

May Day Message from the WRP Namibia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is the only way forward to redemption!

Paul Thomas
Secretary of Publicity.

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY TO REBUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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What Numsa decided in December 2013

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

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

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

The declaration notes: “The treatment of labour as a junior partner within the Alliance is not uniquely a South African

phenomenon. In many post-colonial and post-revolutionary situations, liberation and revolutionary movements have turned on labour movements that fought alongside them, suppressed them, marginalised them, split them, robbed them of their independence or denied them any meaningful role in politics and policy making.”

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

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

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

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

The declaration also re-positions Numsa as a trade union as “shield and spear of workers”, pointing to the need to confront the fragmentation of the workforce through outsourcing and seeking to organise all workers in given workplaces and along supply chains.

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

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

Why they voted leave

Mirek Vodslon, 5 July 2016

“Why we voted leave: voices from northern England” is the title of a documentary (<https://vimeo.com/172932182>) which is really worth giving some thought to. To be more exact, it is a militant message in the form of a documentary. In just under 12 minutes it also shows some of the problems with the Lexit (“left exit”) or “socialist Brexit” position. It was “filmed and edited by Sheena Sumaria, Guerrera Films”, is being advertised by the left group “Counterfire” and shows an anonymous interviewer speaking to five other persons, also unnamed, a Remain voter and four Leave voters in Doncaster.

The supposed need to “take our country back” or “make Britain Britain again” comes up early on. These concerns are first and foremost on the minds of two interviewees. The main reason (mentioned by one of these workers) is to control immigration.

Another two voted Leave “for change” and one of these states that his vote was not about immigration. But why is this change going to be a change for the better? They don’t say, and neither does the interviewer who apparently agrees with these two. She converses with them at length and asks them about Corbyn. Their answer is that they are or were Corbyn supporters despite him adopting the Remain position or until he did. The interviewer, like the Socialist Party and Counterfire, thinks that Corbyn’s Remain campaign was a terrible concession to the right wing of the Labour Party. The interviewer is ready to give him “one more chance” but not two.

One interviewee pleads, like Corbyn, for remaining in the European Union in order to change it. After 30 seconds, the interviewer takes over and “refutes” this lonely “Remainer” simply by asserting that she does not believe in social reforms of the undemocratic EU because the capitalists rule the EU and have the opposite agenda. So, yes, these are voices justifying why they voted Leave, at about 20 to 1 in terms of time, without any real debate with working-class Remainers.

There really is an unorganised working-class anti-EU “movement”. The video shows that and also that it is in part “guided” by this desperate consideration: It can’t get any worse (wrong!), so I vote for whatever promises a change. The presumably socialist interviewer belongs to the movement and supports this fraction of it. An even larger part of this movement voted for change and “knew” what kind of change they wanted, the one that they mistakenly believed would make British imperialism stronger. These two tendencies, desperate adventurism and nationalism, do not exclude each other.

We are not talking here about the nationalism of an oppressed nation. These workers have been falsely persuaded that their oppression is the result of the oppression of their British nation by the European Union but, no, this is the nationalism of a medium sized decadent imperialism, part of whose ruling class dreamt of becoming “great again” by abandoning the EU and especially by getting rid of EU’s minimal social standards. Workers supporting this act against their own immediate interests. The irony on top of this bitter irony is of course that the success of that project is already accelerating both the decadence of British imperialism and the demise of the EU.

The false premise of British workers’ nationalism is the “austere” view that jobs, wages and social resources (NHS, schools, libraries, benefits etc.) – in fact the whole of the working and living conditions of workers – are self-evidently limited British national treasures. From that follows the necessity to guard these precious “possessions” both against foreign workers and against foreign powers like the EU.

These “austere” limits are obviously *the* issue that socialists need to take up with working-class Leave voters (and with all other workers, of course). Practical goals have to be proposed and cast as demands. Those can be only international demands to break with austerity and stop competition among workers, like demands of a European minimum wage allowing a decent living standard, and generally a European minimum of decent social standards.

The EU is able to finance large European programmes. For instance, German finance minister Schäuble has just proposed a big European programme of armament. This is an ideal occasion for Die Linke in Germany, Podemos in Spain, Front de Gauche in France, the renewed Labour Party of Britain and trade unions all over Europe to mobilise not just *against* this horror, but *for* a positive counter-proposal, a European plan of public works to improve the lives of working people and give them

work, especially but not only in “deprived” regions like northern England. That is, make the transition from international “protests” to an international mobilisation for demands to make Europe a place fit for working people.

Such demands can unite European workers and so make an international mobilisation possible. British workers can and must fight for such demands together with workers on the continent despite being now out of the EU by virtue, or rather by the vice, of a mendacious referendum. This has made their situation worse and solidarity with continental workers more difficult to organise, just as the “outsourcing” of a section of the workforce of a company makes it more difficult to organise the solidarity of the whole workforce. Both British and continental workers must now use their trade unions and political parties to intervene strongly in the Brexit negotiations in order to preserve as many of the conditions of that solidarity as possible and even develop them. This concerns especially workers’ rights specified in the European treaties and conventions, however meagre they may be. No British exception undercutting those rights! No restriction of the free movement of workers across Europe, including Britain! These rights must be included in the settlement.

Unfortunately, most working class Leave voters have apparently already made up their minds that British subjection to the EU and especially immigration imposed by the EU are the problems. Coming back to the film, its thrust is to adapt to this position instead of offering an internationalist alternative to it. The interviewer may be an internationalist herself but she refuses to consider reforms of the EU and thus any real steps along a path of an international transition to a socialist Europe. This disarms her when it comes to arguing for internationalism and this may be why she does not even try to take up the subject of internationalism with her polite interviewees. Had she tried some abstract internationalist proclamations on them (called “socialist” or “left”

“argumentation for Brexit” by some ultraleft groups), she might have reaped polite disinterest or even a remark that such proclamations have no connection with their plight.

Instead, she offers the heartbreaking spectacle of a socialist confirming British nationalistic delusions with the following idea: “Austerity is coming from the EU because the EU governs governments”. I beg to differ. This is one of the lies propagated by the class enemies who led the successful Brexit campaign. Efficient lies must be half-truths. In his case, it is just one fourth of the truth. First, the EU is a conglomerate of national states who have the last word in it, which is why the EU is currently paralysed on several questions. Second, the EU Commission does *appear* to govern governments and this appearance *has* been used to shield these governments from their responsibility for imposing austerity. This is the partial truth in the lie. The main part of the truth is that ever increasing “austerity” is an absolute necessity of contemporary capitalism which is why it is being imposed by all its political representatives, national and “European” and why the working class cannot wait much longer to get rid of capitalism. No less important is the fact that capitalism pushed back into the narrow limits of the British national state will have to impose even more severe austerity, and is already planning to do so.

The interviewer having herself adopted some irrational beliefs instilled by the bourgeois Brexit campaign, it is no wonder that she tends to gloss over the irrational or even reactionary aspects of her interlocutors’ opinions in order to make these opinions *look* like expressions of some hypothetical kind of class consciousness that could do without internationalism. Except that this hypothesis is refuted not just by theory, but also by the long experience of working class movement.

These contortions are required to try to underpin the main thesis of the film, which is: the Leave vote of workers was a

class vote. What the film really shows is that the vote of the five "Leavers", including the interviewer, was not about the *struggle* of their own class. It was desperate and in part it was about slogans adopted by a fraction of the enemy class: "national independence" of Britain, mostly in order to curb immigration. If these five voices did cast a class vote, then it was the vote of a class that despairs of herself and has given up being a subject with a goal in life. So, by what it really shows, the film warns us of the possibility that *this sort* of working-class consciousness might prevail. If it does prevail, it will pave the way for barbarism to engulf humanity. Instead of glorifying it, socialists need to think hard how to rebuild real, organised, socialist class consciousness, even if it begins – as it obviously does – as that of a class which must first regain confidence and test seriously if it can defend or recover decent working and living conditions without overthrowing the capitalist class and its state.

To wrap it up, the interviewer spends time reminiscing on the defeat of the miners' strike of 1984-1985, the following deindustrialisation, and the fall of thousands into unemployment and despair. The lesson is that class struggle, in this case a defeat decades ago and subsequent defeats on top of that, are among the deep causes that created the contemporary conditions in which parts of the working class arrive at such utterly wrong conclusions as those expressed by four of the interviewees and the interviewer herself. No less important a cause has been the prolonged absence of a socialist alternative, but the film does not even touch on that. Whatever the causes, wrong conclusions from past struggles remain wrong.

The interviewer wished to correct the view that working-class Brexiters are all racists. She succeeded in that. Even one of the two working-class British nationalists interviewed is no racist, i.e., he does not derive his identity or that of his

enemies from skin colour, skull metrics or pedigree. The other British nationalist is a waste collector, was interviewed at work on the road and had no time to explain himself. Both are certainly afraid of their "foreign" class brothers and sisters and want to keep them out. They are xenophobes.

The strange insistence that most working-class Leave voters are no racists draws attention away from the terrible fact that working-class xenophobia has become a mass phenomenon. Not just in Britain, all over Europe. Trying to sweep that fact under the rug is plainly irresponsible and self-delusional. Nationalism and xenophobia will not go away simply because workers are now being taught a lesson about the negative effects of Brexit which are already setting in. On the contrary, further negative experiences threaten to make xenophobia fester and become fascism.

The question is, how to prevent that? British-nationalistic and xenophobic workers are not likely to be among the first who will be won to a socialist programme. They have some serious rethinking to do because there can be no programme of the working class which is both socialist and nationalist, or both for workers' solidarity and for excluding foreigners from it. It will take time, fresh positive experience of struggle and above all help from other sections of the working class.

There are now two ways to deny them that help. One is to blame them for the living conditions to which capitalism condemns them and which engender despair and backwardness, and treat them all as enemies. Most are not, most have not yet joined fascist squads, it is still possible for socialists to talk to them, as the film suggests. The other way to fail them is to treat their convictions as a minor difference. Pat them on the shoulders and say: "Well done, you voted for change. You also voted against immigration but you meant no offence, did you? Cheers, mate."

Socialists, revolutionaries, especially Marxists who supported

the “socialist Brexit” or Lexit adventure, need to do no less rethinking than these workers: about their negative role and about how on earth they could make such an enormous mistake. What is wrong with their “Marxism”, their organisations and their respected “Marxist” leaders who led them into this impasse? I do hope that this reflection starts now. Simply proceeding with whatever each group thinks is next on the agenda is not an option. Or if it is, it is the option of ultimate degeneration and demise.

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

By Hewat Beukes 11 June 2016 at UN PLAZA, Windhoek

Introduction

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

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

In 1919 the League of Nations ceded the administration of the ‘territory’ including Ovambo and Kavango lands with the

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

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

In the meanwhile a new evil had arisen under South African colonialism. Contract labour. In 1943 as a measure to institutionalise slave labour from the populous northern areas of Ovambo and Kavango lands, the South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA) was established by the South African Administration. It brought young men from the north under conditions tying them to specific employers (owners/hirers) in the south in particular the mines, but also to the farms. Farmers and even small businesses of all races and tribes in the south used the facilities of this slave system.

Farms became killing fields for many of these young workers.

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

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

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

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

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

The sixties saw SWAPO initiating a token guerrilla war on the insistence of the AOU. This was not a serious attempt as illustrated by the fact that the Commander-in-Chief Sam Nujoma and his second-in-command Lukas Pohamba from Lusaka visited the South African Army and Intelligence at the international airport in Windhoek from where they went to Pretoria after which they returned to Zambia.

REPRESENTATION

By 1970 the nation was politically represented by tribal chiefs, SWAPO was an Ovambo tribal organisation, SWANU a

nationalist organisation supported by workers and lower middle class elements. Workers were embroiled in labour struggles in particular the contract labourers but by 1978, there was a fully-fledged national workers movement led by the Rössing miners articulating broad workers' demands.

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

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

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

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

But, already a crucial incident had occurred earlier in 1974. Chief Clemens Kapuuu commissioned by the NC visited Europe and the United Nations to argue the case for independence for Namibia. While in Europe he sought the assistance of Peter Katjavivi the West European Representative of the SWAPO. While hosting the Chief and his delegation, Katjavivi blocked his access to African, European and Caribbean Governments by slandering the Chief as a South African agent. The Chief met closed door upon closed door and was informed of SWAPO's Sole and Authentic Representation status.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

South Africa could no longer rule under Apartheid and it found in the SWAPO leadership the tool to continue its rule.

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

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

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

SWAPO reneged on these terms immediately upon taking over government.

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

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

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

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

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

The criteria for conciliation, benefits and the coveted War Hero status took contradictory forms: Aupa Indongo a billionaire and known collaborator with South Africa has been anointed as War Hero with street names in Windhoek, police spies and former collaborators are SWAPO parliamentarians: Elton Hoff, a demobilised SWATF is Supreme Court Judge, etcetera, etcetera.

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

1. No effective counter-propaganda;
2. No effective action plan;

3. No clear set of demands.

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

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

Issue 16 of the Journal April 2016 out now!

Inside [this issue](#):

Europe:

Who can solve the 'Refugee Crisis' by Mirek Vodslon

How can we build a workers' Europe? by Bronwen Handyside

Draft Programme: A Europe fit for working people (for discussion)

Namibia:

Director of Elections, a letter and a communiqué

Committee of Parents / Truth & Justice Commission demands

Continued Human Rights Abuses

Report of a book launch

MUN Regional Committee supports Marikana inquiry call

Namibian Road authority's reckless roads

Religious ideology:

Discussion Article by Allen Rasek

South Africa:

UF march call

New edition of the The Worker out now!

Out now! [Issue Number 3](#) of Namibia's proletarian newsletter [The Worker](#).

This issue includes material relating to the recent Regional and Local Authority elections and the ongoing attack on the WRP by the SWAPO regime.

The Theses of Pulacayo (1946)

*The revolutionary programme of Trotskyism in South America:
The Theses of Pulacayo*

As the leading elements in the South African working class struggle over key points in the revolutionary programme of Marxism, such as the role of the working class in the revolution, how they relate to other classes, how they should work in government and politics, how to organise at the workplace and in the community, how to plan to develop the national economy and industry, how to organise politically as a party and in a United Front, the Pulacayo Theses provide an essential guide for a way forward.

In 1946 the Bolivian Miners' Federal Trade Union (FSTMB) was a centre of a profound debate between political tendencies which culminated in the Pulacayo Theses submitted by the Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party (POR). Now nearly 70

years old, these Theses stand up astonishingly well as a practical and theoretical guide to action.

Workers International Journal strongly recommends a study of these theses to all those who strive to build the movement demanded by the NUMSA special congress of December 2013

I. Basic principles

1. The proletariat, in Bolivia as in other countries, constitutes the revolutionary social class par excellence. The mineworkers, the most advanced and the most combative section of this country's proletariat, determine the direction of the FSTMB's struggle.

2. Bolivia is a backward capitalist country; within its economy different stages of development and different modes of production coexist, but the capitalist mode is qualitatively dominant, the other socio-economic forms being a heritage from our historic past. The prominence of the proletariat in national politics flows from this state of affairs.

3. Bolivia, even though a backward country, is only one link in the world capitalist chain. National peculiarities are themselves, a combination of the essential features of the world economy.

4. The distinctive characteristic of Bolivia resides in the fact there has not appeared on the political scene a bourgeoisie capable of liquidating the latifundia system and other pre-capitalist economic forms, of achieving national unification and liberation from the imperialist yoke.

These unfulfilled bourgeois tasks are the bourgeois democratic objectives that must unavoidably be realised. The central problems facing the semi-colonial countries are: the agrarian revolution, that is, the elimination of the feudal heritage, and national independence, namely, shaking off the

imperialist yoke. These two tasks are closely inter-linked.

5. "The specific characteristics of the national economy, important as they may be, are more and more becoming an integral part of a higher reality known as the world economy. This is the basis for proletarian internationalism." Capitalist development is characterised by a growing interlinking of international relations, expressed in the growing volume of foreign trade.

6. The backward countries are subjected to imperialist pressure. Their development is of a combined character. These countries simultaneously combine the most primitive economic forms and the last word in capitalist technology and civilisation. The proletariat of the backward countries is obliged to combine the struggle for bourgeois democratic tasks with the struggle for socialist demands. These two stages—democratic and socialist—are not separated in struggle by historic stages; they flow immediately from one another."

7. The feudal landowners have linked their interests with those of world imperialism and have become unconditionally its lackeys.

*From this it follows that the ruling class is a veritable feudal bourgeoisie. Given the primitive level of technology, the running of the latifundia would be inconceivable if imperialism did not support them artificially with scraps from its table. Imperialist domination is inconceivable without the aid of the national governments of the elite. There is a high degree of capitalist concentration in, **Bolivia**; three firms control mining production, the heart of the country's economic life. The class in power is puny and incapable of achieving its own historic objectives, and so finds itself tied to the interests of the latifundists as well as those of the imperialists. The feudal-bourgeois state is an organ of violence destined to uphold the privileges of*

the landowners and the capitalists. The state, in the hands of the dominant class, is a powerful instrument for crushing its enemies. Only traitors or imbeciles could continue to maintain that the state can rise above the classes and paternally decide what is due to each of them.

8. The middle class or petit bourgeoisie is the most numerous class, and yet its weight in the national economy is insignificant. The small traders and property owners, the technicians, the bureaucrats, the artisans and the peasantry have been unable up to now to develop an independent class policy and will be even more unable to do so in the future.

The country follows the town and there the leading force is the proletariat. The petit bourgeoisie follow the capitalists in times of "class peace" and when parliamentary activity flourishes. They line up behind the proletariat in moments of acute class struggle (for example during a revolution) and when they become convinced that it alone can show the way to their own emancipation. In both these widely differing circumstances, the independence of the petit bourgeoisie proves to be a myth. Wide layers of the middle class obviously do possess an enormous revolutionary potential—it is enough to recall the aims of the bourgeois democratic revolution—but it is equally clear that they cannot achieve these aims on their own.

9. What characterises the proletariat is that it is the only class possessing sufficient strength to achieve not only its own aims but also those of other classes. Its enormous specific weight in political life is determined by the position it occupies in the production process and not by its numerical weakness. The economic axis of national life will also be the political axis of the future revolution.

The miners' movement in Bolivia is one of the most advanced workers' movements in Latin America. The reformists argue that it is impossible for this country to have a more

advanced social movement than in the technically more developed countries. Such a mechanical conception of the relation between the development of industry and the political consciousness of the masses has been refuted countless times by history.

If the Bolivian proletariat has become one of the most radical proletariats, it is because of its extreme youth and its incomparable vigour, it is because it has remained practically virgin in politics, it is because it does not have the traditions of parliamentarism or class collaboration, and lastly, because it is struggling in a country where the class struggle has taken on an extremely war-like character. We reply to the reformists and to those in the pay of La Rosca that a proletariat of such quality requires revolutionary demands and the most extreme boldness in struggle.

II. The type of revolution that must take place

1. We mineworkers do not suggest we can leap over the bourgeois democratic tasks, the struggle for elementary democratic rights and for an anti-imperialist agrarian revolution. Neither do we ignore the existence of the petit bourgeoisie, especially peasants and artisans. We point out that if you do not want to see the bourgeois democratic revolution strangled then it must become only one phase of the proletarian revolution. Those who point to us as proponents of an immediate socialist revolution in Bolivia are lying. We know very well that the objective conditions do not exist for it. We say clearly that the revolution will be bourgeois democratic in its objectives and that it will be only one episode in the proletarian revolution for the class that is to lead it.

2. The proletarian revolution in Bolivia does not imply the exclusion of the other exploited layers of the nation; on the contrary, it means the revolutionary alliance of the

proletariat with the peasants, the artisans and other sectors of the urban petit bourgeoisie.

3. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the expression at state level of this alliance. The slogan of proletarian revolution and dictatorship shows clearly the fact that it is the working class who will be the leading force of this transformation and of this state. On the contrary, to maintain that the bourgeois democratic revolution, as such, will be brought about by the "progressive" sectors of the bourgeoisie, and that the future state will be a government of national unity and concord, shows a determination to strangle the revolutionary movement within the framework of bourgeois democracy. The workers, once in power, will not be able to confine themselves indefinitely to bourgeois democratic limits; they will find themselves obliged—and more so with every day—to making greater and greater inroads into the regime of private property, in such a way that the revolution will take on a permanent character.

Before the exploited, we, the mineworkers, denounce those who attempt to substitute for the proletarian revolution, palace revolutions fomented by various sections of the feudal bourgeoisie.

III. The struggle against class collaboration

1. The class struggle is, in the last analysis, the struggle for the appropriation of surplus value. The proletariat that sells its labor power struggles to do this on the best terms it can and the owners of the means of production (capitalists) struggle to seize the product of unpaid labour; both pursue opposite aims, which makes their interests irreconcilable.

We must not close our eyes to the fact that the struggle against the bosses is a fight to the death, for in this struggle the fate of private property is at stake.

Unlike our enemies, we recognise no truce in the class struggle. .

The present historical stage, a period of shame for humanity, can only be overcome when social classes have disappeared and there no longer exist exploiter and exploited. Those who practice class collaboration are playing a stupid game of words when they maintain that it is not a question of destroying the rich but of making the poor rich. Our goal is the expropriation of the expropriators.

2. Every attempt to collaborate with our executioners, every attempt to make concessions to the enemy in the course of the struggle, means abandoning the workers to the bourgeoisie. Class collaboration means renouncing our own objectives. Every conquest by the workers, even the most minimal, is obtained only at the price of a bitter struggle against the capitalist system. We cannot think about reaching an understanding with our oppressors because, for us, the program of transitional demands serves the goal of proletarian revolution.

We are not reformists, even when putting before the workers the most advanced platform of demands; we are above all revolutionaries, for we aim to transform the very structure of society.

3. We reject the petit bourgeois illusion according to which the state or some other institution, placing itself above the social classes in struggle, can solve the problems of workers. Such a solution, as the history of the workers' movement, nationally and internationally, teaches us, has always meant a solution in accord with the interests of capitalism at the expense of the impoverishment and oppression of the proletariat.

Compulsory arbitration and legal limitations of workers' means of struggle, in most cases mark the onset of defeat. As

far as is possible, we fight to destroy compulsory arbitration.

Social conflicts should be resolved under the leadership of the workers and by them alone!

4. The realisation of our program of transitional demands, which must lead to proletarian revolution, is always subject to the class struggle. We are proud of being the most intransigent when there is talk of making compromises with the bosses. That is why it is a key task to struggle against and defeat the reformists who advocate class collaboration, as well as those who tell us to tighten our belts in the name of so-called national salvation. There can be no talk of national grandeur in a country where the workers suffer hunger and oppression; rather we should really talk of national destitution and decay. We will abolish capitalist exploitation.

War to the death against capitalism! War to the death against the reformist collaboration! Follow the path of class struggle towards the destruction of capitalist society!

IV The struggle against imperialism

1. For the mineworkers, the class struggle means above all the struggle against the big mining trusts, against a sector of Yankee imperialism that is oppressing us. The liberation of the exploited is tied to the struggle against imperialism.

Since we are struggling against international capitalism we represent the interests of the whole of society and our aims are shared by the exploited the world over. The destruction of imperialism is a pre-condition to the introduction of technology into agriculture and the creation of light and heavy industry.

We are an integral part of the international proletariat because we are engaged in the destruction of an international

force— imperialism.

2. We denounce as declared enemies of the proletariat the “leftists” who have sold out to Yankee imperialism, who talk to us of the greatness of the “democracy” of the north and its worldwide domination. You cannot talk of democracy in the United States of North America where the sixty families dominate the economy, sucking the blood from semi-colonial countries, ours amongst them. Yankee dominance throws up a vast accumulation and sharpening of the antagonisms and contradictions of the capitalist system. The United States is a powder keg, waiting for just one spark to explode it. We declare our solidarity with the North American proletariat and our irreconcilable enmity towards its bourgeoisie who live off plunder and oppression on a world scale.

3. The policies of the imperialists, which dictate Bolivian politics, are determined by the monopoly stage of capitalism. For this reason, imperialist policy can mean only oppression and plunder, the continued transformation of the state to make it a docile instrument in the hands of exploiters. “Good neighbourly relations,” “pan Americanism” and so on, are just a cover which the Yankee imperialists and the Criollo feudal bourgeoisie use to dupe the Latin American peoples.

The system of mutual diplomatic consultation, the creation of international banking institutions with the money of the oppressed countries, the concession to the Yankees of strategic military bases, the one sided contracts for the sale of raw materials etc, are so many devices used by those who govern the Latin American countries to shamefully divert the riches of these countries for the profit of voracious imperialism. To struggle against this embezzlement and to denounce all attempts at imperialist plunder is a fundamental duty of the proletariat.

The Yankees won't just stop at dictating the composition of cabinets; they will go much further: they have taken on board

the task of directing the police activity of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie. The announcement of the struggle against anti-imperialist revolutionaries means nothing less than that.

Workers of Bolivia! Strengthen your cadres in order to fight Yankee imperialist plunder!

V. The struggle against fascism

1. Our struggle against imperialism must run parallel to our struggle against the embezzling feudal bourgeoisie. Anti-fascism, in practice, becomes one aspect of this struggle: defence and attainment of democratic rights and the destruction of the armed bands maintained by the bourgeoisie.

2. Fascism is a product of international capitalism. It is the final stage of the decomposition of imperialism but, in spite of everything, it does not cease to be an imperialist phase. When state violence is organised to defend capitalist privileges and to physically destroy the workers' movement, we find ourselves in a regime of a fascist type. Bourgeois democracy is a costly luxury that can only be afforded by those countries that have accumulated a great deal of fat at the expense of other countries where famine rages. In poor countries, such as ours, the worker will at one time or another will find himself looking down the barrel of a rifle.

No matter which party has to resort to fascistic methods the better to serve the interests of imperialism, one thing is sure: if capitalist oppression continues to exist, it is inevitable that those governments will be characterised by violence against the workers.

3. The struggle against the fascist bands is subordinated to the struggle against imperialism and the feudal bourgeoisie. Those who, under the pretext of fighting fascism, peddle confidence in equally 'democratic' imperialism and the 'democratic' feudal-bourgeoisie are only preparing the ground

for the inevitable advent of a fascistic regime. To eliminate the fascist peril once and for all, we have to destroy capitalism as a system.

In the fight against fascism, far from artificially dulling class contradictions, we must sharpen the class struggle.

Workers and all the exploited let us destroy capitalism in order to definitively destroy the fascist peril and the fascistic bands! It is only by the methods of proletarian revolution and within the framework of the class struggle that we can smash fascism.

VI. The FSTMB and the present situation

1. The revolutionary situation brought about on July 21 [the overthrow of Villarroel] by the irruption onto the streets of the exploited, deprived of bread and liberty, and by the combative defensive action of the miners forced to defend the social gains and to extract further gains, has allowed the representatives of the mine owners to construct their state apparatus thanks to the treachery and collusion of the reformists who have made a pact with the feudal bourgeoisie. The blood spilled by the people aided its executioner to consolidate its position in power. The fact that the governmental Junta was a provisional institution did not in anyway modify this situation. The mineworkers were right to adopt an attitude of distrust vis-à-vis those in power and to demand from them that they oblige the companies to comply with the law. We cannot and must not solidarise with any government which is not our own, that is, a workers' government. We cannot take this step because we know that the state represents the interests of the dominant social class.

2. "Worker" ministers do not change the nature of bourgeois governments. As long as the state is the defender of capitalist society, "worker" ministers become common pimps in the service of the bourgeoisie. The worker who is weak enough

to swap his battle station in the revolutionary ranks for a bourgeois ministerial portfolio, joins the ranks of the traitors. The bourgeoisie has created "worker" ministers the better to dupe workers and so that the exploited will abandon their own methods of struggle, giving themselves over heart and soul to the guardianship of the "worker" minister.

The FSTMB will never enter a bourgeois government, because this would mean the most bare-faced betrayal of the exploited and the abandonment of our revolutionary class struggle line.

3. The next elections will install a government in the service of the big mining companies, because there is nothing democratic about these elections. The majority of the population, the indigenous [Indian] people and an enormous percentage of the proletariat are, by means of obstacles created by the Electoral Laws and because they are illiterate, refused the right to take part in elections. Sectors of the petit bourgeoisie, corrupted by the dominant class, have the decisive weight in the outcome of elections.

We harbour no illusions about the electoral struggle, we workers will not come to power by stuffing a ballot paper in a ballot box, and we will get there by social revolution. That is why we can assert that our behaviour towards the future government will be the same as towards the present Junta in power. If the laws are complied with, so much the better; that is what governments are supposed to do. If they are not, the government will find itself up against our most strenuous protest.

VII. Transitional demands

Each union, each mining region has its particular problems and the trade unionists in each of these must adapt their day-to-day struggle to these particularities. But, there are also problems which affect worker militants throughout the

country and create the possibility of uniting them: growing poverty and the bosses' boycott, which are becoming more menacing each day. Against these threats the FSTMB proposes radical measures.

1. The establishment of a basic minimum wage and a sliding scale of wages

The suppression of the pulperia barata [company shops] system and the enormous gap between standard of living and real wages, demands the fixing of a minimum wage.

A scientific study of a working class family's living needs must serve as the basis of indexation for the minimum wage, i.e. of a wage that would allow that family to live a human existence.

In line with the decision of the Third Miners' Congress (Catavi-Llallagua, March 1946), this wage must be complemented by a sliding scale of wages. In this way we can ensure that the periodic adjustment of wages is not nullified by rising prices.

We will put an end to the ceaseless manoeuvres that consist of swallowing up wage rises through devaluation and the hiking—almost always artificial—of the cost of living. The unions must take charge of the checking of the cost of living and must demand from the companies the automatic increase of wages in line with this cost. The basic wage, far from being static, must rise in line with the increase in the price of basic necessities.

2. The forty-hour week and a sliding scale of working hours

The introduction of machinery into the mines has resulted in the intensification of the work rate. The nature of work underground itself means that the eight-hour day is in fact longer and that it destroys the workers' vitality in an inhuman way. The very struggle for a better world demands

that we free, however little, man from the slavery of the mine. That is why the FSTMB will fight to win the forty-hour week, complete with the introduction of the sliding scale of working hours.

The only way to struggle effectively against the constant danger of a bosses' boycott is to win the sliding scale of working hours that will reduce the working day in line with the number of unemployed. Such a reduction must not mean a cut in wages, since the latter is considered to be the minimum living wage.

This alone will allow us to avoid the situation where worker militants are crushed by poverty and where the bosses boycott artificially creates an army of unemployed.

3. Occupation of the mines

The capitalists attempt to contain the rise of the workers' movement with the argument that they are obliged to close unprofitable mines: they attempt to put a rope round the necks of the unions by invoking the spectre of lay-offs. Moreover, temporary suspension of extraction, as experience shows, has only served to make a mockery of the real potential of the social laws and to re-employ workers under the pressure of hunger in truly shameful conditions.

The big companies use a double accounting system. One is intended for the consumption of the workers and for when it comes to paying taxes to the state; the other is used to establish the rate of dividends. For that reason, the figures of the accounts books will not make us give up our legitimate aspirations.

The workers who have sacrificed their lives on the altar of the companies' prosperity have a right to demand that they are not denied the right to work, even in periods where this is not profitable for the capitalists.

The right to work is not a demand aimed against such and such a capitalist in particular, but against the system as a whole; that is why we cannot let ourselves be stopped by the lamenting of certain bankrupt small manufacturers.

If the bosses find they cannot give their slaves one more piece of bread, if capitalism, in order to survive, must attack the wages and gains won, if the capitalists immediately reply to all demands with the threat of a lock-out, the workers no longer have any other option than to occupy the mines and to take in hand, on their own account, the management of production.

The occupation of the mines, in itself, goes beyond the framework of capitalism, since it poses the question of who is the true master of the mines: the capitalists or the workers? Occupation should not be confused with the socialisation of the mines: it is only a question of avoiding the situation where the success of the bosses' boycott, condemns the workers to die of starvation. Strikes with mine occupations are becoming one of the central aims of the FSTMB.

From this point of view, it is obvious that the occupation of the mines can only be considered illegal. It couldn't be otherwise.

An action that, from all points of view, goes beyond the limits of capitalism cannot be catered for by already existing legislation. We know that in occupying the mines we are breaking bourgeois law and we are on the way to creating a new situation. We know that from now, the legislators in the service of the exploiters will give themselves the task of codifying this situation and will try to smother it by means of regulations.

The Supreme Decrees of the junta in power forbidding the seizure of the mines by the workers does not affect our

position. We knew in advance that it is impossible in such cases to count on government support, and we are aware that we are not operating under the protection of the law. Therefore, no other perspective remains to us but the occupation of the mines without conceding the slightest compensation to the capitalists.

In the course of the occupation of the mines there must emerge mine committees formed with the agreement of all the workers, including those who are not unionised. The mine committees will have to decide the future of the mine and of the workers involved in production.

Mineworkers: to thwart the bosses' boycott—OCCUPY THE MINES.

4. Collective agreements

The law of the land states that the employers are free to choose between individual and collective contracts. Up till now, because it suits the companies, it has not been possible to win collective agreements. We must fight for the implementation of only one type of work contract: the collective contract.

We cannot allow the individual worker to let himself be crushed by the power of capitalism. In fact, he is unable to give his free consent since such a thing cannot exist while domestic poverty forces the acceptance of the most ignominious work contracts.

To the organised capitalists, who pull together to rob the worker through individual contracts, we oppose collective contracts of the workers organised in trade unions.

a) The collective work contract must above all be revocable at any time by the wish of the unions alone.

b) It must be obligatory for all, including non-union members; the worker who is going to sign a contract will find

suitable conditions already established.

c) It must not exclude the most favourable of the conditions that may have been won from individual contracts.

d) Its implementation and the contract itself must be under union control.

*e) The collective contract must be built upon our platform of transitional demands. Against capitalist extortion:
COLLECTIVE WORK CONTRACTS!*

5. Workers' control of the mines

The FSTMB supports every measure that takes the unions on the path towards the achievement of real workers' control over all aspects of mine work. We must disclose the bosses' business secrets, their secret accounting, their technological secrets, the processing of minerals, etc, in order to organise direct intervention into these secret plans by the workers themselves. Because our objective is the occupation of the mines, we must turn our attention to throwing the light of day onto the bosses' secrets.

The workers must control the technical management of the mines, the accounts books, must intervene in the assignment of the different categories of work and, especially, they must make known publicly the profits drawn by the big mining companies and the fraud they perpetrate when it comes to paying taxes or contributions to the workers' Insurance and Savings Fund.

To the reformists who talk of the sacred rights of the bosses, we oppose the slogan of WORKERS' CONTROL OF THE MINES.

6. Trade union independence

The realisation of our aspirations will only be possible if we are able to free ourselves from the influence of all

sectors of the bourgeoisie and its "left" agents. "Managed" trade unions are a cancer in the workers movement. When trade unions become appendages of government, they lose their freedom of action and lead the masses on the road to defeat.

We denounce the CSTB as an agent of government in the ranks of the workers. We can have no confidence in organisations which have their permanent secretariat in the Ministry of Labor and who send their members out to propagandise for the government.

The FSTMB is absolutely independent from the different sectors of the bourgeoisie, from left reformism and from the government. It practices a revolutionary trade union policy and denounces as treason any accommodation with the bourgeoisie or government.

WAR TO THE DEATH AGAINST GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED TRADE UNIONISM!

7. Arming the workers

We have said that, as long as capitalism exists, the workers will be constantly threatened with violent repression. If we want to avoid a repetition of the Catavi massacre we must arm the workers. To repulse the fascist bands and the strike breakers, let us forge suitably armed workers' strike pickets. Where are we going to get the arms? The fundamental task is to convince rank and file workers that they must arm themselves against the bourgeoisie, which is itself armed to the teeth; once that conviction is driven home, the material means will be found. Have we perhaps forgotten that we work every day with powerful explosives?

Every strike is the potential beginning of civil war and we must approach it with arms adequate to the task. Our objective is victory and for that we must never forget that the bourgeoisie can count on its army, police and its fascist bands. It falls to us, then, to organise the first cells of

the proletarian army. All the unions must form armed pickets from the younger and most combative members.

The trade union strike pickets must organise themselves militarily and as soon as possible.

8. A strike fund

The pulperías baratas [mining company stores] and low wages are the companies' means of keeping in check the workers, whose daily wage is their only resource. Hunger is the worst enemy of the striker. So that the strike can come to a successful end, we must relieve the striker of the burden of a starving family. The unions must reserve part of their income to build up strike funds, so that they may grant, as the case arises, the necessary aid to the workers.

Break the burden of hunger that the bosses impose on strikers; organise strike funds right away!

9. Control of the abolition of the pulpería barata system

We have already seen that the pulpería barata system made possible the unwarranted enrichment of the bosses at the expense of workers' wages. However, simply doing away with these shops is only worsening the situation of the workers and is turning into a measure contrary to their interests.

So that the elimination of the pulperías baratas fulfils its function, we must demand that this measure is accompanied by a sliding scale of wages and recognition of the basic minimum wage.

10. The elimination of "a contrato" work

In order to get round the legal daily maximum hours of work and to exploit the workers even

further, the companies have dreamed up different methods of work called "a contrato." We are obliged to thwart this new

capitalist manoeuvre aimed at increasing their spoils. Let us establish a single system of daily wages.

VIII. Direct mass action and the parliamentary struggle

1. Amongst the methods of struggle of the proletariat, direct mass action occupies a central position for us. We know only too well that our liberation will be first and foremost our own work and that to win it we cannot count on the help of any forces other than our own. That is why, at this stage of upturn in the workers' movement, our preferred method of struggle is the direct action of the masses, that is to say the strike and the occupation of the mines. As much as possible we must avoid striking for insignificant reasons in order to avoid squandering our strength. We must go beyond the stage of localised strikes. Indeed, isolated strikes allow the bourgeoisie to concentrate its forces and attention on a single point. Every strike must start off with the aim of becoming generalised. What is more, a strike by the miners must spread itself to other sectors of workers and to the middle class. Strikes with occupation of the mines are on the agenda. The strikers, from the outset, must control all key points of the mines and, above all, the explosives depots.

We declare that in putting the direct action of the masses to the forefront, we are not denying the importance of other forms of struggle.

Revolutionaries must be everywhere where social life throws the classes into struggle.

2. The parliamentary struggle is important, but in periods of upturn in the revolutionary movement, it takes on a secondary character. In order to play an effective role, parliamentarism must be subordinated to the direct action of the masses. In times of retreat when the masses abandon struggle and the bourgeoisie takes back the positions it has abandoned, parliamentarism can play a prominent role. In

general, bourgeois parliaments do not resolve the essential problem of our epoch: the fate of private property. This question will be resolved by the workers in the streets. Although we do not renounce parliamentary struggle, we subject it to definite conditions. We must send to parliament tried and tested revolutionary militants who are in full agreement with our trade union activity. Parliament must become a revolutionary tribune: we know that our representatives will be in a minority, but we also know that they will undertake to expose, from inside the assembly itself, the manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie. But above all, the parliamentary struggle must be tied to the direct action of the masses. Worker deputies and mineworkers must act according to one line only: the principles of these theses.

In the course of the next electoral struggle, our task will consist of sending to parliament the strongest possible workers' bloc. We stress that, while we are anti parliamentarists, we cannot, however, leave the field free to our class enemies. Our voice will be heard in the parliamentary arena as elsewhere.

To the electoral manoeuvres of the left traitors, we counterpose the formation of the PARLIAMENTARY BLOC OF MINERS!

IX. To the bourgeois demand for national unity, we oppose the workers' united front

1. We are soldiers of the class struggle. We have said that the war against the exploiters is a war to the death. That is why we will destroy every attempt at collaboration within the workers' ranks. The door to betrayal opened with the famous popular fronts, which, drawing away from the class struggle united the proletariat with the petit bourgeoisie and even with certain sectors of the bourgeoisie.

The policy of popular fronts has cost the international proletariat many defeats. So called "national unity" is the

most cynical expression of the negation of class struggle, the abandonment of the oppressed to their executioners, and is the end point of the degeneration which the popular front constitutes. This bourgeois demand has been launched by the reformists. "National unity" means the unity of the bourgeoisie and their lackeys with the aim of muzzling the workers. "National unity" means the defeat of the exploited and the victory of La Rosca. It is impossible to talk of "national unity" when the nation is divided into social classes engaged in a fight to the death. As long as private property reigns, only traitors or paid agents of imperialism can dare to speak of "national unity."

2. To the bourgeois demand for "national unity" we oppose that of the Proletarian United Front. The uniting of the exploited and the revolutionary elements in one unbreakable bloc is imperative in order to destroy capitalism which is, itself, united in a single bloc. Because we use the methods of proletarian revolution and because we do not step outside the framework of class struggle, we will forge the Proletarian United Front.

3. To counteract bourgeois influences, to achieve our ambitions, to mobilise the masses towards proletarian revolution, we need the Proletarian United Front. Revolutionary elements that identify with our declarations and proletarian organisations (factory workers, railway workers, printers, lorry drivers, etc) all have their place in the Proletarian United Front. Lately, the CSTB has been calling for a Left Front. Even now, we do not know for what purpose such a front is to be formed. If it is only a pre-electoral manoeuvre and if they seek to impose a petit bourgeois leadership on it—the CSTB is petit bourgeois—we declare that we will have nothing to do with such a Left Front. But if it will allow proletarian ideas to be dominant and if its aims are those of these theses, we would rally all our forces to this front which, in the last analysis, would

be nothing other than a proletarian front with minor differences and under a different name. Against the united front of La Rosca, against the fronts which the petit bourgeois reformists think up almost daily:

Let us forge the Proletarian United Front!

X. Union confederation

The struggle of the proletariat requires a single command structure. It is necessary to forge a powerful UNION CONFEDERATION [Central Obrera]. The history of the CSTB shows us the way in which we must proceed if we are to succeed in our task. When federations turn themselves into docile instruments of the petit bourgeois political parties, when they begin to make pacts with the bourgeoisie, they cease to be the representatives of the exploited. It is our duty to avoid the manoeuvres of the trade union bureaucrats and sections of craft workers corrupted by the bourgeoisie:

The Confederation of Bolivian Workers must be organised on a truly democratic basis. We are tired of fiddled majorities. We will not stand for an organisation made up of about a hundred craft workers being able to have as much weight in the electoral balance as the FSTMB which numbers about 70,000 workers. The decisions of majority organisations cannot be overturned by the vote of almost non-existent groupings.

The proportional influence of the various federations must be worked out on the basis of the number of members.

PROLETARIAN, NOT PETIT BOURGEOIS, IDEAS MUST TAKE PRIME PLACE IN THE UNION CONFEDERATION.

Moreover, our task is to furnish it with a truly revolutionary program that must take its inspiration from what we put forward in this document.

XI. Agreements and compromises

1. With the bourgeoisie we must make neither bloc nor agreement.

2. We can form blocs and sign agreements with the petit bourgeoisie as a class, but not with its political parties. The Left Front, and the Union Confederation are examples of this type of bloc, but we must take care to fight to put the proletariat at its head. Faced with attempts to make us follow the petit bourgeoisie, we must refuse and break these blocs.

3. It is possible that many pacts or compromises with different sectors will not come to fruition; nevertheless, they are a powerful instrument in our hands. These compromises, if they are undertaken in a revolutionary spirit, allow us to unmask the betrayals of the petit bourgeois leadership and draw their base towards our positions. The July pact between workers and university staff is an example of the way in which a broken agreement can become a formidable weapon against our enemies. When certain academics without any standing launched an attack on our organisation in Oruro, the workers and revolutionary elements from the University attacked them and so gained some influence amongst the students. The declarations made in this document must form the starting point of any alliance.

The success of a pact depends on us, the miners, initiating the attack against the bourgeoisie; we cannot expect petit bourgeois sectors to take such a step.

The leader of the revolution will be the proletariat. The revolutionary collaboration between miners and peasants is a central task of the FSTMB; such collaboration is the key to the coming revolution. The workers must organise peasant unions and must work with the Indian communities.

For this the miners must support the peasants' struggle against the latifundia and back up their revolutionary

activity.

It is our duty to bring about unity with other sectors of workers as well as with the exploited sectors of artisans: journeymen and apprentices.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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NB. the numbering of section Vii parts 5 and 6 has been corrected from the version appearing Wirfi Journal No.13 july 2015

Namibia: WRP election successes

Workers Revolutionary Party to Rebuild the Fourth International is a member of the Workers International for the Rebuilding of the Fourth International.

Its leadership emanated from the liberation struggle of Namibia and were part of the socialists in the SWAPO Youth League, which in 1976 unsuccessfully challenged the SWAPO Leadership for all-encompassing corruption and imperialist collaboration due to imperialist intervention.

In 1984 we started building our party clandestinely and stood in the forefront of the struggle against the terror campaign and mass killings of SWAPO members by the SWAPO leadership in exile in Angola and Zambia.

In 1988 our party called out the mass protests of 4 May 1988 against South Africa just prior to independence obtained in 1989.

Since 1990 we have fought on all fronts on issues wracking the working class and the colonial status quo maintained by the colonial ruling classes through a caretaker boss-boy SWAPO regime.

We dealt with trade union issues, the homeless, the landless and workers who were in struggle over the past 24 years.

We participated in elections to articulate a workers programme and self-determination for national groups.

We did not stand in the 2009 elections due to our work with mass workers groups such as the TCL miners whose pensions were stolen, teachers who were being pauperized, fuel workers who were being brutalized, the Truth and Justice

Committee seeking historical restitution of history and the landless whom the regime sought to bulldoze after they had taken their land by themselves.

We took part in the 28 November 2014 general elections, incorporating former soldiers of South Africa who were forcefully conscripted during the colonial era and whose pensions were stolen by the SWAPO regime, and won two seats in the National Assembly to the consternation of the bourgeoisie.

The media speculate on how a party which has not made one rally or campaigned could obtain such a high number of votes and for that matter a communist party.

Our votes varied between 1.5 and 2% over this vast country (1,600 km north to south, from central Namibia to north west 1,600 km, east to west 800 km.)

Our votes came mostly from organized groups and from supporters of our work over 24 years.

(We plan to produce a fuller report on the Namibian election campaign and results in the next issue of Workers' International Press – Editor)

Stalinist witch-hunt paves the way for violent

repression

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

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

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

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

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

(We also look in detail in another article at the way the leaders of the "Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917" saw the active and leading role of the working class in revolutions in which other oppressed labouring classes were involved, and indeed how their views on this really developed alongside their growing understanding of what was then the early decades of imperialism.)

Nzimande carefully skirted around the fact that the

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

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

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

His problem is that 20 years on from the end of the apartheid regime, and following the police killing of 34 platinum miners at Marikana, this assertion has become threadbare. No wonder many of the more thoughtful workers, even if they still think the “National Democratic Revolution” was a valid way forward, have now reached the conclusion that to say the least “the Alliance has been captured and taken over by right-wing forces”.

So where does this leave Nzimande and the SACP leadership?

They can only respond as every Stalinist leadership has responded, with slander and libels, preparing the way for attempts at physical repression.

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

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

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

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

He linked the NUMSA leadership with the "neo-fascist, demagogic and populist" Economic Freedom Fighters, "a party which only brought hooliganism to Parliament", and the "deeply divided" Democratic Alliance (DA) with a "white brat-pack", and "our own factory faults", i.e former members who have abandoned the SACP. At other times the leaders of NUMSA have been accused of wanting "regime

change”.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“At least two individuals named in the document, Professor Patrick Bond of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Azwell

Banda, a former Zambian trade unionist, have been the victims of crime recently, in what appears to be attempts to intimidate them.

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

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

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

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

Millions of trade unionists and socialists in the UK, the United States and elsewhere supported the resistance to the

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

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

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

Bob Archer, January 2015

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

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

NUMSA proposes to:

(1) Break the trade unions away from the ruling alliance

with the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) because that alliance has been "captured by hostile forces"

(2) Commission an international study of the history of previous attempts to establish working class political parties in different parts of the world in order to prepare to form one which can defend the interests of working people today

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

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

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

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

Late last year they bureaucratically forced through a decision to expel NUMSA from the Confederation of South African Trades Unions (COSATU) – a body which NUMSA

activists helped to establish in previous decades in the teeth of apartheid oppression! Workers' International stands foursquare with NUMSA and her allies against this undemocratic move to silence her.

A campaign of slander and intimidation against NUMSA and her supporters is now developing (cf. "Reinstate NUMSA in its rightful place in the leadership of COSATU" in Workers International Press no. 9.)

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

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

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

A necessary discussion

South African workers and their own leaders in the organisations they control, such as NUMSA, have been trying

to force the leaders of the SACP and the ANC to make good on the promises they made in the early 1990s, when government rule in South Africa was peacefully handed over from the apartheid Nationalist regime to the Alliance. The hope was dangled that the constitutional handover would start a National Democratic Revolution (NDR) which would gradually pave the way for a more radical socialist transformation of society. It seems inevitable that the present positive and necessary flowering of political discussion in South Africa should take the form of trying to hold the political leadership of the movement around the SACP to make good what it promised then.

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

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

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

One strategy, the "two-stage" theory, explained that the first stage was for the country to achieve its

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

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

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

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

Hopes of a new arrival achieving balanced national development of society and economy today under capitalism

are an illusion. The real way forward involves nationalising industry and finance under workers control and socialist methods of planning, and the scope of the plan must be international. The continent of Africa is one sustained essay on this topic from the negative side.

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

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

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

Lenin the social-democratic leader

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

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

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

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

*This must be known to Comrade Jim. Addressing the NUMSA Political School in January this year, he quoted effectively from a well-known author on the subject who was, at the time he wrote the pamphlet quoted, a leading member of the Second International and of the Russian **Social Democratic** Labour Party, an author who at the time had a lot to say about the question of maximum and minimum programmes. Jim said, for example:*

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

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

profoundly he identified at that time with "International Social Democracy":

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

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

Lenin against the theory of stages!

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

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

bourgeois society. He says in Two Tactics:

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

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

"But it does not at all follow from this that a democratic revolution (bourgeois in its social and economic substance) is not of enormous interest for the proletariat. It does not at all follow from this that the democratic revolution cannot take place in a form advantageous mainly to the big capitalist, the financial magnate and the 'enlightened' landlord, as well as in a form advantageous to the peasant and to the worker."

After all, he says, in tsarist Russia:

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

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

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

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

But the whole point of the handover which ended apartheid and brought majority rule in South Africa is that it deliberately avoided a revolution! That is why the Black population still suffers from all the aspects of “putrefaction” which Comrade Jim describes in detail in various speeches.

Later Lenin adds:

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

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

Even in 1905, when he was still a Social Democrat, even

when he firmly denounced any idea of the immediate possibility of a socialist revolution in Russia, Lenin castigated his Menshevik opponents who crudely divided the revolution up into "stages". Denouncing their "theory of stages", he explained:

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

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

And part the answer to this "whether" depends on the leadership which the workers' party provides. The pamphlet *Two Tactics* is literally about two different approaches. Lenin contrasts them:

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

oozes, so to speak, with verbose descriptions of the first step and (excuse the crude expression) simply masticates it.”

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

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

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

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

The Fate of Social Democracy

The first Russian revolution of 1905 happened on the cusp of momentous changes in world capitalism, developments which faced the Socialist International with challenges it could not deal with. So when World War I broke out 100 years ago in 1914, it was revealed that the majority of Europe’s socialist leaders had been “captured and taken over by right-wing forces”. They supported the interests of their “own” imperialist bourgeoisie (and dynastic regimes)

against workers ruled by other imperialists, and urged them on into the carnage. This set the seal on the political collapse of social democracy. Whatever long after-life it has had in western and northern Europe, it has never reverted to its potentially revolutionary days in the last decades of the 19th century.

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

His pamphlet *Imperialism* noted the end of the:

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

It was because the epoch thus ushered in is an "epoch of wars, civil wars and revolutions" that the Socialist International entered a crisis and the majority of its parties, having sunk to the level of "passive onlookers" and increasingly "steeped in lifeless pedantry", turned out to have been "captured and taken over by right-wing forces" when World War I broke out, followed later by the revolutionary wave that started in Russia.

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

This was because the arrival of the imperialist stage of

capitalism signalled the need to actually carry out the socialist revolution despite the unevenness of development between different countries.

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

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

April Theses

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

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

He therefore insisted:

“(3) No support for the Provisional Government” which he

describes as a "government of capitalists", and "(5) **Not a parliamentary republic ... but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom ... Abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy ... Confiscation of all landed estates ... Nationalisation of all lands in the country ... The immediate amalgamation of all banks in the country into a single national bank, and the institution of control over it by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.**"

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

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

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

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

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

The "socialist" enemies of the Russian Revolution

Now the whole policy and programme of the Socialist International had been "superseded by events". Leaders of the Socialist International supported the "war effort" of

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

The Communist International

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

Lenin, the Bolsheviks and their allies rescued Marxism from the wreckage of the Socialist International and took it forward in the formation of Communist Parties and the Communist International. How these organisations faced up to the task of world revolution is recorded in the minutes and other documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International, which are now widely available for study and should be carefully studied as part of the movement which NUMSA is setting afoot.

Among the many problems the Communist International

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

Stalinism and social democracy

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

From being the world party of socialist revolution, the Communist International started to abuse the huge respect and enthusiasm the Russian Revolution had evoked in working people to control and dominate the Communist movement. It inculcated into its members unswerving loyalty to the Soviet leaders and the view that the way forward lay in an accommodation with capitalism under the slogan of peaceful co-existence (although there were occasional but

devastatingly destructive ultra-left lurches).

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

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

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

Today's activists should study for themselves the history of the movement in China in the 1920s and Spain in the 1930s in order to understand what it meant for the masses in these countries and the parties of the Communist International to be guided by these "tatters and rags".

Then for Britain, for example, Stalin is supposed to have

personally crafted the "British Road to Socialism" after World War II, supporting gradual progress through parliamentary reform and fostering illusions that working people could see their needs met under a parliamentary bourgeois state with a mixed economy (part state-owned, part private).

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

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

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

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

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