalist Party?**

DB: Most of the commercial media have ignored us. On the other hand we did get a reaction from alleged adherents of the neo-classical school of economic thought, who have gained a monopoly position in economic science over recent decades. They do everything in their power to depict us as charlatans and try to discredit us by saying we are not real working people.

According to them, only a blue-collar factory worker with a moustache and a spanner in his hand can count as a working person.

The fact that we are getting resistance from these two quarters only goes to show we are doing the right thing.

The origins of the crisis lie in the system itself.

## **Q: How do you see economic reality, as against these people?**

DB: We think that the profound causes of the crisis in Croatian society are that for the last 20 years a political caste which is the product of this socio-economic system caused further social deterioration, the way people are alienated, and the degradation of work.

All the other problems flow from these three main ones, and behind all these processes is the mechanism our economists know nothing about because economic science has dropped the study of reality, whereas this mechanism is the one through which a minority appropriates values created by the rest of society.

If you postulate that it is more essential to satisfy the needs of capital arising from private appropriation than those of society, then society finds itself removed from all control over work as a whole, over the value created, and then we have a spontaneous process which society cannot control.

Economists who are militant supporters of private capital may well proclaim how rational and efficient it is, but in fact it is a fundamentally irrational system, perhaps the most irrational in the whole of history.

This is the situation: technical progress is greater than ever, but people are working harder and harder and longer and longer for wages which buy them less and less.

**Q: So in Croatia there are fewer people working more and more, while the others become surplus to requirements?**

DB: It's one more proof that the system is irrational, because it cannot use the social potential that is there to develop society's productive forces. But it is also one of its characteristics, because when you have lots of unemployed, the price of labour power falls and in that way, people accept any wages just to get work. All these contradictions show that the necessary structural change cannot just come from the economic policy of a political party, since the source is precisely in the socio-economic system.

**Q: What do you propose?**

DB: We propose a cut in the working week from 40 hours to 35 hours at existing wage levels to increase the number of those in work.

We propose to raise the relative wage, or to put it another way, the part of the wealth the worker creates which comes back to that person, to lower the retirement age, and increase pensions and the minimum wage, to cap the spread between minimum and maximum wages at a ratio of 1:4, to place banks under social control and other steps to develop society, not profits.

We should put a stop to privatisation.

**Q: The tendencies you describe are present everywhere. What**

## **can the State do to counteract them?**

DB: We are not working for some sort of utopian society, but something that flows from the mode of production itself.

We are not enemies of technology, but we are against the capitalist application of technology which means we see the productivity of labour rise, but that is not done for the benefit of society, nor in order to shorten labour time and the proportion of our life we spend at work.

On the contrary, that is getting longer and longer, and the surplus value created is more and more appropriated and more and more used to create new value.

The data shows that while Gross Domestic Product (GDP) keeps rising, globally and in Croatia, wages have risen more slowly than GDP. In that sense we are afraid that you cannot proceed just by redistributing the profits and the value created, since you can introduce taxes, but you cannot by doing so change the system which creates the inequalities.

We see that in periods of economic upswing, capital only grows because it does not pay labour adequately and then, in a period of crisis, the only way capital can get out of it is to reduce the price of labour power so that investments once again become profitable.

We do not say that the state on its own can resolve this problem. Capitalism is a global system, and people should cooperate and organise society in common.

But it is possible to set an example by lowering the working week to 35 hours, so that others can take the question on board.

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# Capitalism between hammer and anvil

by *Balazs Nagy*

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In our last issue, we briefly noted “cracks” emerging in world capitalism, including, among other things, weaknesses in relation to the international monetary system organised on the basis of and governed by the US dollar. We do know that, to ward off the last great crisis, the big chiefs of US finance decided to supply the economy, which was gasping for breath and quite unable to meet astronomic levels of losses and needs, with even greater massively and artificially swollen credit arrangements. To put it another way, the crisis had revealed the imperative urgent need to deal quickly and urgently with the yawning gap between real production on the one hand, hampered and dragged back by the growing limitations on effective profits, and on the other the phenomenal pile-up of dollars not backed by anything whose job was to make good the market’s organic deficiencies. Let me repeat: the whole edifice of runaway and inflamed world finance operates under the auspices of the US dollar.

We know that immediately on the outbreak of the crisis, capitalist governments carefully put the corpse of capitalist economy on life-support, injecting hundreds of billions of dollars (and euros) to soften the sudden absence of billions of fictitious dollars which had gone up in smoke. The managers of the US dollar in the Federal Reserve System (the US central bank) panicked and decided to institutionalise the allocation of billions of dollars into the economy through regular purchases of American Treasury bills, i.e. to buy these bits of valueless paper with billions of newly-created dollars (85 billion a month!) hot off the press and not backed by anything in the proper way. This blatant forgery they pompously

baptised “quantitative easing”, and it is no more than an act of common counterfeiting. But this time the forgeries are done by the state and swapped for other state bonds which are also worthless, i.e. they are buying government debt with paper. As the notoriously blunt billionaire Warren Buffet commented recently: “The Fed is the greatest hedge fund in history” (Bloomberg.com/news September 20 2013). Indeed, the whole business casts a glaring light on the fact that the whole mechanism of capitalism-imperialism today rests on a swindle.

Now, as we commented in a previous article, the US central bank, the Fed, has stated that it will now aim to progressively reduce these purchases with a view to ending them. Obviously by doing so the Fed hoped to help, in its own way, to contain the unbridled proliferation of un-backed credit which even they admit is a permanent crisis-trigger. But as our previous article said, the bare mention that they would eventually do this shook capital around the world.

The first consequence of the Fed’s announcement that it wanted to turn off the easy dollar-tap was to provoke a swift and inevitable rise in interest rates in the dollar’s US home country, and elsewhere, given that currency’s preponderant role. This rise in interest rates meant that credit became more expensive, which cut across the imperative need for cheap money. This fact immediately unmasked all the claims about an economic recovery as mendacious bragging. Next, it started a massive flight of capital from the so-called “emerging” countries in search of more profitable investments. This defection abruptly exposed a bitter truth for the bourgeoisie: that the best part of economic growth in these countries (India, Brazil, etc.) is not based on real production, but is artificially doped by financial juggling with the cheap dollar. So the announcement that the easy dollar was shortly to be withdrawn cut the transfusion needed for their economic growth, and as they were left short of blood, their markedly lower real growth rate emerged in the light of day and their



currencies depreciated. A terrible new stage in the crisis started to loom on the horizon in these countries. But while they were waiting to hear what the 22 May announcement about reducing and then stopping the flow of easy dollars actually involved, the Fed took everybody by surprise on 18 September by finally announcing its spectacular U-turn. The same Bernanke who had disconcerted capitalists with his astonishing announcement that he would deprive the economy of cheap dollars, caught the whole world napping with the Fed's final decision contradicting its previous announcement. It turned 180 degrees, stating that "the Fed would continue to buy long term treasury paper and other bonds worth \$85 bn a month, believing that tightening financial conditions could slow down the rate of recovery" (Le Monde, 20 September 2013.)

Despite the coded and extremely careful language, this is a resounding and honest public confession. It relegates the servile press's enthusiastic reports of a supposed economic recovery in the US and elsewhere to the level of lying fantasy on a level with the Coué method of optimistic auto-suggestion. More generally it is an involuntary admission that capitalism actually is undergoing a prolonged worsening of its death-agony, and in particular that merely keeping it going pushes and drags the economy towards an even more corrupt state of putrefaction and parasitism than was already revealed by Lenin's analysis of imperialism. The major fact is and remains that finance, or more exactly omnipotent credit and the way it is manipulated, tend to supplant production in simply making sure that capitalist economy keeps functioning (accumulation, investment and circulation). But here we must remember what Marx said about credit in volume 3 of Capital: "Banks and credit become the most potent means of bringing capitalist production out of its own limits and one of the most effective bringers of crises and fraudulent speculation". To support this judgement he quoted a contemporary (J.W.Gilbart, The History and Principles of Banking, London 1834, pp 137-8): "It is the object of banking to give facilities to trade, and

whatever gives facilities to trade gives facilities to speculation. Trade and speculation are in some cases so nearly allied, that it is impossible to say at what precise point trade ends and speculation begins." To which Engels adds a note: "To what extent the entire business world of a country may be seized by such swindling, and what it finally comes to, is amply illustrated by the history of English business during 1845-47." (Capital vol 3, 1984 p. 406). What would they say about things today!

The dead hand of finance is precisely the concrete form that the increasing rottenness of the system takes today. Massive parasitism in the economy – and in daily life – are its inevitable outgrowths. In the same way, the amazing growth in the social stratum of rentiers, as well as the appearance of a series of rentier states and their expansion and their significance testify to an unparalleled growth in parasitism.

It is really characteristic that when the Fed announced it was going to reduce the flow of dollars, economic growth immediately tended to slow down, especially in the "emerging" countries, whereas immediately after the bank turned 180 degrees, stock markets around the world marked up considerable gains. Even the European Central Bank (ECB) is now itself proposing to pump some fresh liquidity into the deathly anaemic European banks, having vainly allowed them a thousand billion euros in 2011-1012. But it is still a lot more reticent than its US colleagues.

In fact world capital as a whole is trying to walk a tightrope between two pseudo-solutions, both equally risky: either they will continue to pour billions into keeping their system ticking over, and in doing so all the while preparing a series of upheavals even more devastating than the one we have not yet got out of. Or, anxious about that way out, they will try to control credit parsimoniously, which seems to be the option which the ECB favours. But both potential outcomes of this tightrope-walking lead to the same blind alley of capitalism.

With or without injecting billions, production in this system keeps marking time and has not even managed to make good past and current losses.

Two things are certain. The first is that these two false capitalist options will both deepen the systems congenital sickness, bringing redoubled attacks and suffering on working people. The second, which flows from it, is that the overthrow of this cruel system in its death-throes is now on the agenda.

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# **New Valls government: A government of anti-working class struggle**

By *Balazs Nagy*, April 2014

The recent local government elections and the formation of a new government are a good opportunity, indeed a direct incentive, to say more about the mean, twisted and nasty way the Hollande team running the country think. Their politico-social reasoning is very simple, not to say simplistic. It is what you might call classical social-democratic thinking of a kind well-known over the last hundred years or more.

## **Resolute defenders of decadent capitalism**

The main thing that really marks these people out, among all those who claim to be on the side of working people, is that they present capitalism as an eternal system whose existence you just have to accept. So according to this disgrace to the name of socialist, everything we do is necessarily limited and determined by the framework of capitalism and its general

rules. But as a consolation to working people, according to this conception, the capitalist system can be put right, amended and improved, and our job is to contribute to that. This cheapskate philosophy which has long been selling the mission of liberating the working class for a mess of pottage still had some limited validity when, in return for this sell-out, the bourgeoisie was still able to concede various actual reforms. But imperialism is the period of capitalism's decline – something which social democrats obstinately deny – in which, because it is exhausted, this system is organically unable to concede the slightest reform.

Now the present crisis has brutally revealed that this decline has got to the point where not only have reforms become impossible for this moribund system, but in order to survive it needs to attack and destroy previous reforms. This need is what explains its general offensive against existing reforms and its intransigent determination to fight that right through to the end.

But social democrats are incorrigible; they have not abandoned their grotesque fantasies, but adapted them precisely to the many-faceted requirements of this offensive on the part of a bourgeoisie with its back to the wall. For all Hollande's solemn oaths – and this sheds some light on the social democrats' consummate duplicity – they then told us all the fibs about the need on the one hand to swell the coffers of international capital by paying back the debt, and on the other to help our own impoverished capitalist with yet more billions. Against all the evidence they still maintain the lie that thanks to this aid the grateful bourgeoisie will do everything it can to secure the well-being of working people. Even a few weeks ago Hollande was still handing out dozens of billions in line with this plan, but he and his ilk were the only ones (like all self-respecting social democrats) who still believed the incredible dream that in exchange the bourgeoisie would give unemployed people work. (Through these

outrageous deceptions they hoped to justify making savings by drastically cutting expenditure on health, education, all welfare benefits, wages, right to a job and so forth, to the point of threatening their very existence.) Alongside this savage demolition of genuine previous reforms – and to show that they are true reformists carrying out actual reforms – they have flooded the country with a wave of so-called societal reforms – at the margins of and even outside of social and economic life – such as same-sex marriage, electrical cars and so forth. The main function of these pretend reforms has invariably been to distract attention from the activity of destroying previous reforms.

The local government elections brought a stinging defeat to those who, in their arrogant and pretentious duplicity, thought that working people had swallowed this hogwash hook, line and sinker. They were sincerely and profoundly surprised when they saw the results. But to go from there to imagining that Hollande and co would revise their policies and adapt them to what working people want would be an absurd illusion. Far from it!

### **A build-up of losses and other miseries threaten workers.**

The new government is not just a body committed carrying on Hollande and co.s bourgeois policy of robbing working people. In view of the preceding governments alleged dawdling in getting on with the job and also the bourgeoisies growing appetite, not to say bulimia, it is going to toughen up considerably. After 26 March, the employers body Medef trumpeted: A more ambitious trajectory than the 50 billion cut already announced is now absolutely imperative, (Le Monde, 30-31 March 2014). Then the headline on the same newspapers editorial of 1 April spelled out what the government has to do: Hold course! No wobbling, get on with it! And then Hollande's road map made it clear: The only responsible outcome is to set afoot and then roll out reforms aiming at securing an economic recovery. We all know the terrible

reality hiding behind these anodyne words. The self-proclaimed leaders of the bourgeoisie in Brussels have also jumped at the chance to insist on greater rigour from the French government. And the commercial treaty being prepared between Europe and the US has up its sleeve further blows which will make any hopes of an economic recovery by France, already pretty well compromised, even more precarious.

Hollande reacted swiftly, obeying not indeed the wishes of the disappointed voters but the requirements of his real, bourgeois, bosses. He quickly established a new government team tightly organised around his closest social-democratic partners. His new prime minister, Valls, is ready-made to epitomise it, with his even more pronounced right-wing political orientation and aggressive character. It is no accident that he has long wanted to rid his party's name of the adjective socialist. So right from the start this team presents itself as an advanced detachment of a bourgeois attack formation. The odd reassuring and soothing phrase where required do not alter this truth. We shall have occasion later on to comment in greater detail on this new government's anti-worker offensive, the first elements of which, aiming to dismantle the social security system, we have just seen.

There certainly is a change, not to say a turn. Here is an end to the procrastination and shilly-shallying which, however much they suit Hollande's innate weakness, have become intolerable to the bourgeoisie and seem contrary to the nature of the new government. The presence of people with a left aura like Hamon and Montebourg has nothing to do with any real left. Much more, it signifies the end of equivocation or misunderstanding surrounding these careerists' reputations. Indeed, if there is a real left in this party, apart from the usual fake-left loud-mouths like Lienemann and co., now would be the time to say so in opposition to the deployment of definite measures and attacks against workers' gains. Above all, now is the time for all organisations who speak and act

in workers interests to rally round the Left Front to prepare together a broad united front of all working people against the redoubled attacks by capital and its new government.

Balazs Nagy, April 2014

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# **Euro-election results reveal signs of Political turmoil in Europe**

By *Bob Archer*

Politicians and the media talked a great deal about earthquakes as the results of last months elections to the European parliament were published. This was especially true in France and the UK, where the established parties were beaten at the polls by the Front National (FN) and the UK Independence Party respectively.

Failing to assuage voters anger could mean the erosion, if not the destruction of the union in a matter of years, said veteran Austrian journalist Erhard Stackl, writing in The New York Times International Weekly. In some countries, the vote against an integrated Europe was profound.

He consoled himself with the observation that nevertheless two-thirds of the votes were cast for pro-European parties. And in Germany, the economic powerhouse of the 28-nation bloc, Chancellor Merkel and her allies still command a comfortable majority.

Smarting under a series of lost seats in the European parliament, many established bourgeois parties needed all the consolation on offer.

Actually integrating and developing a unified economic unit in

Europe is a historic necessity. How urgent it is has been adequately demonstrated by two terrible world wars centring on the continent.

The simple fact that the bourgeoisie finds it profoundly difficult to carry out this fundamental task is striking proof of how deep the crisis of capitalism is.

But their brainwashing machine quickly springs into action to distract attention from this problem to a series of real or imaginary surrogates:

There are three main reasons for the voters anger, Herr Stackl continues: dissatisfaction with political leaders, who are seen as uncaring and arrogant; frustration because of the slow economic recovery; and the growing fear of foreigners. Encouraged by demagogues, citizens of the well-to-do countries are blaming immigrants from poorer countries for many of their woes.

All established political parties from conservatives to social democrats speak and act on behalf of the capitalist class. They work might and main to remove all the social gains working people have made in previous decades and centuries. This includes all the so-called socialist parties, whether PASOC in Greece, the SPD in Germany, the Parti Socialiste in France or Labour in the UK, who all chant in unison that the debt ? which is really a tax levied by bankers via national state fiscal systems on working people all around the world ? has to be paid down, and that in order to do so, government spending on all social services, state education and health provision, housing and welfare and all the rest has to be cut, and whatever fragments remain, privatised.

It is not the personal qualities of politicians which is the question here, but their attachment to the needs of a particular class, the bourgeoisie. Whether or not people are conscious of it, their anger towards these politicians is caused by a series of attacks on working people on behalf of this bourgeois class.

The slow economic recovery is caused by the global depth of the crisis of capitalism and, indeed, by what the bourgeoisie does in order to overcome it, for example cutting the living standards of swathes of working people across the continent, attacking benefits and wage levels, and so forth.

The growing fear of foreigners really is not just encouraged



but fanned into flame by demagogues.

But, besides the vile gutter press which has carried out a sustained campaign of vilifying and scapegoating migrants, those demagogues also include significant forces in parties as respectable as the UK Labour Party. People who cannot recognise and fight their real enemy, concealed within a fog of business deals and obscure financial transactions, are incited to turn on their neighbours because of some imagined ethnic, national or religious difference. They are taught by these demagogues to judge their fellow working people by such standards and to blame them for a crisis they have not created.

Many commentators lump the FN and UKIP together with radical socialist parties like Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain and others. This is sowing deliberate confusion. The FN and UKIP deliberately seek a turn back into national economic isolation from the rest of the continent while whipping up backward chauvinism. Syriza and the others are a very different matter, and represent an attempt to resurrect political organisation among working people.

There are indeed some forces on the left which follow UKIP and the FN in denouncing European unity and migration, groups such as the Communist Party of Britain's NO2EU campaign in the UK, but in fact anybody who agreed with these bourgeois politics were always mainly going to vote for an openly right-wing grouping anyway.

Indeed, the media also played a role in this, completely ignoring the left anti-EU candidates but adoringly splashing pictures of Nigel Farage and Marine Le Pen at every opportunity across front pages and the TV screen.

The subsequent media rhetoric about earthquakes hides the odd fact that most of these right-wing parties did less well in these elections than they have previously. The Dutch Party for Freedom of Geert Wilders saw their share of the vote tumble from an earlier prediction of 20% to a mere 13.3%. The Finns Party (True Finns) saw similar shrinkage in their vote. In recent Hungarian elections, Jobbik won 20% of the vote, but in the Euro-elections they claim as a break-through, they only achieved 15%.

However, the outcome of the 2014 European elections strengthen and embolden some of the most reactionary forces across

Europe. With resistance by working people to cuts and austerity continuing across the continent, often inchoate as is it, such forces will soon be unleashed to impose the bourgeois attacks on working people.

More than ever, a step forward in building a workers movement across the continent for a Europe of working people is essential. The answer to fascism does not lie in relying upon the bourgeoisie to sustain democratic methods when it is wracked by crisis. It lies in mobilising working people to fight for the needs of their class.

But this must involve overcoming the damage to working class organisation and consciousness brought about by the bourgeois attacks, the collapse of the USSR and its satellites and the degeneration of socialist and communist movements.

The articles by [Balazs Nagy](#) in the [Wirfi Journal No.5 June 2014](#) deal with all these issues through the prism of the French municipal elections and preparations for the recent Euro-elections. They provide the essential basis for grasping the current political situation and acting upon it.

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## **Numsa President Opening Speech during Central Committee at The Lakes Hotel and Conference Centre on 12 – 16 May 2014**

20 Years After 27th April 1994: what is the state the South African Revolution?

*“Nothing demonstrates better the increasing rigor of the colonial system: you begin by occupying the country, then you take the land and exploit the former owners at starvation*

*rates. Then with mechanization, this cheap labour is still too expensive. You finish up taking from the native their very right to work. All that is left for the Natives to do in their own land at a time of great prosperity, is to die of starvation.” (Jean Paul Sarter, 2001)*

Numsa National Office Bearers,  
Delegates to this Numsa CC,  
All Numsa Staff,  
Invited guests,  
Media present.

On behalf of the National Office Bearers of Numsa, I welcome all of you to this first Central Committee meeting of Numsa after our historic December 2013 Numsa National Congress.

As we seat here, we are meeting after the first South African National Elections in which Numsa as an organisation did not support any political party.

This Central Committee must help all of us to fully understand the moment we are in, from a clear Marxist-Leninist class perspective. There should be no confusion over what Numsa resolved to do, in the Numsa National Special Congress. All of us must be very clear what these just ended elections mean to the working class of South Africa. All of us must be clear what our revolutionary and trade union responsibilities are, post the Numsa historic Special National Congress.

From the beginning, please allow me to thank the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary of Numsa and the entire Head Office and all our staff in all our Numsa provinces for putting together a most comprehensive information and documentation package for this important Central Committee. This is as it should be.

Among other important matters this Central Committee must initiate is a serious and urgent national dialogue among all

the left formations in general and in Numsa in particular, on the fundamental question of the form and content of the socialism we want for South Africa and the world.

We are required to go beyond theoretical formulations to concretely defining the economic and social formation we would like to see South Africa and the world become, when we win the struggle for a socialist South Africa and socialist world.

In order to help us all fully appreciate the moment we are in, and the state of class struggles in the whole world in general and in South Africa in particular, I want to, very briefly, tackle the following:

- A. The state of the world capitalist system;
- B. The South African revolution: its theory and revolutionary practice;
- C. The Freedom Charter as the minimum programme and basis of the class alliance of the forces that spear-headed the South African violent revolution for freedom in South Africa;
- D. The South African negotiated settlement and post 1994 South Africa;
- E. Numsa and post 1994 South Africa and the Numsa Special National Congress;
- F. The 2014 National Elections and their class significance; and
- G. What is to be done, to build the power of the working class and accelerate momentum towards a Socialist South Africa as the only viable alternative to the savagery of the current racial capitalism and imperialist domination?

Obviously, in the course of this Central Committee delegates must make time to reflect upon these and all the other business of this Central Committee. My hope is that when we depart this meeting on Friday the 16th of May 2014, no one who will have attended this Central Committee Meeting must be a source of confusion when we are back in our regions, locals, communities and on the factory floors.

Numsa is a serious, mature and revolutionary Marxist-Leninist inspired trade union. We pride ourselves in being a worker driven and worker controlled revolutionary trade union. Internal robust debates and discussions before decisions and resolutions are taken is our democratic lifeblood. This is the cornerstone of our democratic centralism.

It is my duty to always remind ourselves that our Constitution charges us to, at all material times, grow the power of the working class in the factories, in our communities and in the whole world so that we can win the war against exploitation, oppression, discrimination and for socialism.

We are a socialist trade union precisely because we know that our real war is ultimately for winning the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only true democratic state of affairs.

We understand capitalism as the dictatorship of the bosses, of the capitalist, no matter how well concealed this fact may be, behind false liberal hopes as captured in all liberal constitutions.

Very briefly then, allow me, Comrades, to deal with the matters I said I will tackle above.

A. The state of the world capitalist system

We all have a duty and revolutionary responsibility to understand, in class terms, the world we live in. This is important because we need to be fully aware at all times, of the actual revolutionary potential for winning the war against the barbarism capitalism inflicts upon the world working class and peasant populations.

We also analyse the world in order to understand how our own class struggles are linked to the rest of the class struggles taking place in the world, so that we may better grow faster the power of the world working class against our class enemy: the capitalist class.

The world capitalist system is in a deep terminal systemic and structural crisis. The world capitalist system is terminally sick, it cannot recover. Unless the world capitalist system is soon destroyed by the world working class and replaced by revolutionary and democratic scientific socialism, the Earth and all life on it are faced with the real possibility of being destroyed!

This is not an empty threat, nor is it a false alarm: capitalism has today developed enough atomic, nuclear, biochemical and other kinds of bombs to destroy the Earth and all life on it.

We now know that land, sea and air pollution are all at record high and life systems in all these spheres are threatened with total destruction. Global warming is not a joke. It is real and is fast destroying the energy balance of our Earth system as we know it.

As Marx and Engels so scientifically and correctly explained more than 150 years ago in the Communist Manifesto, the world today is ruled by the money form of value. Everything has been reduced, is being reduced, into a money relationship – finance (money) capital is dominant today. No human value or relationship is immune to the penetration of money.

We live in the true age of imperialism as the phase of human history in which finance capital is truly dominant.

The world capitalist class that owns and controls the global economic production and financial system ultimately controls all our lives, as they make sure that nothing that does not serve the interest of money can survive and thrive! The search for faster, more efficient, global means of accumulating money is conditioning all economic and social activities, and therefore all human life on Earth today.

Even our poverty, diseases, homelessness, ignorance and all miseries are everyday being converted into businesses for

making money. If ways have not been found to make money out of any of our problems, those problems will not receive any attention until money can be made out of them!

All this is happening at a time when the development of productive forces have never been so advanced! We now live in the age in which no human being should go to bed hungry – there is enough agriculture and food science to properly feed more than 100 times the current entire human population.

No one should have no decent modern house to live in – there is in fact too much construction science and technology to ensure that every human being lived in a luxurious and palatial house!

There is so much medical science and health technology that each human being can today have their health problems attended to, and medicines provided, according to their individual needs and specifications.

There is so much communication knowledge, technology and science that in fact nursery schools, primary schools, colleges and universities as they exist today are actually museums of ancient education: information technologies and computers, and manmade robots have made learning, transferring skills and education such a simple and accessible process that every human being can virtually learn anything, know anything, acquire any skill, communicate in an instant, as often and as many times as they want in their life time.

In the meantime, billions of human beings live miserable lives because the world capitalist class controls and dominates the world production system, all for money, for profits, and not for serving human beings and protecting our Earth.

Thus we see that on one hand, at no time have the productive forces been so developed such that every human being can live a full, enjoyable and happy life, on the other hand, precisely because a small and minority world capitalist class owns and

controls the world economy for their profits, the majority of the world peoples suffer terribly, and the Earth itself is threatened with total destruction.

Thus there is no alternative to the victory of the world working class over the world capitalist class, if we must save human life and the Earth, from the potentially inevitable destruction from the power of the world capitalist class. We are engaged in a life and death war with world capitalism!

Because of their greed, the world capitalist class has actually already started curving up pieces of the moon for themselves, even as we seat in this CC!

B. The South African revolution: its theory and revolutionary practice

South Africa today is firmly and fully imbedded in the world capitalist system. The 1994 negotiated settlement had as one of its most important objectives the full and rapid integration of the South African economy (inevitably, society too!) into the world capitalist system.

This is not to imply that before 1994 the South African economy was not part of the world capitalist system, rather, the negotiated settlement removed all the impediments which the Apartheid government had caused, and a post-Apartheid neoliberal and vicious capitalist trajectory was adopted to fast-track this "integration".

But, when we say that there was a struggle for freedom in South Africa prior to 1994, what do we mean? What were we fighting for? What was the theory and revolutionary practice of that "revolutionary struggle"?

Was our struggle for the fuller integration of, and the normalization of the white minority South African economy into the world capitalist imperialist system?

Was our struggle a struggle for a neoliberal capitalist South Africa?



Was our struggle for social grants?

Was our struggle for the protection of white minority cultural, social, political and economic rights at the expense of the majority of South Africans who are Black and African?

Was our struggle for the mere reform of Apartheid education, health and other social services?

Was our struggles for us to merely participate in choosing which faction of the capitalist class should be in government through the lottery of capitalist elections once in every 5 years, and then pretend that we too have “political power”?

Was our struggle merely for “basic services” in our apartheid designed geographical ghettos?

Why was our blood shed? Why did we shed blood? Was it for BEE? For Nkandla? For Ghuptas? For tenders perhaps?

Indeed, was our violent revolutionary struggle just for “a better life for all”?

For more than four centuries, why did we kill and risk being killed?

Today, especially after the 2014 National Elections in which the ANC has won a majority in both the national and provincial legislatures, it has become extremely important to sharply remind ourselves why we waged a violent revolutionary struggle, what its theory and practice was.

Only when we fully connect to this understanding will we then have the necessary and sufficient theoretical preparation and understanding, to enable us to summon the courage we need to continue the revolutionary struggle. For, indeed struggle we must, precisely because the revolutionary war has not been won!

Our struggle was about ending forced and violent colonial occupation. Today, less than 8 percent of the white population still own more than 80 percent of our land.

Our violent revolutionary struggle was about ending social and cultural domination.

Today, 25 million Africans live a life no cat or dog of the rich white 10 percent of the population enjoys! They are classified as extremely poor. 23 million Black and African people in fact survive on less than R650 per month, far less than the weekly dog food for a rich white and Black middle class dog!

Our violent revolutionary struggle was about ending exploitation of the Black and African majority who are the bulk of the South African working class! Today, the majority of Black and African people cannot survive without selling themselves very cheaply to white or white black parasitic capitalists!

Today, 20 years after 1994, the majority of Black and African people, who because of our history of violent white land dispossession were turned into labourers on white farms and factories and mines, cannot find even these super exploitative jobs, thus they are left to die of starvation and extreme despondency, at a time when South Africa is one of the richest countries of the world!

Our violent revolutionary struggle was about ending land hunger among the formerly disposed, and restoring the ability and right to live anywhere where one desired in South Africa. Today, neither land redistribution nor decent affordable housing has been made available throughout the country to enable the destruction of Apartheid distributions of our population.

We fought and shed blood, not so that a few corrupt Black and African elites should become the new prison warders of Black and African labourers by becoming instant credit card billionaires!

In South Africa as elsewhere in the capitalist and imperialist

colonies, we violently fought to end colonial occupation, to abolish colonial domination, to abolish exploitation, to end gender oppression and domination, to restore the right to land to all the people of South Africa, to return the wealth of the country to all the people of South Africa.

In a nutshell, we fought – we killed and shed blood – to restore the humanity of both the oppressors, dominators, exploiters and dispossessors and the exploited, dominated, oppressed and dispossessed.

It is my submission that nothing, not even an iota, of the theory and practice of our violent revolutionary struggle has been achieved in the past 20 years.

The extra water, electricity, small poorly located and constructed houses, poor quality but expanded health care, and a raft of empty liberal political rights (precisely because these rights are not backed by economic equality – which is the only foundation of real political freedom) in the past twenty years do not amount to even the smallest achievements of the promise of our violent revolutionary struggle for freedom.

There is nothing extraordinary that has been done in the past twenty years that any ordinary capitalist formation would not have done, I submit.

To the contrary, we now have become the most unequal country on Earth, with the most violent of violent crimes, with an explosive youth unemployment that threatens to blow this this country up any time now, with the world's largest and most violent civil protests against inhuman conditions of life. Our poor rural populations have simply been forgotten!

C. The Freedom Charter as the minimum programme and basis of the class alliance of the forces that spear-headed the South African violent revolution for freedom in South Africa.

With all the noise making the rounds about “a good story to

tell” and the results of the 2014 7th May National Elections, it has become absolutely necessary to remind ourselves of the basic demands that brought together the coalition of forces that participated in the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

The Freedom Charter is the basic document that contains both the principles and the demands for the minimum programme that was the basis upon which the revolutionary block of the African, Black and White working class and other progressive strata in South African society united, and constructed and fought the struggle for freedom and liberation.

We remind ourselves of the 10 demands of the Freedom Charter:

1. The People Shall Govern!
2. All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!
3. The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!
4. The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!
5. All Shall be Equal Before the Law!
6. There Shall be Work and Security!
7. The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!
8. All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!
9. There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!
10. There Shall be Peace and Friendship!

To govern means to have political power. Land and economic power has not been transferred into the hands of all the people of South Africa as a whole. White monopoly capital and US and British and other imperialist finance capital dominates and controls the South African economy. The people are not governing!

The 2014 National Elections perfectly captures the fact that all national groups do not have equal rights!

The results of the Elections perfectly mirror the colonial and racist distribution of the racial political groupings in South Africa today. The results are a perfect reminder of the fact that white monopoly economic and political power continues to live side by side with majority Black and African poverty and

extreme inequality. Nothing best captures the colonial nature of South African economy and society than the racial voting patterns.

Black and African people are still condemned to live far away from former whites only economic centres, rely on extremely inferior education, health and housing facilities, are condemned to inferior colonial wages and have no similar access to modern science, technology and the fruits of their labour! This explains why Black and African communities today are warzones.

The fundamental point to note here is that as long as a minority controls and owns the economy, with the support of US, British and other imperialist backers, the essence, the fundamental reason for our violent struggle for liberation will remain unachieved: the transfer of the wealth of the country into the hands of all South Africans!

Racism is a necessary feature of our continuing post 1994 racist colonial economic and social system, whose destruction were the basis for our violent revolutionary struggle.

D. The South African negotiated settlement and post 1994 South Africa

Today, 20 years after the 1994 negotiated settlement, we the revolutionary South African working class are very clear that:

- While the working class in the townships were making the Apartheid government and society “ungovernable” and sorting out traitors in their communities, even by using burning tires, the Black and African middle class elites at the heart of the negotiations were busy stitching together with the enemies of the working class, secretly, a neoliberal anti working class and capitalist post-Apartheid South Africa, without the formal democratic mandates of either the ANC or SACP members and leadership structures.

- We now know that the totality of the openly and secretly

negotiated settlement firmly entrenched a neoliberal capitalist post-Apartheid South Africa, and threw the Freedom Charter into the dustbin of history!

- We now know that the racist dominant and exploiting white block won by simply mutating racial social and economic dominance into economic class domination and exploitation through the South African liberal constitution which protected their old and newly created economic and property rights.

- The 1996 South African most liberal constitution guaranteed both existing and created new property rights for the white minority population, especially in land – thus entrenching racial capitalism, post 1994.

- We are now convinced that BEE was secured as a means both to pay off and consolidate a Black middle class, post 1994 that would act as the new policeman for the new version of the same Apartheid capitalist society and economy that South Africa became, after 1994.

- We are very clear that the 1994 democratic breakthrough was nothing but the mechanism for the racial capitalist transition, entrenchment of the racial social and economic domination order we are now living in.

- The 1994 negotiated settlement laid the capitalist foundation for the post-Apartheid rise of a kleptomaniac, corrupt black and African political class.

- The negotiated settlement contained the seeds for the dismantling of the popular and revolutionary block that had waged the struggle for genuine freedom in South Africa.

We are therefore, not surprised that today, 20 years after 1994, Black and African working class communities will, on the same day, participate in the elections by returning a black government into power, even as they are coming straight from a violent protest against their inhuman conditions of life. This

is a perfect reminder that our colonial and racist society and economy are alive, and the struggle for freedom continues!

#### E. Numsa and post 1994 South Africa: the Numsa Special National Congress Resolutions

Numsa is a socialist Marxist-Leninist inspired revolutionary trade union. We make no apology to anyone for this fact.

In our December 2013 Numsa National Special Congress, we confirmed and resolved that the ANC led alliance no longer serves its revolutionary purpose. We, accordingly, ended our political support for the ANC and resolved to campaign for Cosatu to break the Alliance.

We further very correctly recognised that the SACP has exhausted its revolutionary potential in South African politics and in the South African revolution.

In order to prevent Cosatu from being destroyed and converted into a useless and toothless formation of the working class and the poor, we have resolved to call for a Cosatu Special Congress to deal with the class paralysis and leadership question in Cosatu.

I am happy to report that we have placed this demand before the courts.

Our demand for the President of the ANC and the country to resign because of the neoliberal trajectory and corruption in government and the country stands. This CC must determine how to carry this demand forward.

In order to sustain our membership growth and simultaneously to defend and service our members, we produced and adopted a Service Charter for Numsa. We must all live by this Charter, in Numsa.

#### F. The 2014 National Elections: Significance for the revolutionary South African working class.

We have already explained above that the continuing ANC

victories from all the previous elections and especially the 2014 National Elections are all simply proof of the racist colonial polarization of South African Society – they are all perfect proof of the continuing US/British financed neocolonial economic and social status of South Africa.

The foundation of the South African social and economic formation remains racial capitalism: the super exploitation of Black and African labour.

The ANC negotiated settlement guaranteed this neoliberal and colonial status of post 1994 South Africa. The majority of the population, therefore, who are Black, African and proletariat, in the lottery that is the capitalist election circus cannot be expected to vote for a white minority party with the same capitalist policies as the black party, no matter how rotten the black parties may be!

The solution to this crisis of development lies in the working class (white, black and African) creating their own political organ to continue the struggle for liberation which can only inevitably lead to socialism as the only viable alternative to the savage and backward system of capitalism and imperialism.

Numsa resolved in its December 2013 Special Congress to work to unite the working class behind a movement for socialism, and to work to initiate the formation of a genuine revolutionary political organ of the working class.

G. What is to be done, to build the power of the working class and accelerate momentum towards a Socialist South Africa as the only viable alternative to the savagery and misery of the current racial capitalism and imperialist dominated South Africa?

Numsa must jealously guard and defend the unity of its organisation as a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist inspired trade union.



While retaining our independence and autonomy as a trade union, Numsa must carry through its resolution to build a united front of the working class in South Africa.

Simultaneously, we must deepen and sharpen our understanding of what we want our socialism to be like, even as we work towards the formation of a revolutionary socialist political organ of the working class which must lead the revolutionary struggle for a socialist South Africa.

The General Secretary will brief this CC on how we expect work to explore the state of socialism in the world is going on. We need to fast track this work. Socialism is international because capitalism is international. The victory of the South African revolutionary struggle for socialism will not be possible if we do not simultaneously struggle for a socialist world.

We must be humble, ready to learn from all other revolutionary and progressive working class formations even as we are very clear about what we want: it is not the resuscitating of any version of some pre-Marxian utopian socialisms: ours is the struggle for scientific socialism in which the dictatorship of the proletariat is the ultimate goal, as the only true democratic state of any society.

I am confident that this CC will do its work properly, and contribute fully to growing our union and firming up our revolutionary struggles for socialism!

Forward to a socialist world!

Forward to a socialist Africa!

Forward to the Socialist Republic of South Africa!

We cannot afford to fail. The future will not forgive us!

Andrew Chirwa,  
Numsa President

12th May 2014.

original posted here:

[Numsa President Opening Speech during Central Committee at The Lakes Hotel and Conference Centre on 12 – 16 May 2014](#)

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# Numsa Views on the state of Class Struggles in South Africa and the Crisis in Cosatu

*“Numsa is calling ALL South African workers, Black and White and African, to join us in our United Front to demand the immediate and radical implementation of the Freedom Charter as the only basis for a truly democratic South Africa and in our fight against all neoliberal manifestations.”*

**Numsa Headquarters, Johannesburg**

*“People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises.”*

**Lenin in “Three Sources and Three Component parts of Marxism”,  
March 1913**

***“Nothing demonstrates better the increasing rigor of the***

*colonial system: you begin by occupying the country, and then you take the land and exploit the former owners at starvation rates. Then with mechanization, this cheap labour is still too expensive. You finish up taking from the native their very right to work. All that is left for the Natives to do in their own land at a time of great prosperity is to die of starvation.” (Jean Paul Sartre, 1964)*

#### ***A. The world we live in today and our 20 years of “Democracy”***

It is impossible to deny that the world has seen the most severe crisis of the global capitalist system. And, there is no end in sight, to this crisis.

More than anything else, what makes the current systemic and structural global crisis of capitalism more dangerous and frightening than in the past is the total intellectual, ideological, political and moral bankruptcy of the world capitalist leaders and their capitalist theorists: they have no answer to what increasingly appears to be the world's relentless progression towards mass poverty, worldwide unemployment, growing extreme global inequalities within and between nations of the world, vicious and extremely violent civil and international wars, global warming, environmental destruction – all pointing to the eventual destruction of our Earth and all life on it.

The neoliberal “Washington Consensus” has been completely discredited and confirmed dead especially by the 2007/8 global financial capitalist crises.

There is no alternative to discarding the theories and practices of capitalism, if we must save the Earth and its living systems. No amount of cosmetic reforms either in the centre of the global capitalist system nor anywhere in its periphery can hide the most obvious fact today: at a time when humanity has the most profound knowledge and technology, the world capitalist system of private greed risks all our lives and the very Earth we live on.

Mankind today is faced with one choice: abandon the capitalist system or perish by it.

We at Numsa have no illusion that only a total destruction of capitalism and all it represents can save the Earth and give birth to a new civilisation, a new reordering of common and democratic ownership, production and consumption patterns along a higher human life and Earth respecting human civilisation. Such a civilisation is Socialism.

### ***A.1. The South African “Democratic Transition” and squandered opportunity***

We at Numsa have taken the trouble of reading the South African economic and political history, ultimately focusing on the imported capitalist revolution in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and our “negotiated settlement”, and their impact on the South Africa we live in today.

We have come to the following conclusions, very well captured in our policy papers and resolutions of our December 2013 National Special Congress, also found in the SACP “Path to Power” document of 1989:

- a. The South African capitalist state did not emerge as a result of an internal popular anti-feudal revolution. It was imposed from above and from without.
- b. From its birth through to the present, South African capitalism has depended heavily on the imperialist centers.
- c. Capital from Europe financed the opening of the mines. It was the colonial state that provided the resources to build the basic infrastructure – railways, roads, harbours, posts and telegraphs.
- d. It was an imperial army of occupation that created the conditions for political unification. And it was within a colonial setting that the emerging South African capitalist

class entrenched and extended the racially exclusive system to increase its opportunities for profit.

e. The racial division of labour, the battery of racist laws and political exclusiveness guaranteed this. From these origins a pattern of domination, which arose in the period of external colonialism, was carried over into the newly formed Union of South Africa. From its origins to the present, this form of domination has been maintained under changing conditions and by varying mechanisms.

f. ***In all essential respects, however, the colonial status of the black majority has remained in place. Therefore we characterise our society as*** “colonialism of a special type”.

The 1994 “democratic transition” was supposed to lay a foundation for destroying colonialism of a special type in South Africa, a form of colonialism characterised by the existence side by side, of the colonial subjects and the local agents of colonialism and imperialism in the same geo-economic and political space.

Today, 20 years after the “democratic transition” nothing best confirms the fact that ***in all essential respects, however, the colonial status of the black majority has remained in place*** than of the 26 million South Africans who live in abject poverty, 25 million are Africans.

Further, all economic policies since 1994 have been incapable of defeating ***Colonialism of a Special Type*** and the effects of Apartheid capitalism, which condemned the South African black working class to a life of misery and hardship.

The South African government own 2011 Census so well captures this ugly fact, the fact of the continuing colonial lives of millions of Black and African South Africans, post 1994.

Any shallow class analysis of the “negotiated settlement” in South Africa easily reveals the most obvious fact: the

“negotiated settlement” was secured on the basis of abandoning the Freedom Charter and the land and property claims of the “natives”.

These devices of protecting white property rights in the “1996 negotiated constitution” effectively guaranteed white property rights and therefore, white economic dominance, and the logical and inevitable continuation of imperialist economic and political domination of South Africa.

## ***A.2. The Freedom Charter and the Negotiated Settlement***

At Numsa we are convinced that the abandonment of the property clauses of the Freedom Charter by the ANC and the SACP formed the basis for the “democratic transition”.

We now know that while Cosatu was busy putting together the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), ANC and SACP negotiators, together with representatives of South African white monopoly capitalism and their imperialist counterparts were busy stitching together a neoliberal post-Apartheid South Africa.

We are not surprised, therefore, that the RDP was quickly discarded in favour of GEAR, which has now formally become the National Development Plan (NDP).

It was inevitable that in 2012, in the ANC Mangaung Conference, GEAR mutated into the neoliberal National Development Plan, and, in the ANC, the matter of expropriating land and the commanding heights of the economy without compensation was formally buried. Effectively too, was buried any prospects of a worker friendly “National Democratic Revolution” and all hope of a seamless transition to a Socialist Republic of South Africa.

Today in South Africa, black and African poor people must wait for the profits to grow of white people and their sprinkling of a tiny filthy rich black and African middle class for any

changes in their mass poverty and widespread unemployment.

It is this cruel reality, post 1994, and 20 years into our “democracy”, which caused Numsa to hold its historic 2013 Special National Congress, and to take the resolutions it did, prominent among which is the recognition that the ANC led Alliance no longer serves any revolutionary purpose in South Africa today.

### ***A.3. The State of the South African black and African working class***

At Numsa we are, following the class analysis above, not surprised that in all black and African communities there is a state of restlessness, there are widespread protests now increasingly turning violent, against the bitter and cruel conditions of life in these communities.

We are not surprised that 20 years after the negotiated settlement, very little real wealth has been redistributed and as a result, education, housing, water services, sanitation, electricity, distance from quality social and economic productivities activities and so on continue to be disastrous problems for black and African people of this country.

We are not surprised that South Africa, post 1994, has become the most unequal and socially violent place on Earth today.

We are not surprised that the white population continues to dominate in the economy, society and culture, today.

It is against this background that we examine the President of South Africa’s State of the Nation Address of 2014, and the ANC government 2014 Budget Speech. Further, we examine the election promises using this background.

We in Numsa understand the crisis in Cosatu as simply a reflection of the on-going class struggles in the wider South African society in general and inside the ANC led alliance in

particular.

### ***B. State of the Nation Address (SoNA)***

There is nothing in the State of the Nation Address that even remotely indicates that the ANC and its government are embarked upon a “radical transition” for full social justice in South Africa.

Nor does anything in the SoNA remotely signal the fact that the ANC is worried that virtually ALL Black and African communities, 20 years into democracy, are at war inside themselves!

While the SoNA correctly recognizes the ongoing extreme burden of unemployment, mass poverty and extreme inequalities, the SoNA simply treats all these as products of the failure of the South African economy to grow fast enough post 1994, and on the global crisis of capitalism.

The SoNA lamentably fails to locate the real roots and causes of the South African crisis of unemployment, poverty and extreme inequalities – the ongoing economic and social domination of South Africa by white capital and its black and imperialist surrogates.

The SoNA celebrates liberal democracy in South Africa without any shame at the exclusion of more than 25 million South Africans from this system that is black and African.

We see that the 2014 Budget Speech takes its cue from the SoNA, and also wastes time singing praises of the neoliberalism of the past 20 years.

### ***C. ANC's Elections Manifestos: a look at the ANC's 2014 Vision***

In 2004, the ANC launched its “Vision 2014”. The 2004 Manifesto was framed within this vision. We have now reached 2014, and the ANC has produced another Manifesto and yet



another vision, which is now called “Vision 2030”. It is therefore propitious that we evaluate the ANC’s performance in relation to its “Vision 2014” and in relation to its subsequent Manifestos.

In its 2004 Message from the President, the ANC called for ***“A People’s Contract to Create Work and Fight Poverty”***.

The combination of some of the most important targets and objectives making up Vision 2014, together with our findings, are as follows:

- Reduce unemployment by half through new jobs, skills development, assistance to small businesses, opportunities for self-employment and sustainable community livelihoods.

***Today, unemployment has in fact increase beyond the 2004 levels today, self-employment has dwindled, and, more dangerously, Black and African communities are reeling from violent crimes and daily violent protests!***

- Reduce poverty by half through economic development, comprehensive social security, land reform and improved household and community assets.

***Precisely because unemployment has in fact increased beyond the 2004 levels, we see today that more than 26 million South Africans are classified as extremely poor!***

- Provide the skills required by the economy, build capacity and provide resources across society to encourage self-employment with an education system that is geared for productive work, good citizenship and a caring society.

***Marikana sums it all: the bulk of the population remains poorly educated, unskilled, living in abject poverty and in a very uncaring society. Today we are being conditioned to accept that every community protest will lead to deaths of***

***some protestors!***

- Ensure that all South Africans, including especially the poor and those at risk – children, youth, women, the aged, and people with disabilities – are fully able to exercise their constitutional rights and enjoy the full dignity of freedom.

***Violent crime and crimes against women and children are still intolerably high. An African child in South Africa today is many times more likely to be borne in a poor household than before 2004.***

- Compassionate government service to the people; national, provincial and local public representatives who are accessible; and citizens who know their rights and insist on fair treatment and efficient service.

***Again, the Marikana massacre speaks volumes about where we are. It is an open secret that the system of local government has collapsed, with very few of them having clean audits. So-called service delivery protests are the order of the day everywhere in the country. South Africa in fact leads in the number of violent community protests in the world today.***

- Massively reduce cases of TB, diabetes, malnutrition and maternal deaths, and turn the tide against HIV and AIDS, and, working with the rest of Southern Africa, strive to eliminate malaria, and improve services to achieve a better national health profile and reduction of preventable causes of death, including violent crime and road accidents.

***While there have been some improvements in these variables, the quality, levels and efficiencies in the health system, especially the public health system, are pathetic. TB cases have actually increased.***

- Significantly reduce the number of serious and priority

crimes as well as cases awaiting trial, with a society that actively challenges crime and corruption, and with programmes that also address the social roots of criminality.

***Unemployment is globally recognized as a “significant contributor” to all crimes, including violent ones.***

***The fact that unemployment has in fact increased since 2004 is experienced by black and African communities through the high incidence of violent crimes, today with an increasing incidence of extreme forms of violence even among teenagers.***

***The failure to implement the property clauses of the Freedom Charter is the most profound root cause of violent crime in South Africa, in our opinion.***

- Position South Africa strategically as an effective force in global relations, with vibrant and balanced trade and other relations with countries of the South and the North, and in an Africa that is growing, prospering and benefiting all Africans, especially the poor.

***The xenophobia that has engulfed post 1994 South Africa is the best test of just how badly positioned South Africa is globally, especially in the South. None of the rhetoric on balanced trade and other relations have materialized precisely because the ANC government has no real economic levers, because it has not implemented the property clauses of the Freedom Charter.***

#### ***D. The ANC 2014 Budget speech***

Numsa has carried out the only comprehensive and detailed class analysis of the National Development Plan (NDP). Our conclusions are that the NDP is simply GEAR dressed up as a populist document.

Not only does the NDP fail to tackle the economic and social structural and systemic foundations of South African colonial economy and society, it quite pathetically promises wholly unrealistic and totally unachievable goals, just like its father – GEAR.

Numsa has consistently argued that South African National Treasury Department has been post 1994, the home and custodian of neoliberalism in the South African government.

Pravin Gordan's 2014 Budget Speech announces that it locates the 2014 medium term budget in the NDP.

Like the SoNA, the 2014 Budget is littered with some self-praise, and the false promise of jobs, more housing, more water, more social security, better health and so on, all of them to be done within the NDP framework.

It is impossible to ignore Lenin's words in 1913:

***"People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises."***

The sweet coated promises contained in this Budget, including the pathetic increases on the social grants do not succeed to hide the fact that this is a budget designed to please South African white capital and its local agents and imperialism and their rating agents.

There is nothing in this budget which signals a "radical transition". This is why the bosses and their political formations have received it very well.

A most blatant betrayal of the Black and African working class is the bribery to white and black capital the budget gives in the form of the Youth Employment Incentive Tax. This has been

done without exhausting the NEDLAC process and actually by contemptuously bypassing NEDLAC.

Rather than abolition the colonial and apartheid wage as demanded in the Freedom Charter, the budget instead bribes capital with free money, to divide the working class!

This budget, more than anything else, confirm the rightwing shift in the ANC/SACP government.

### ***E. The crisis in Cosatu***

We understand Cosatu's launching principles and values as being the following:

- a. Cosatu is a worker controlled and democratic trade union federation.***
- b. Cosatu is a Revolutionary Socialist Federation.***
- c. Cosatu is an anti-imperialist federation; it fights against foreign capitalist domination.***
- d. Cosatu rejects all forms of cultural, male chauvinist and racist prejudices.***
- e. Cosatu is a militant federation.***
- f. It is a transformative federation.***
- g. Cosatu is a champion of working class democracy.***
- h. Cosatu believes in working class power, and advocates worker control not only of the progressive trade union movement, but of society as well.***
- i. Cosatu believes in the revolutionary power and unity of the working class, which is why it champions the formation of one union in one industry and one federation in one country.***

In our opinion, it is these values and their articulation, which is at issue in Cosatu today.

On one hand, there are those among Cosatu leaders who see a Cosatu guided by the values above as a threat to their potential careers in the ANC or its government. These leaders have long abandoned Socialism and are only paying lip service to the struggle for Socialism.

On the other hand, there are those leaders such as in Numsa and the affiliates Numsa is working with, who are determined to defend and advance the ideals for which Cosatu was founded, including defending a Socialist Cosatu.

Given the abandonment of a radical NDR by the ANC and the cooptation of the SACP into the ANC and its government, it is inevitable that Cosatu must be plunged into a crisis by the fight to the death between these two class positions in Cosatu – one for a Cosatu that simply transmits the wishes of the right wing ANC nationalists among the working class and the other which wants to fight for a Cosatu with its original values.

Numsa has thus become the “enemy within” among the Cosatu leadership clique that is imbedded in the ANC and SACP. It so happens that this clique is numerically strong in the CEC of Cosatu.

This pro rightwing ANC and SACP clique in Cosatu wants to engineer the expulsion of Numsa from Cosatu. It has already engineered first the paralysis, and later the suspension of the General Secretary of Cosatu – Zwelinzima Vavi.

This right wing Clique ignores the Cosatu Constitution at will. It has refused to abide by the Cosatu Constitution that demands that when a third of Cosatu affiliates demand the convening of Cosatu Special Congress, the President of Cosatu must convene such a Congress or be replaced by a convener.

This rightwing clique, knowing very well that its positions have no mandates from its own members, is very scared of a Special National Congress because it knows the Special National Congress, besides exposing this right wing, may also trigger leadership removals in their unions.

Numsa's positions are very clear and quite simple:

1. Zwelinzima Vavi's unconstitutional public humiliation, harassment and suspension must be lifted immediately.
2. All mischievous and unconstitutional efforts to frustrate and expel Numsa from Cosatu must stop forthwith.
3. A Cosatu Special Congress as requested by the appropriate number of unions must be convened immediately, to resolve all the causes of the crisis in Cosatu.
4. Numsa will do everything possible to achieve these objectives, including using the courts to stop the violations of Cosatu Constitution.
5. Numsa is calling upon all members of Cosatu affiliates to defend their federation from being swallowed into the ANC/SACP right wing camp.

In the meantime, Numsa continues to run with its section 77 campaigns.

### ***F. Progress on the United Front and the Movement for Socialism***

In order to understand Numsa, especially in order to understand our resolutions on the United Front and Movement for Socialism, one has to understand what Numsa is first.

***Numsa is a revolutionary formation, a red trade union, playing a leading role in the struggle to defeat capitalism and the exploitation that is associated with it. In that role we are unashamedly Marxist-Leninist, rooting ourselves in the***

*traditions of Marx and Lenin. So we defy the boundaries between nations that are set up to divide workers as we proclaim ourselves as proletarian internationalists. That tradition also gives us democratic centralism, that combination of robust, vigorous and democratic debate with the discipline of marching together when we have made a decision. That combination makes us what we are proud to be – a red union.*

The leadership of the national liberation movement as a whole has failed to lead a consistent radical democratic process to resolve the national, gender, and class questions post 1994. *This leadership is predominantly drawn from the Black and African capitalist class; it kowtows to the dictates of white monopoly capitalist and imperialist interests. It is nothing more than parasitic and crony capitalists.*

*It is half-hearted and extremely inconsistent in the pursuit of a radical democratic programme and has completely abandoned the Freedom Charter.*

It is these circumstances, combined with the worsening situation of the South African working class as a whole post 1994, which has lead Numsa to rethink and revisit its relationship with the ANC and its Alliance.

Work is well underway to mobilise the working class in all their formations, into a United Front for the radical implementation of the Freedom Charter and against neoliberalism.

During our January Numsa Marxist-Leninist Political School we met with the leaders of some of the social movements and community structures, to begin the process of mapping out how we will work together.

In order to reach out far and wide, Numsa shall convene Provincial and National consultative meetings to share the content of our resolutions on the United Front and Movement



for Socialism.

We are happy to note that many social movement organisations and community organisations are joining us in our Section 77 campaigns starting with a national strike on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

During the course of this year, work will be done to assess the state of the world socialist movement and its formations, to inform our work towards the Movement for Socialism. The Numsa Marxist Leninist School in the first week of April 2014 shall receive representatives of Workers and Communist Parties from countries such as Brazil, Greece and Venezuela to share experiences and to lay the basis for our international research.

### ***G. Engineering and Eskom negotiations in 2014 – The Numsa National Bargaining Conference (NBC)***

As always, Numsa has begun our Ear to the Ground Campaign in workplace general meetings to listen to the aspirations of Numsa members with respect to collective bargaining demands in the Engineering industry and Eskom.

In collecting these demands our key and strategic objective is to improve the benefits and conditions of employment. The demands from the 9 Numsa Regions shall be consolidated and tabled for discussion in our Numsa National Bargaining Conference scheduled for 10-12 March 2014 in Saint Georges Hotel, Centurion.

Without pre-empting anything, we must be upfront that we are preparing for the mother of all battles as we shall champion the struggle for a living wage for workers in the Engineering Industry and Eskom in particular.

The union will use this round of negotiations not only for wages but also take up a very important campaign of defending existing jobs and to fight for more jobs. In extending our

work beyond the factories, Numsa shall on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 embark on a national strike to demand the scrapping of the employment tax incentive act or the so called youth wage subsidy. We shall do so in defense of existing jobs as we have reason to believe that the current spate of retrenchments notices across various sectors are directly linked to this stupid incentive scheme.

We refuse that the working class of SA must be forced to pay for the global crisis of capitalism.

That is why we calling on the mining bosses and government to quickly resolved the current strike in the platinum belt. It has become abundantly clear there is a joint pack between government and mining capital to destroy union activity outside of the NUM.

With respect to Eskom, Numsa shall not rest until workers at Eskom receive a fair increase. We view the arbitration award that imposed 5, 6 % as an insult that constitute a wage freeze.

We do need equity of pay. Currently white workers sit at the top of their pay grades while many black workers still languish at the bottom of their grades.

We can no longer tolerate Eskom and Government hiding behind the skirt of Nersa to justify paying lip service to a negotiation process where the power (the only power) of workers to withhold their labour is removed.

We calling on all workers at Eskom to unite behind their legitimate right to demand a living wage if in these round of negotiations Eskom management doesn't move swiftly to make a real offer that will settle workers' demands and hide behind essential service but pay workers peanuts, they would have to take fully responsibility for a load shedding that would come as a result of workers insisting that their demands must be

met.

Eskom now has a shareholder compact with government, but it does not call for fair wages rather it focuses on profit targets. Profit targeting mean Eskom is under pressure to moderate wages.

Our members are victims of high standards of living as a result of administered prices that continue to rise and affecting negatively their basket of food and all aspects of their lives.

They continue to receive low wages as there is no National Minimum Wage that can guarantee them a living wage.

Workers are taking loans from loan sharks in-order to make a living.

There is poor or virtually no assistance from the employers.

Unemployment which makes those who are working to support those not working imposes a heavy burden on our members as a result of the triple crises poverty, unemployment and inequalities.

It is our members who are victims Privatization and Commodification of basic needs/services.

### ***H. What is to be done?***

As Lenin so well said, in 2013:

***“People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises.”***

Twenty years into our “democracy”, we the Black and African South African working class are sick and tired of listening to

the same stories about us having to wait for the rich to grow their profits for us to see some minor improvements in our lives.

The working class can only be defeated because it is not united. United, no force on Earth can defeat us.

As immediate tasks, we state the following:

- Numsa is calling ALL South African workers, Black and White and African, to join us in our United Front to demand the immediate and radical implementation of the Freedom Charter as the only basis for a truly democratic South Africa and in our fight against all neoliberal manifestations.
- We are calling on all members of affiliates of Cosatu to demand that their national leaders explain where they stand today, on the ongoing crisis in Cosatu.
- We call on all members of affiliates of Cosatu to stand up and defend their federation from the vultures who want to turn it into a toy telephone of the ANC and the SACP.
- We call on all mineworkers to stand together, united against the mine bosses and the government who are both fighting mining workers in their just struggle for a living wage.
- As Numsa, we fully support the just demands for a living wage for the mineworkers. We remain convinced, however, that with the increasing marriage between the ANC and its government and the mine bosses and shareholders, no just wage will be secured by mine workers.

We therefore call upon all workers to intensify the struggle to nationalize South African wealth, including the mines and land.

Our consistent Marxist-Leninist inspired class analysis of the

world and South Africa today informs us that we have no option but to fight to the bitter end, for a Socialist world and Socialist South Africa.

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**Stop the destruction of  
social gains! March  
separately, strike together!**

In defence of the workers and people of Greece – first victims of capital's offensive

European march on Brussels! Response to the [“Common Appeal for the Rescue of the People of Europe”](#) launched by Mikis Theodorakis and Manolis Glezos,

*by Balazs Nagy, Workers' International (20 February 2012)*

From a stricken Greece, long-familiar voices are calling on the peoples of Europe to defend themselves and come to the aid of Greece and its working people. Above all for the working people of Greece, living standards and indeed the whole setting within which they live, and their public services and

properties, are once more under vicious attack and their very existence threatened by the intensified, concentrated onslaught of aggressive and arrogant world capital. Greece was the cradle of our civilisation and is now in the cross-hairs as the initial site for the destruction of gains the modern age has contributed to that old civilisation: a series of rights, to fair wages, to work and decent housing, to the equality of citizens and individual and collective liberty as a whole. Greece is a symbol for all of this, since the suppression of these rights and advantages so lately won by civilisation, their deliberate destruction undertaken by capital, raises the spectre of their imminent annihilation along with the ancient civilisation born in Greece which is the foundation and natural framework for all that has been achieved. Theodorakis and Glezos are a thousand times right to invoke the dark shadow of fascism on a Europe rendered numb and vulnerable by capital.

Greece and her working people are particularly undermined – and also denigrated and slandered – as they have been picked on as the first to undergo the creeping barrage of capital's heavy artillery. But don't fool yourselves! Working people in the other countries have already felt the first salvos and the strategists of capital have them in their sights too. Portuguese, Spanish, Italians and all the rest ... they will not be spared by the shattering fire of this class war.

Our analysis of the crisis and its effects is not the same as that of the Greek authors of the appeal. We believe that the first and most important target are the workers and other working people of Greece. They are attacked, not because they are Greek, Italian or whatever, but because they are workers; that the attack on them is organised and waged by the world bourgeoisie, and not just by the American banks, which are only one pernicious head of the immense thousand-headed hydra. Ministers – whether unelected like Papademos and Monti, or elected, like Merkel and Sarkozy – are infinitely closer to

Goldman Sachs than to the workers of Athens, Rome or Berlin, who in turn are class brothers of Greek, Portuguese or British workers. The current European crisis – to speak only of Europe – and the proposed “solutions” constitute a new and particularly important episode in a class struggle that has lasted over a century. In this struggle, Europe, as constituted in her institutions, is neither a neutral nor a well-intentioned entity, but an instrument of war on the the social, political and cultural gains working people have made. How true this is is proved by its presence in the hated “Trioka” with its pitiless dictatorship over Greece. Whatever differences there may be in analysis, the response of the working people of Europe to the appeal from Greece cannot but be massively positive.

To resist capital’s attacks, it is high time that working people throughout Europe take up the only weapon at their disposal: the organisation of their ranks. All they have to defend themselves with is their ability to mobilise. It must start immediately, as things are urgent. It must be concentrated and it must be strong. Hesitation and dispersal of our forces weaken us and strengthen our attackers.

The immediate goal of the mobilisation is to defend the working people and the whole people of Greece.

- Down with the dictatorship of the Troika with its shameful exactions!
- Throw this three-headed hydra out of Greece!
- The people of Greece are the only sovereign power with the right to determine what to do about the debt!

As a way to carry the struggle forward, we should without delay prepare and organise the march of the working people of Europe on the HQ of the bourgeois attacks in Brussels. From every country, the chosen columns of working people can converge on Brussels to express their determined opposition to the predators and the desire to colonise their initial prey –

Greece, and to there present the determination and united strength of the working people of Europe in a huge demonstration as a culmination of the first stage of the action and a prelude to a broader struggle.

Alongside our forthcoming defence of Greek working people and in order to remove definitively the permanent threat facing all working people and all peoples, we should open the way for the main demand: for a Working People's Europe!

The very recent general strike against the same enemies by working people in Belgium as well as the decision of the European Trade Union Confederation to hold a big joint action at the end of February show that favourable opportunities exist for such an action.

Let us eagerly seize these opportunities to introduce our action in order to give redoubled strength to the defence and resistance of the working people throughout Europe.

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**Stop the destruction of social gains!**

**March separately, strike together!**

*By Balazs Nagy, member, Workers International*

ALL over Europe, the various capitalist governments are inflicting drastic and very similar austerity measures and plans on working people. Obviously people in other continents are not exempt from the effects of the deep crisis of capitalism either, but it is here in Europe that they take on their most significant and vicious dimensions. This is the cradle of capitalism and therefore of the workers' movement.

In the past, with the support of all working people, this movement succeeded in winning significant rights and advantages during over a century of bitter and stubborn struggle. The crisis is far from over, however those in government spin it. The determined frontal attacks on the gains and rights workers have won will grow in number and



ferocity, so it is very important to know what they really represent and where they come from.

### **Thirty (not so) glorious years**

These attacks by the capitalist class did not just start with the current crisis. In fact the material, social, political and cultural rights working people enjoy are incompatible with capitalism-imperialism (the overall period since the beginning of the twentieth century, when finance capital merged with industrial capital), particularly in its current state of senile decrepitude. They were never freely given, but all of them were won from the system by force in heroic struggles by working people over many years, during and after World War II, but also well before then. At that point the balance of forces, internationally and within almost every country, swung clearly in favour of the working class. Terrified by the underlying support for the powerful revolutionary wave in Europe – and bankrupt – the capitalists were only able to defuse the revolution with ready help from the leaders of parties which called themselves socialist and communist. But this came with a price tag attached, and so there started the series of measures and reforms which culminated in what became known as “welfare states” or “social market economy” (in Germany) and the so-called “thirty glorious years”. But even then the rot had already set in.

Even if they had wanted to, the capitalist class and their governments could not have granted these reforms and advantages to working people on a permanent basis. And they certainly did not want to let working people keep that fraction of an accumulating mass of profits, which was squeezed out of them in the first place anyway. In the end they could not allow it to go on, especially since, as time went by, although the total sum grew, the rate of return was shrinking by the minute. To put it in capitalist economic language, the return on investments or the profits on capital were no longer enough. Marx and his followers describe this as

the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. At its root was above all the progressive shrinkage of the world market for expensive western capitalist goods.

From this flowed two major consequences which were to shape the course of capitalist-imperialism and the behaviour of its major players. It was not totally transformed, but it would be correct to say that its features were altered in a significant and historical way. The first change was that it became a system that not only could not carry any more genuine reforms, but actually had to do away with and destroy the reforms and advantages which it had been forced to concede under pressure in the past. The second was to do with its structure. The emergence of the imperialist phase at the beginning of the twentieth century had already meant:

“... the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this ‘finance capital’ of a financial oligarchy”.

This now went a lot further. In fact, in attempting to overcome market saturation and the declining substance of profit, this marriage of convenience between industrial capital and finance capital gave birth to a legitimate but monstrously deformed offspring – the uncontested hegemony of finance capital. Inevitably this artificial, overblown, distorted and ill-proportioned substitute for real profits mutated into an insatiable parasite sucking the life-blood of the whole of society.

But please note carefully: well before it could infect every pore of society, the capitalist class – both mother and father of this formation – did everything it could to take back and revoke the reforms and concessions it had been forced to make earlier. At first it did not dare attempt a full, general, global offensive against all these concessions, because it felt too weak. The working class and working people in general justifiably continued to think that the right to sickness

insurance, to a decent pension, to full employment and proper care, to free education – in short, the whole system and network of rights, assistance and protection – were an essential part of their wages, and that capital had taken a big enough cut out of them already. They correctly took these things as a legitimate “social wage”, theirs by right.

This was far more than the increasingly insatiable capitalist class were prepared to tolerate. But, however desperately they wanted to launch an open frontal attack on these rights and concessions, congenital cowardice in the face of the organised strength of working people cooled their ardour and a cunning instinct to side-step such confrontations moderated it.

Consequently, in the first phase of its war on the rights and concessions working people had gained, in the 1960s and 1970s, the capitalist class mainly concentrated on undermining real wages and working conditions. They made constant and repeated attempts to claw back the inroads that the “social wage” made into their profits, doing what they could to increase the productivity and intensity of labour and nibble away at wages. But powerful strike actions, drawing in their wake not only wider categories of working people but even top union leaders, blocked these attempts and a succession of partial struggles restored the real value of wages by force. In the course of those “thirty (not so) glorious years”, for example, working people in Britain twice brought down governments through the sheer scale of their struggles – once the Labourite Wilson and once the Tory Heath. In France, at the same time, working people engaged in a series of struggles, including a remarkable national miners’ strike. They then united in 1968 in a long general strike and inflicted a resounding setback on De Gaulle, who had been tasked precisely with smashing their resistance and taking back their “social wage”.

Nor should we forget the German working class and working people as a whole. Already bled white by Hitlers’ counter-

revolutionary dictatorship and the years of total war, they were were both divided and tied down in the late 1940s in the four zones of military occupation. Thus the previously powerful German working class, with its pivotal role at the heart of Europe, was isolated and kept off the scene. And just to make sure, working people in Germany were also stigmatised with the vile insinuation that they were collectively responsible for Hitler. The reactionary and extended occupation regime was followed by the long drawn-out trauma of the country's surgical separation into two with the assistance and complicity of Stalin. This veritable act of vivisection was only compensated for, and above all partially masked, by the efforts of international capital as a whole during the cold war to use the western part of Germany as a shop-window for their prosperity.

For many a long year, capital was forced to put up with paying this whole "social wage". Alongside repeated unsuccessful attempts to make up for this in other areas (real wages, productivity, etc.), it never stopped trying in every possible way to weaken working people and to prepare the conditions for a general assault on their rights and gains. Step by step, exploiting every opportunity and helped by the complacent and often complicit leaders of the workers' movement, the capitalist class nibbled away unceasingly at the scope and extent of the advantages working people had gained. But above all they acted to reduce the latter's strength and ability to resist by corrupting and suborning the general staffs of their organisations. It continued the already long process of domesticating the trade unions, and also of breaking up their unity using rival and competing leaders. Working people's right to defend themselves was, little by little, patiently reduced and increasingly strictly regulated, so that strikes and demonstrations – not to mention other forms of direct action – were confined and fettered in a rigid and repressive legal straightjacket.

For all this, the European capitalist class were not able to claw back all the concessions they had been forced to give. But, more and more threatened by shrinking profit margins and the international situation, they were forced to take drastic steps to take back the reforms and improvements they had previously conceded. At the same time they tilted the structure of their system towards something that looked more lucrative: the supremacy, not to say dictatorship, of finance and its bastard child, speculation.

### **Capital's frontal attack – and the fall of the USSR**

The global offensive was unleashed by Thatcher in the UK and Reagan in the US. Thatcher soon faced a formidable miners' strike, and even though they were left in the lurch by the bureaucracies of the other unions, the miners stood up to the government's offensive as long as they could. Their defeat was the signal for a general offensive right across Europe. It was the beginning of a great general frontal attack on working people's gains, an attack whose origins, however, lay much earlier. Never forget that the capitalist class had spent years carefully honing their weapons for this great offensive.

It is also important to emphasize that the continent-wide scope of this offensive was supported by strong, allegedly socialist, parties led by François Mitterrand in France, Gerhart Schröder in Germany and Tony Blair in the UK, ably assisted by bureaucrats at the helm of so-called Communist Parties.

The bourgeoisie's "European" project fitted in with the trend towards the concentration of capital and offered the means and the tools to consolidate and boost this offensive. So the general attack on the rights and gains of working people known as "neo-liberalism" was centred on the "European" institutions in Brussels, Strasbourg and Frankfurt. Each section of the European bourgeoisie gained at least three advantages from this. The first was unquestionably that it allowed them to shelter their own anti-working class offensive behind the

attractive screen of building a united Europe. The second advantage resulted from the fact that it appeared as if policies and measures directed against the interests of working people emanated from a centre in Brussels and each individual country was merely carrying them out; this appearance implied that nobody in any particular country was to blame, so that nobody in a given country could be held to account. The third and last advantage rested on the fact that this centre, detached from any real political and social life, is so profoundly anti-democratic and the majority of its members so anonymous, that any struggle against it is impractical, not to say impossible, within the normal framework of democratic politics; its chiefs and their staff are parachuted in anonymously, unelected and without apparent qualifications. It is a monstrously distended bureaucracy which abuses the whole idea and conception of Europe, while in reality it is nothing but a scurrilous parasite unable to achieve anything, let alone a European entity. On the contrary, this overblown, very expensive and useless organism is an agent of the capitalist class' main and most pressing objective and acts solely to organise, regulate and supervise its overall offensive and to destroy systematically the rights and gains working people have won.

Shortly after the concerted attack on working people's rights intensified in this way, a historical event of considerable importance gave a new and extra boost to the capitalist class and their offensive. At the same time, it both directly and indirectly weakened working people's resistance. There is no doubt that the collapse of the Soviet Union stiffened the capitalists, consolidated their position and increased their confidence. Quite apart from what anyone thought about the fall of the USSR, and despite the disastrous role of the bureaucracy which was both its manager and its grave-digger, the whole world working class and working people everywhere lost an advanced post and a precious base for their goals of emancipation. For how long we do not know, the relationship of

forces has tilted clearly to the advantage of the capitalist class and to the detriment of working people.

Capital and all its devoted supporters, in a rush of blissful satisfaction and smug arrogance, crowed their overweening self-satisfaction and arrogance to all and sundry, culminating when one of their intoxicated “thinkers” even proclaimed the end of history. In any case, the sequel was clearly more and stronger cynical and shameless attacks by capital and its supporters and a confused and chaotic retreat by workers forced onto the defensive. Over the last twenty years or so workers have continued to retreat more and more markedly. Some of their big organisations, following leaders already integrated into the system, have identified themselves with the temporary victors, while others have melted like butter in the sun or simply vanished. Unions, too, which used to be official defenders of working people, have, under the leadership of inveterate bureaucrats, publicly become “social partners” of vengeful capital. Even the sinister warning creaks of a system in temporary – but nevertheless alarming – crisis did nothing to disturb these good folks’ deep content.

### **Shock therapy disguised as “reforms”**

In this state of artificially induced euphoria, bumptious capital nevertheless went on reducing, cutting and one by one taking back the advantages working people had won, limiting, circumscribing and slimming down their reforms. All these good people were brutally awoken from their pleasant reverie by the alarm bells of the latest great crisis. We are right in it now, but there is no point going into detail about that here. Everybody knows perfectly well that to reduce the negative impact on themselves and to get out of the crisis, the capitalist class and their system – as is their nature – are doing everything they possibly can to put the whole burden of dealing with and “solving” the crisis onto the backs of working people. However, what is less clear to a lot of people ? because it is hidden ? is the fact that the crisis is

being used as a pretext to ratchet up out of all proportion the scale and force of capital's murderous offensive, which is bearing down on the people of Europe like a tornado.

Governments of every type are shamelessly presenting the destructive attacks they inflict as "reforms". This viciously abuses the traditional attachment working people have to genuine past reforms which actually tangibly improved their lives. Sadly, the unanimous din from the opinion-formers means this pernicious deception has contaminated the whole of society. More seriously, the general staffs of the left parties and of the unions use the same dishonest terminology, whose purpose is precisely to camouflage the dismantling and destruction of the very same genuine reforms in the near and distant past. That is how the "troika" – which has assumed right of attorney over Greece's financial affairs – commands and supervises the stripping and deprivation of the working people of their gains and rights while all the time presenting this destruction as "one-off structural reform" for the "benefit" of the Greek people. As we all know, language and choice of words are never innocent.

Here "disaster capitalism" is applying the "shock doctrine" used more or less all over the world as described by the journalist Naomi Klein. Her book has never been refuted or disproved. (While we are on this subject, there is no doubt at all that her accusations are true and supported by a mass of proven facts. What you can hold against her is that she presents this whole scandalous and revolting situation as an excrescence, a deviation within a healthy capitalist system, whereas it is its essence in its present phase of decline, naturally woven into the very fabric of its existence.) What is happening in Greece – and this is just the prelude – gives us a foretaste of the determination of the capitalist class and its acolytes to squeeze the very last halfpenny out of a people who they have (most democratically) quarantined so that they can be offered up to the tender mercies of "the markets",



i.e. to capitalists usurious to the marrow of their bones.

For Europe's working class and millions of working people, the most important thing to understand is that what is happening is no accident or passing whim, not some passing attitude on the part of capitalism arising just from this particular crisis. Get your heads round this: you should expect absolutely nothing from the capitalist system and its servants. They themselves are all telling us that their society is ill-suited to meeting the needs of working people, that it cannot do it. They keep repeating the mantra that working people are to blame for "living beyond their means", but this merely recognises and confirms that their system really is not able to guarantee the advantages and rights people rely on. That is something that really is "beyond their means". Indeed, thinly-veiling an implied threat of punishment, they have decided to dismantle and end all the previous social gains for once and for all in order to bend working people into the narrow straitjacket of their moribund system's stunted "means".

### **An historic turning point**

We are at an historic moment. In the past, the capitalist class launched successive attacks aimed at reducing the gains working people had made, culminating in a general offensive by Thatcher and co. which exploited the weaknesses of the workers' movement. Now the capitalist system is using the crisis to develop a final all-out assault on working people. It is not just another skirmish or even a partial or isolated confrontation, such as we have often seen in the past, nor even their subsequent extension and development into a general offensive. It is a new stage over and above that, where the ferocity, extent and depth of the blows struck and our capitalist opponents' resolute firmness of purpose absolutely all reveal their determination to go all the way. One further proof of this implacable determination is their peculiar insistence on ravaging gains even beyond the point where the

attacks deliberately reduce, indeed annihilate, any resources that offer a potential way out of the crisis. Now it is the turn of Italian working people to sit in the hot seat: others are not far behind ...

In such a threatening situation, you can only welcome the fact that people get angry in the face of so much deceit and malice and express that anger publicly. There are more and more of them all over the world, an obvious sign – following the spectacular and uncompleted risings by a series of peoples in North Africa and the Middle East – of a reawakening of working people that it still groping for a way forward. All of these expressions of anger and protest in place of resignation and fatalism are in themselves precious as the first signs of incipient consciousness of the threatening reality. But bearing in mind the enormity of what is at stake, the global extent of the conflict and the enemy's unyielding determination, passive indignation and verbal protest are helpless. Those in power, by the way, simply see them as public disorders, at worst annoying, or maybe as street entertainment. Annoyed or amused, they are not going to change by one iota their destructive plans. You really need to do a lot more. In this respect you have to salute the Portuguese working people whose powerful general strike has shown us how to fight. There is no doubt that Greek working people, who have been savagely attacked by capital, will find a path to the kind of vigorous struggle they have always waged over the years. There is also no doubt that other European countries will follow the same path.

### **The response must be international**

Anyone who will not put up with cuts and measures that destroy their rights and advantages, or with present and future austerity plans, and wants to oppose them, needs to get their heads round the idea that this struggle goes far beyond national boundaries. Capital's frontal attack is international, even if it is carried out on national soil and

tailored to fit each specific national set of circumstances. The enemy is everywhere the same. Consequently, struggles confined within the framework of one or another nation, fragmented and isolated from the others, lack the necessary strength to repel attacks that are international in nature and to force into retreat an adversary who is also completely international. Solidarity and links between the various movements in different countries are important but inadequate on their own. We absolutely must field against these degrading plans and actions a movement that is both organically international and also struggles on an international scale. Obviously none of that precludes movements and struggles in each individual country, which provide the base and the framework necessary for any international action.

There is no doubt that what makes a movement of struggle and its action international in character, and what forges its fighting potential, is that it really is international. That is the only way it can measure up to the international character of the plans, actions and offensive of an adversary who is attacking the social position and conditions of life of working people all over the globe, even if what he does varies considerably country by country and continent by continent. Despite the distances that separate them and the great divergence between their respective positions and conditions, that is what solidly unites, for example, working peoples engaged in their own local battles who have recently revolted in the Middle East and North Africa. And that is why there are signs that the working people of Europe are stretching out a fraternal hand to their natural allies, the revolutionary working people of Egypt and Syria engaged in their own bloody struggles.

### **“Anti-globalisation” a blind alley**

Nevertheless, it is necessary to reject calls for an “anti-globalisation” struggle. To characterise the current world economic and political system as “globalisation” is simply

wrong. The bourgeoisie and its ideologists have invented and introduced this mystifying term to hide behind its eminently **geographical** character the present phase of their **economic** and **social** system, which is that well known capitalism-imperialism that is now in a state of advanced senility. As for capitalism, in its distant and still vigorous youth Marx and Engels described "globalisation" in the Communist Manifesto:

"Modern industry has established the world market ..." "The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country..." "In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations."

These notions and concepts of capitalism and its globalisation have long since formed part of the elementary knowledge of the whole of humanity. We are still dealing with the same old system. The changes are only quantitative and moreover are connected with an enormous worsening of its defects.

So it is no surprise that those who have risen to the poisoned bourgeois bait and support "anti-globalisation" are inextricably trapped in confusion. It is very hard for them to shake off the accusation of a bad dose of protectionism, since that is actually the reactionary nationalist and historically outmoded antidote to the world market, with its largely interconnected and interdependent parts. All the noise about "de-globalisation" takes us straight into a dead end alongside the confused and backward-looking prophets of anti productivity, when there are officially a billion people in the world suffering from starvation, not to mention other millions condemned to vegetate in poverty. We should reject capitalist "productivity" spurred on by greed for profit, but we should also fight to expand production to meet the immense unsatisfied needs of humanity.

It is understandable that the first steps of those who want to

struggle against the actions of capital should lead them to embrace “anti globalisation” or “anti productivity”, but these first steps lead into a blind alley scarcely different from that of the “indignant ones”. These are a one-way street to confusion and disillusionment.

### **The capitalist class cannot unify Europe**

The situation in Europe pits us above all directly against a section of the European capitalist class more or less gathered together into a deeply contradictory, unstable and muddled conglomerate called “Europe” or more precisely the European Union. And it is through this body with its monstrously swollen head that it hopes to impose its outrageous plans to wipe out the social advances working people have won. That objective is its central pre-occupation and determines what it does. From this point of view and for that aim, the governments of the European countries, varied as they are, act as its arms and executive agents, even the ones which appear to keep their distance.

That is why the movement against the attacks and attempts to dismantle and destroy working people’s rights needs to be organically international, very concretely Europe-wide, and not simply an occasional adding together of those arising in each country. While reinforcing these, the European movement as a whole needs to concentrate its fire on the capitalists class’s self-proclaimed centres (Brussels, Strasbourg, Frankfurt) and on its planned dirty deeds and manoeuvres.

But it is highly important to understand that a continent-wide movement to defend working people cannot be anti-European. On the contrary, it is the capitalist class that struts around in stolen “European” clothes to hide their concerted attack behind fine phrases about Europe. To tell the truth, this exploitative and oppressive class with its train of servile politicians is absolutely incapable of unifying Europe. The birth of this class was all mixed up with the birth of the nations with which its entire life is bound up. Two

catastrophic world wars testify to this, obviously from the negative side. And since it was only the appearance of this class way back in time that gave birth to nations, so only its disappearance will signal that they too will also die away. The several decades of the European venture provide adequate proof that the capitalist class is quite incapable of unifying Europe but at the same time stolidly determined and able to attack and demolish the gains and rights working people have won.

The colossal level of indebtedness, or rather specifically the way the debts are configured in Europe, is one of the main aspects of the current world crisis which has clearly put into relief these two "European" faces of the capitalist class. Instead of bringing them together on the road to a greater European integration, it has laid bare the divisions between countries, even their extreme separation. At the same time as successive capitalist governments have let domestic inequalities build up and grow to a monstrous level, their "European" agents have reproduced and reinforced these many and varied inequalities in their stunted "Europe".

They have already divided Europe into several more or less concentric circles. There is the outer circle of poor, untouchable pariahs waiting for their masters – usually their former imperialist rulers – to save them by letting them into a second circle of the chosen elect. They are tossed around according to the whim of the lords of Europe, the banks and their packs of patronising politicians. Within the circle of the chosen elect, there are two more circles: that of the countries which are doubly elect because they possess the single currency and the others, looked down on pityingly, who have not yet tasted that bitter fruit. Even though they have caught the same disease of debt, small and large, from Poland to the UK, they are not fettered directly to the calamitous consequences of an artificial currency. (Of course, their working people undergo the same frontal attack by capital on

their gains. On this there is no country that is different, inside or outside Europe.)

And then, behind the deceptive veil of the European "Union", within an already pretty restricted inner circle, the policy of destroying social rights and gains in order to save the capitalists has increased and enlarged the inequalities between countries. That artificial pseudo-currency the euro has powerfully contributed to extending and increasing these inequalities. The monetary aspect of the crisis has revealed and at the same time deepened not just a "simple" growth in inequality but a veritable fissure between these supposedly "united" countries. The leaders of the "more equal" ones and their entourage speak slightingly about certain "less equal" countries like Greece, Portugal, Italy, etc. which these arrogant leaders disdainfully describe as the "periphery" of Europe, echoing the contemptuous and fearful French mantra about the "dangerous *banlieue*".

Today even this – only yesterday broad and compact – camp of close-knit European insiders has fairly well broken apart. Confronted with a veritable rout in which the concentric circles of a pseudo-Europe are gradually shrinking and tending openly and cynically to be reduced to the so-called "German-French axis", "pro-European" politicians and journalists speak and write openly about the possibility of the euro collapsing while their "Europe" falls apart. It is worth repeating that their artificial money, conceived in the feverish imagination of monetarist dogma and first seeing daylight under the magic wand of voluntarism, is before our very eyes colliding with the realities of a fragmented Europe on which it will inevitably break apart. Glimpsing this abyss, some economists, more lucid than the mass of politicians and other "experts", foresee a much narrower grouping of countries as the only way to furnish a more or less realistic and adequate base for a euro which is being tossed about in the air like a shuttlecock. But one can also see clearly the obvious fear

leaders have of taking this route, one more proof that the capitalist class are by their very nature incapable of unifying Europe. The euro is an artificial currency condemned to disappear, and its collapse will lead to that of the capitalists' counterfeit Europe.

Of course this capitalist class and its leaders will never acknowledge that their European (misad)venture is a fiasco. After all, for better or for worse, it is in line with the move towards greater concentration of capital and guarantees it a wider unrestricted market. But most of all, rickety and deformed as this scaffolding is, it provides a framework, a way and a cover (and now also as a pretext) for organising, pursuing and carrying out its frontal attack on the rights and gains workers have achieved, which is ultimately essential if they are to keep their crumbling system going. On Europe, the sharper the contradiction becomes between reality and the capitalist class's obstinacy, the heavier the burden they will put on the backs of working people.

### **Dream of a "social" Europe or fight for a working peoples' Europe**

So what is needed to fight this general and frontal attack by the bourgeoisie is a broad movement of working people. While they camouflage that attack behind the pretence of dealing with the crisis, that is actually the concrete form in which the attack is taking place. You can see that clearly in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and a succession of other countries. Italy is next on the execution block. Given the nature and extent of these attacks, the movement against them cannot but be international and, more concretely, Europe-wide.

Every single one of the great organisations traditionally supposed to defend and promote the interests of working people stops at the borders of its own country, despite the well-known fact that they have sister organisations in every country in Europe. They do have some sort of European or even international centres, but what stands out is these zombie



bodies' total and absolute lack of any European-wide platform or programme. What most of them do is mimic the capitalist class's attitude on Europe, including its general offensive disguised behind a fig-leaf of "reforms". At most, they embroider lovely little designs to set themselves apart, but always on a canvas provided by the capitalists. What they absolutely will not ever do is work out and put forward a coherent programme for Europe, different from, and opposed to, the one currently in force. Not to mention the essential precondition for such a programme, i.e. a critical global analysis of the capitalist class's programme.

At most, the leaders of these organisations will from time to time humbly petition the "competent authorities" to give Europe a social dimension by introducing a series of social norms among the other conditions and criteria of their "European project". In this connection it is brutally revealing that these norms and social rights have been deliberately set aside and have simply disappeared from all plans for "Europe". These ridiculous Don Quixotes never say a word about that and make fools of themselves when they occasionally flaunt themselves as champions of social rights. It never occurs to them to put forward social demands of their own.

Obviously it is extremely important to defend the gains workers have made in each country, because the general offensive to dismantle them often takes a particular form depending on specific national conditions. But if it stays at this national level, the movement to defend them will be delayed and ultimately defeated. We must both strengthen them and unify them into a Europe-wide movement right from the outset. But such a continent-wide movement cannot be limited to just defending social gains, which at the end of the day is a *negative* objective. The only way it can attain the stature it needs is if it has a *positive* goal to aim for. To put it another way, it is not enough to be *against* something, you

have to be fighting *for* something. The banner of this movement must therefore say what it stands for, i.e the construction of a "working people's Europe". Only a struggle with a clear and open orientation on that scale will be in a position to parry and defeat the capitalist class's frontal attack on working people's rights, an attack embodied in their their pseudo-Europe with all its destructive plans.

It would be pretentious and premature to try to work out in advance a detailed and complete programme for the movement towards a working people's Europe, but we should state some aims and demands which flow from the concrete current situation, as well as some of the principles and methods which ought to guide its activity and help it bear fruit.

### **Main central demand**

First of all there is the crisis of this bankers' Europe which currently centres on the colossal levels of debt faced by all the countries in the euro zone (and the rest), causing intractable quibbling and haggling in search of a "solution" which looks more and more like squaring the circle. (Unless, of course, they can impose massive impoverishment on working people under conditions of totalitarian oppression.) The Greek leader Papandreou made a feeble attempt to escape this implacable vice by suggesting that the Greek people should be consulted over what to do about the debts in a referendum. The moment he said this, all the leaders of Europe and their entourages rose in protest as one man, violently and angrily, as if stung by a scorpion. What impertinence! How dare he ask the people what they thought, when those in charge have already decided to squeeze them and their rights even harder! This vain effort tore away the mask and showed the true face of their runt "Europe".

On the one hand this was one more confirmation that they will never be able to pay back the gigantic debts (which at the same time sheds light on the cynical, off-hand, way these leaders trample democracy underfoot). On the other, it exposed

how profound the crisis – or rather death agony – of the euro actually is. How significant that not a single one of all the “socialists” who are up to their necks in this “Europe” and its euro stood up for their “comrade” Papandreou.

What is more, the plan to salvage creditor capital (and definitely not the Greek people), born amid so many protracted and painful labours, also required a good dollop of help from – that same capital. Whether the banks are willing to repeat the experience is more than doubtful. Attempts to consolidate the much-touted European fund to help states meet their debts are certainly not welcomed with open arms in every quarter and are in fact in a bit of a sorry state. The queue of potential victims – Italy, Spain and then France – is coming into sharper focus. The billions that have to be paid back are joined each day by further billions as the usurious interest rate keeps going up, set and raised arbitrarily at the insatiable whim of finance capital, or – to use the oracular, antiseptic language of the spin doctors – “the needs of the markets”. They make old Shylock look a mere beginner.

The sorcerer’s apprentices of modern “Europe” are at least partly responsible for setting up this reality, but they cannot contain the infernal mechanism which is at one and the same time their servant and their master. Desperately trying to get a grip on a situation which slips through their fingers and threatens to carry them away in their turn like Papandreou or Berlusconi, they have opened fire on the ratings agencies. These are unquestionably parasites on the system which have the juicy job of informing finance capital how profitable their investments are, using a continuous grading system. Their ratings are scanned as anxiously as the class dunces read their end of term reports. Because the agencies have recently handed downgrades even to their star European pupils in view of their poor economic performance, these former teachers’ pets have turned on them furiously and used some rather choice language over the loss of their cherished

triple-A ratings. Just like the ancient Romans who put to death the messenger who brought bad news.

The steady and yet disproportionate growth in the already monumental weight of debt actually reflects the real economic situation. That, and the quite bleak prospects for the future mean that it will never be possible to pay the debts back. The few more clear-sighted economists and journalists point out that the main reason for the debts is that economic growth is slowing down considerably, if not just marking time. Consequently they point out that the way forward is a series of measures to improve and increase this growth. And they are right – on paper. Growth is not an isolated, separate economic phenomenon which you can stimulate and increase at will. In capitalism, it depends exclusively on the ability of domestic and export markets to absorb the goods produced. Without going into detail, suffice it to say that these markets are more or less saturated, resulting in chronic over-production. In any case, for a long time now markets have been inaccessible to European (and American) goods which are too expensive and (with the exception of Germany) of inferior quality. That is the actual fact hiding behind the insistent calls by a handful of economists and even fewer politicians for production in Europe to be made more competitive. To put it in simple everyday language, they must produce goods at a better price and of a better quality, etc., if they are to sell them against ever tougher competition from the massive quantities of goods at unbeatable prices appearing from the so-called “emerging” countries, made possible by the shameless super-exploitation of their workers.

Of course capital and its economic and political managers, as ever, see a way out of their serious situation, but it is *their* “way out” in line with their system, starting with a savage determination that their debts will be paid in full, come what may. Next, they seek to improve their economic competitiveness, i.e. cut their production costs. This is

exactly what they are doing with their continuous attacks – not to say a veritable grand offensive – on the rights and advantages working people have gained, achievements which are now definitively incompatible with this reduction in production costs, and therefore with their system as a whole. But they do not stop there. In the next wave they will take direct aim at real wages, and this has already started in places. Do not forget that the German capitalists consolidated their industrial competitiveness by drastically squeezing incomes across the board through a wage freeze “agreed” by compliant trade unions, and this has been going on for years!

### **Don't pay the debts!**

All this means that for a prolonged period the crisis is going to get worse and consequently we must expect a redoubled and sharper offensive against working people on all fronts. There can only be one serious response: we must propose a *general refusal* to pay back these debts, which are growing all the time as the interest goes up. This should be the first demand of the Europe-wide workers' movement in connection with their call for “a working people's Europe”. At the same time it builds a barrier against further destruction of workers' rights. The series of harsh austerity plans inevitably threatens human civilisation as a whole, a terrible sacrifice on the hideous altar of capitalism in decline.

Historical regression of this sort would not be confined to economic and social conditions; gloom would also spread across political life, and to an extent it already has. No-one should forget that in a similarly tortured situation fascism conquered power in Germany, having already triumphed in Italy. It is no accident that it is already making giant strides in several European countries on the same basis of capitalist convulsions and taking advantage of the same dereliction of their most elementary duties by workers' official leaders. If workers and their representatives remain inactive and turn their backs on this struggle to defend themselves boldly and

unite their forces at a European level, there is no doubt that new Hitlers and new Mussolinis will take their place. The worrying progress they are already making in a growing number of countries goes hand in hand with no less disturbing retreats by the workers' movement. The only effective way to fight these shades of barbarism was and is an energetic united struggle to defend the rights workers have gained and to transform a Europe shrouded in shadows into a free "working people's Europe".

While it would be silly and pointless to try to work out a complete scheme of detailed demands for such a Europe-wide workers movement in advance, it does seem necessary to put forward a few important points and principles to guide its activity.

### **Against a stunted "Europe" and its banks**

The central target is European policy, summed up and concentrated in the offensive described above, and Europe's anti-democratic central institutions. The Europe-wide workers' movement is directed against this policy which is profoundly anti-democratic in every way. The movement will be aimed directly against these so-called European institutions whose establishment, character and methods, in line with their policy, are not merely anti-democratic but brutally opposed to democracy. These tyrannical organs are veiled in an anonymity from behind which they issue and impose binding decrees without appeal, squandering vast sums of money in the process. Swarms of idle parasites gravitate around the innumerable pressure groups, wooing and winning support for this or that group of capitalists. In the name of elementary democracy, the Europe-wide workers' movement will fight these anti-democratic monsters, spectres of a long-vanished feudal rule. The Europe-wide workers' movement should loudly insist that the whole lot of these autocratic, parasitic and enormously expensive bodies should be abolished. And while we are about it, it will fight to establish democratic bodies based on the mass participation

of workers and all working people.

Everything about the problems under discussion shows very clearly that this Europe-wide movement will have to have a working-class character. It also means that that this has to be laid down clearly and unequivocally. This stands out when it comes sketching even in outline the aims, programme and method of such a movement. As the partial mobilisations have so far have emphasised, the Europe-wide workers' movement must beyond doubt be directed against the main threat, i.e. finance capital and its institutions, which are already exploiting the crisis to unleash a large-scale offensive. It is therefore clear that, from the start, the movement must aim to undermine the very basis for this evil offensive. The conviction arises naturally that in doing so it is impossible to disentangle social and economic troubles in general, and the refusal to repay the debts in particular, from the circumstances and position of the banks. Consequently one of the very first demands will be to end banking secrecy which, by the way, will remain a pious wish unless it is accompanied by nationalisation of the leading banks under workers' control.

That is the natural, logical and concrete way to strike a real blow at the source of their power, as opposed to the endless chatter and demagogic fantasies, devoid of both content and consequences, around "regulation" of finance capital and its movement. It is also the only serious way to strike a definite blow against the pressure towards impoverishment. Only a radical step like this, under the watchful supervision of workers, would provide at the same time an indispensable basis for and a means to manage credit vigorously and healthily and get an effective grip on the arbitrary up and down movement of interest rates. Such steps are also important in defending the many thousand small, often family, firms which are being mugged by capital. They are the natural allies of working people and their movement in this struggle. What is downright culpable is the almost total silence on these basic questions

emanating from the big "Left" organisations. In this they have absolutely turned their backs on their own – not too distant – past.

### **Renew the trade unions**

To even get off the ground, never mind flourish, a Europe-wide workers' movement absolutely must be allied to the trade unions. Actually there is much more at stake here. The current situation is marked by the general merciless offensive of capital on the one hand and the successive retreats and political and organisational disarmament of the working class and all working people on the other, so the trade unions are a particularly important force and tool in the workers' hands. After all, the sole and original reason for unions is to rally working people together, represent them and defend their interests. They are probably the only levers that actually exist in every country and internationally which can give a decisive boost to their movement, unifying and strengthening them. That is precisely why, ever since they first came into being, capital has always done whatever it could either to destroy and outlaw them, or co-opt them and turn them its own servants.

They have long since succeeded in shepherding unions, through their leaderships, into a sort of "peaceful co-existence" or even class collaboration, sometimes masked or hidden, but suspended and interrupted outright in times of heightened class-struggle. From this point of view, the characteristic trait of recent decades, while capital has been preparing and launching a general offensive, has been the way these trade union leaderships have turned openly and publicly into auxiliary detachments of capital, or, as they themselves put it bluntly, "social partners".

One disastrous consequence of this attack on the innermost core, the most fundamental being of trade unionism, and the kind of behaviour it gives rise to, has been a considerable fall in membership. Massive desertions by workers and working



people in general express a lack of trust in trade unions and have reached alarming proportions in every country. One of the most urgent tasks facing the European workers' movement is to put this into reverse and take back the unions – from top to bottom.

The mass of workers who did stay on in their unions did not follow the same path as the trade union bureaucracies, of class collaboration codified and underlined by their conversion into “social partners”. This stopped the rot from spreading too far and prevented the unions from becoming fully integrated into the state. Despite losses, they have actually maintained their independence and thus their ability to get back into the fight.

On this basis, workers and all working people can and should get back into their unions. In any case, the unions belong to them and not any particular individual, least of all the trade union bureaucrats who put at risk the the very existence of unions, whose main justification after all is that they stand up to capital. The decisive argument in this re-conquest of the unions by workers is this: without these organisations and their mobilising capacity, it would be very difficult, not to say practically impossible, to develop a powerful Europe-wide movement of workers.

However, it goes without saying that this campaign to take back the unions means that they must at the same time be turned back into organisations of struggle against capital's offensive. To do this, a platform of union-organised workers must urgently express in words the need to break with class collaboration (“social partnership”) in order to achieve independence from bosses and government.

### **Combative actions, not carnivals**

Merely deciding to go for that sort of independence, or just talking or writing ringing declarations about it, will not bring it. It will only take concrete shape through involvement

in real, resolute struggle against capital's offensive and all its manifestations. Such a struggle is fundamentally different from all the pretend and pseudo-actions used as a pretext by the leaderships of the "social partner" unions, first and foremost because it completely denounces capital's offensive and condemns it from every angle. That means clearly-defined and precise workers' demands rather than the kind of puerile gestures requesting "realistic negotiations" which trade union bureaucrats often indulge in. It also requires serious actions and combative, determined demonstrations instead of the happy-go-lucky clownish carnival-like processions used to lull working people into a false sense of security.

A particularly important criterion in this involvement is its international – above all Europe-wide – scope and character. Trade unions have significant links and even an apparatus at an international and European level. The acutely painful situation we are in means that these entirely bureaucratised links and offices must be turned boldly into (or replaced by) pillars of continent-wide struggle against capital's offensive and the machinery of it concentrated in Brussels, Frankfurt and Strasbourg. A series of actions in these centres and across Europe should replace the very occasional European rallies disguised as tame village fêtes.

This shows why there is no way the great mass of working people will be able to re-conquer the trade unions without re-establishing complete workers' democracy within them. Besides freedom of discussion, the main test (success criteria) for such democracy is freedom for tendencies and factions to express their views including the right to organise an opposition. This internal democracy is vitally necessary and the only way to work out the best orientation, achieve the necessary flexibility and make sure that the most appropriate slogans are selected. It is the best guarantee against the deadly snares of capitulation through unprincipled opportunism or marginalisation in sectarian sterility. Of course it is

also the only way to give the unions back to working people and make the changes to them that are needed.

A Europe-wide workers' movement can only exist and develop through the involvement of a multitude of political, trade union, cultural, etc. organisations and movements in the various countries. In the nature of things, these organisations function on the basis of a very broad spectrum of different conceptions and programmes and a variety of attachments and affiliations. What will unite them and assemble them into a single movement – besides their working-class character – will be their determination to fight back against capital's attacks on the rights working people have won and the gains they have made. In a situation like this, there is only one way to achieve and guarantee on the one hand the unity and integrity of the movement and on the other the freedom and independence of each of its components. That is the historically-proven method of the international workers' movement, the united workers' front. Almost 100 years ago Lenin, one of the great leaders of this movement, summed it up succinctly in the words: "March separately – Strike together!".

This is the only effective way for our broad and diverse movement to achieve its common goal.

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