

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

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

NUMSA proposes to:

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

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

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

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

The NUMSA website and other sources now provide a rich stream

of material in the discussion arising from this turn.

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

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

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

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

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

A major strength of Comrade Jim's speeches is his excoriating critique of how the ANC/SACP regime has failed to deliver on the promises it made to the masses when it took office in the

early 1990s (“the 1994 democratic breakthrough” according to ANC legend). It bears constant repeating: The ANC/SACP made certain very specific promises when it persuaded workers in NUMSA to shelve socialist aspects of their programme, including nationalisation of industry under workers’ control; **it has not delivered**. Read these explosive speeches and form your own conclusions.

A necessary discussion

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

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

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

At stake are two conflicting views of the way forward for the working class and broader masses in colonies and former colonies like South Africa. (But a further note is necessary

here. The Stalinist view already separated such countries off from the rest of the world in a "Third World". The opposing, Marxist, view is an internationalist one which sees capitalism in its imperialist phase as an international phenomenon and the working class as an international class, while understanding that each country embodies a unique combination of the system's essential features.)

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

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

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

Meanwhile, the conditions of world imperialism mean that most countries cannot hope to replicate the way capitalism in Western Europe (and then exported to North America) evolved through a series of stages over many centuries. A gradual development from feudalism to small-scale capitalism via manufacture and trade towards the factory system and finally a fully-fledged "modern" finance capitalism is not an option today. And the exceptions here prove the rule: Countries which

have apparently achieved this have done so in a leap, either because like South Korea they had an important role in the West's Cold War strategic arrangements, or because, as in Japan and now China, their rulers have developed methods of super-exploiting labour to an extreme degree.

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

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

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

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

Lenin the social-democratic leader

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

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

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

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

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

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

When he wrote this, in 1905, Lenin (like all the serious Marxists of the day) was a declared social democrat. Lenin

wrote the pamphlet *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* during the Russian Revolution of 1905. The pamphlet explains the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party's programme and tactics intended to take that revolution forward and showed how they could guide the working class in Russia. He emphasised (in 1905!) how profoundly he identified at that time with "International Social Democracy":

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

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

Lenin against the theory of stages!

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

What stands out in Lenin's handling of the question of programme and tactics even in 1905 is his refusal to rigidly separate the maximum and the minimum programme. This is one expression of the difference between him and other prominent leaders of the Socialist International who were later themselves openly "captured by hostile forces". He was, it is

true, absolutely convinced that the 1905 Russian Revolution had the historical job to abolish tsarist autocracy based on serfdom and replace it with a bourgeois society. He says in *Two Tactics*:

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

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

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

After all, he says, in tsarist Russia:

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

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

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

determined and relentless.”

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

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

Later Lenin adds:

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

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

Even in 1905, when he was still a Social Democrat, even when he firmly denounced any idea of the immediate possibility of a socialist revolution in Russia, Lenin castigated his Menshevik

opponents who crudely divided the revolution up into "stages". Denouncing their "theory of stages", he explained:

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

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

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

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

The resolution "steeped in lifeless pedantry" was the one

adopted by Lenin's opponents in the RSDLP who formed the Menshevik faction. In 1905, Lenin stretched the politics of social democracy, of the Second International, as far as they would go to make them serve the interests of the working class.

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

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

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

The Fate of Social Democracy

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

revolutionary days in the last decades of the 19th century.

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

His pamphlet *Imperialism* noted the end of the:

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

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

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

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

A leader of the Socialist International such as Karl Kautsky, a man who had previously been Lenin's mentor and ally and had fought shoulder to shoulder with him, changed his approach to

imperialism. He came to view this imperialist phase as a passing policy of the capitalists, a set of measures which could be reversed by political pressure and agitation, without a revolution. Lenin decisively broke with such leaders, asserting that imperialism is a definite stage of capitalism, and moreover, the stage which makes necessary the socialist revolution. (From this point of view, Lenin's work on imperialism also forms a basis for understanding specific features of economy, society and politics in South Africa.)

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

April Theses

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

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

He therefore insisted:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The "socialist" enemies of the Russian Revolution

Now the whole policy and programme of the Socialist International had been "superseded by events". Leaders of the Socialist International supported the "war effort" of their "own" bourgeoisies and tried to impose a class truce on the working class, a cessation of hostilities against their own employers. The end of the war brought revolution in Russia, the collapses of the German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires and revolutionary movements of international scope. In Russia, the revolution established a government of Workers' and Peasants' Soviets. In these events, the leaders of the old Socialist International opposed the Soviets and organised troops to suppress revolutionary movements throughout Europe. When momentous political changes are actually happening in a

seismic shift, clinging to a separation of “minimum” and “maximum” programme partly reveals, partly fulfils a process in which a whole movement has rotted from within.

The Communist International

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

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

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

Stalinism and social democracy

Lenin died in January 1924. Under a show of continuing his work, his successors in the leadership of the Soviet Union and the Communist International abandoned the struggle for world revolution. They established a bureaucratic regime in the

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

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

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

A good example of Stalin's policy in relation to colonies and semi-colonies of imperialism was his support for Ghandi in

India. An entire library of books would be needed to trace how Stalinist influence in the huge wave of revolts against imperialism has systematically ended with local bourgeois puppets of imperialism running corrupt and dictatorial regimes.

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

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

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

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

This after-life of social democracy was far from being just a political fashion. It was a deliberate policy to disarm the working class and dupe it into accepting a future under

capitalism, a "Faustian pact" as it has aptly been described.

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

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

Bob Archer

January 2015

From the archives: Trotsky on Ninety Years of the Communist Manifesto, (Oct. 1937)

*The materialist conception of history, discovered by Marx only a short while before and applied with consummate skill in the **Manifesto**, has completely withstood the test of events and the blows of hostile criticism. It constitutes today one of the most precious instruments of human thought. All other interpretations of the historical process have lost all scientific meaning. We can state with certainty that it is impossible in our time to be not only a revolutionary militant but even a literate observer in politics without assimilating the materialist interpretation of history.*

It is hard to believe that the centennial of the [Manifesto of the Communist Party](#) is only ten years away! This pamphlet, displaying greater genius than any other in world literature, astounds us even today by its freshness. Its most important sections appear to have been written yesterday. Assuredly, the young authors (Marx was twenty-nine, Engels twenty-seven)

were able to look further into the future than anyone before them, and perhaps than anyone since them.

As early as their joint preface to the edition of 1872, Marx and Engels declared that despite the fact that certain secondary passages in the **Manifesto** were antiquated, they felt that they no longer had any right to alter the original text inasmuch as the **Manifesto** had already become a historical document, during the intervening period of twenty-five years. Sixty-five additional years have elapsed since that time. Isolated passages in the **Manifesto** have receded still further into the past. We shall try to establish succinctly in this preface both those ideas in the **Manifesto** which retain their full force today and those which require important alteration or amplification.

1. The materialist conception of history, discovered by Marx only a short while before and applied with consummate skill in the **Manifesto**, has completely withstood the test of events and the blows of hostile criticism. It constitutes today one of the most precious instruments of human thought. All other interpretations of the historical process have lost all scientific meaning. We can state with certainty that it is impossible in our time to be not only a revolutionary militant but even a literate observer in politics without assimilating the materialist interpretation of history.
2. The first chapter of the **Manifesto** opens with the following words: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." This postulate, the most important conclusion drawn from the materialist interpretation of history, immediately became an issue in the class struggle. Especially venomous attacks were directed by reactionary hypocrites, liberal doctrinaires, and idealistic democrats against the theory which substituted the

struggle of material interests for "common welfare," "national unity," and "eternal moral truths" as the driving force of history. They were later joined by recruits from the ranks of the labor movement itself, by the so-called revisionists, i.e., the proponents of reviewing ("revising") Marxism in the spirit of class collaboration and class conciliation. Finally, in our own time, the same path has been followed in practice by the contemptible epigones of the Communist International (the "Stalinists"): the policy of the so-called People's Front flows wholly from the denial of the laws of the class struggle. Meanwhile, it is precisely the epoch of imperialism, bringing all social contradictions to the point of highest tension, which gives to the **Communist Manifesto** its supreme theoretical triumph.

3. The anatomy of capitalism, as a specific stage in the economic development of society, was given by Marx in its finished form in [Capital](#) (1867). But even in the **Communist Manifesto** the main lines of the future analysis are firmly sketched: the payment for labor power as equivalent to the cost of its reproduction; the appropriation of surplus value by the capitalists; competition as the basic law of social relations; the ruination of intermediate classes, i.e., the urban petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry; the concentration of wealth in the hands of an ever-diminishing number of property owners, at the one pole, and the numerical growth of the proletariat, at the other; the preparation of the material and political preconditions for the socialist regime.
4. The proposition in the **Manifesto** concerning the tendency of capitalism to lower the living standards of the workers, and even to transform them into paupers, had been subjected to a heavy barrage. Parsons, professors, ministers, journalists, Social Democratic theoreticians, and trade union leaders came to the

front against the so-called "theory of impoverishment." They invariably discovered signs of growing prosperity among the toilers, palming off the labor aristocracy as the proletariat, or taking a fleeting tendency as permanent. Meanwhile, even the development of the mightiest capitalism in the world, namely, US capitalism, has transformed millions of workers into paupers who are maintained at the expense of federal, municipal, or private charity.

5. As against the **Manifesto**, which depicted commercial and industrial crises as a series of ever more extensive catastrophes, the revisionists vowed that the national and international development of trusts would assure control over the market, and lead gradually to the abolition of crises. The close of the last century and the beginning of the present one were in reality marked by a development of capitalism so tempestuous as to make crises seem only "accidental" stoppages. But this epoch has gone beyond return. In the last analysis, truth proved to be on Marx's side in this question as well.
6. "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." This succinct formula, which the leaders of the Social Democracy looked upon as a journalistic paradox, contains in fact the only scientific theory of the state. The democracy fashioned by the bourgeoisie is not, as both Bernstein and Kautsky thought, an empty sack which one can undisturbedly fill with any kind of class content. Bourgeois democracy can serve only the bourgeoisie. A government of the "People's Front," whether headed by Blum or Chautemps, Caballero or Negrin, is only "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." Whenever this "committee" manages affairs poorly, the bourgeoisie dismisses it with a boot.
7. "Every class struggle is a political struggle." "The

organization of the proletariat as a class [is] consequently its organization into a political party." Trade unionists, on the one hand, and anarchosyndicalists, on the other, have long shied away – and even now try to shy away – from the understanding of these historical laws. "Pure" trade unionism has now been dealt a crushing blow in its chief refuge: the United States. Anarchosyndicalism has suffered an irreparable defeat in its last stronghold – Spain. Here too the **Manifesto** proved correct.

8. The proletariat cannot conquer power within the legal framework established by the bourgeoisie. "Communists openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions." Reformism sought to explain this postulate of the **Manifesto** on the grounds of the immaturity of the movement at that time, and the inadequate development of democracy. The fate of Italian, German, and a great number of other "democracies" proves that "immaturity" is the distinguishing trait of the ideas of the reformists themselves.
9. For the socialist transformation of society, the working class must concentrate in its hands such power as can smash each and every political obstacle barring the road to the new system. "The proletariat organized as the ruling class" – this is the dictatorship. At the same time it is the only true proletarian democracy. Its scope and depth depend upon concrete historical conditions. The greater the number of states that take the path of the socialist revolution, the freer and more flexible forms will the dictatorship assume, the broader and more deepgoing will be workers' democracy.
10. The international development of capitalism has predetermined the international character of the proletarian revolution. "United action, of the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat."

The subsequent development of capitalism has so closely knit all sections of our planet, both "civilized" and "uncivilized," that the problem of the socialist revolution has completely and decisively assumed a world character. The Soviet bureaucracy attempted to liquidate the **Manifesto** with respect to this fundamental question. The Bonapartist degeneration of the Soviet state is an overwhelming illustration of the falseness of the theory of socialism in one country.

11. "When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character." In other words: the state withers away. Society remains, freed from the straitjacket. This is nothing else but socialism. The converse theorem: the monstrous growth of state coercion in the USSR is eloquent testimony that society is moving away from socialism.
12. "The workingmen have no fatherland." These words of the **Manifesto** have more than once been evaluated by philistines as an agitational quip. As a matter of fact they provided the proletariat with the sole conceivable directive in the question of the capitalist "fatherland." The violation of this directive by the Second International brought about not only four years of devastation in Europe, but the present stagnation of world culture. In view of the impending new war, for which the betrayal of the Third International has paved the way, the **Manifesto** remains even now the most reliable counselor on the question of the capitalist "fatherland."

Thus, we see that the joint and rather brief production of two Young authors continues to give irreplaceable directives

upon the most important and burning questions of the struggle for emancipation. What other book could even distantly be compared with the **Communist Manifesto**? But this does not imply that after ninety years of unprecedented development of productive forces and vast social struggles, the **Manifesto** needs neither corrections nor additions. Revolutionary thought has nothing in common with idol-worship. Programs and prognoses are tested and corrected in the light of experience, which is the supreme criterion of human reason. The **Manifesto**, too, requires corrections and additions. However, as is evidenced by historical experience itself, these corrections and additions can be successfully made only by proceeding in accord with the method lodged in the foundation of the **Manifesto** itself. We shall try to indicate this in several most important instances.

1. Marx taught that no social system departs from the arena of history before exhausting its creative potentialities. The **Manifesto** excoriates capitalism for retarding the development of the productive forces. During that period, however, as well as in the following decades, this retardation was only relative in nature. Had it been possible in the second half of the nineteenth century to organize economy on socialist beginnings, its tempos of growth would have been immeasurably greater. But this theoretically irrefutable postulate does not invalidate the fact that the productive forces kept expanding on a world scale right up to the world war. Only in the last twenty years, despite the most modern conquests of science and technology, has the epoch of out-and-out stagnation and even decline of world economy begun. Mankind is beginning to expend its accumulated capital, while the next war threatens to destroy the very foundations of civilization for many years to come. The authors of the **Manifesto** thought that capitalism would be scrapped long prior to the time when from a relatively

reactionary regime it would turn into an absolutely reactionary regime. This transformation took final shape only before the eyes of the present generation, and changed our epoch into the epoch of wars, revolutions, and fascism.

2. The error of Marx and Engels in regard to the historical dates flowed, on the one hand, from an underestimation of future possibilities latent in capitalism, and, on the other, an overestimation of the revolutionary maturity of the proletariat. The revolution of 1848 did not turn into a socialist revolution as the **Manifesto** had calculated, but opened up to Germany the possibility of a vast future capitalist ascension. The Paris Commune proved that the proletariat, without having a tempered revolutionary party at its head, cannot wrest power from the bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, the prolonged period of capitalist prosperity that ensued brought about not the education of the revolutionary vanguard, but rather the bourgeois degeneration of the labor aristocracy, which became in turn the chief brake on the proletarian revolution. In the nature of things, the authors of the **Manifesto** could not possibly have foreseen this "dialectic."
3. For the **Manifesto**, capitalism was – the kingdom of free competition. While referring to the growing concentration of capital, the **Manifesto** did not draw the necessary conclusion in regard to monopoly, which has become the dominant capitalist form in our epoch and the most important precondition for socialist economy. Only afterwards, in *Capital*, did Marx establish the tendency toward the transformation of free competition into monopoly. It was Lenin who gave a scientific characterization of monopoly capitalism in his *Imperialism*.
4. Basing themselves on the example of "industrial revolution" in England, the authors of the **Manifesto**

*pictured far too unilaterally the process of liquidation of the intermediate classes, as a wholesale proletarianization of crafts, petty trades, and peasantry. In point of fact, the elemental forces of competition have far from completed this simultaneously progressive and barbarous work. Capitalism has ruined the petty bourgeoisie at a much faster rate than it has proletarianized it. Furthermore, the bourgeois state has long directed its conscious policy toward the artificial maintenance of petty-bourgeois strata. At the opposite pole, the growth of technology and the rationalization of largescale industry engenders chronic unemployment and obstructs the proletarianization of the petty bourgeoisie. Concurrently, the development of capitalism has accelerated in the extreme the growth of legions of technicians, administrators, commercial employees, in short, the so-called "new middle class." In consequence, the intermediate classes, to whose disappearance the **Manifesto** so categorically refers, comprise even in a country as highly industrialized as Germany about half of the population. However, the artificial preservation of antiquated petty-bourgeois strata in no way mitigates the social contradictions, but, on the contrary, invests them with a special malignancy, and together with the permanent army of the unemployed constitutes the most malevolent expression of the decay of capitalism.*

5. *Calculated for a revolutionary epoch the **Manifesto** contains (end of Chapter II) ten demands, corresponding to the period of direct transition from capitalism to socialism. In their preface of 1872, Marx and Engels declared these demands to be in part antiquated, and, in any case, only of secondary importance. The reformists seized upon this evaluation to interpret it in the sense that transitional revolutionary demands had forever ceded their place to the Social Democratic*

*“minimum program,” which, as is well known, does not transcend the limits of bourgeois democracy. As a matter of fact, the authors of the **Manifesto** indicated quite precisely the main correction of their transitional program, namely, “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the readymade state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.” In other words, the correction was directed against the fetishism of bourgeois democracy. Marx later counterposed to the capitalist state, the state of the type of the Commune. This “type” subsequently assumed the much more graphic shape of soviets. There cannot be a revolutionary program today without soviets and without workers’ control. As for the rest, the ten demands of the **Manifesto**, which appeared “archaic” in an epoch of peaceful parliamentary activity, have today regained completely their true significance. The Social Democratic “minimum program,” on the other hand, has become hopelessly antiquated.*

- 6. Basing its expectation that “the German bourgeois revolution ... will be but a prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution,” the **Manifesto** cites the much more advanced conditions of European civilization as compared with what existed in England in the seventeenth century and in France in the eighteenth century, and the far greater development of the proletariat. The error in this prognosis was not only in the date. The revolution of 1848 revealed within a few months that precisely under more advanced conditions, none of the bourgeois classes is capable of bringing the revolution to its termination: the big and middle bourgeoisie is far too closely linked with the landowners, and fettered by the fear of the masses; the petty bourgeoisie is far too divided and in its top leadership far too dependent on the big bourgeoisie. As evidenced by the entire subsequent course of development in Europe and Asia, the bourgeois*

revolution, taken by itself, can no more in general be consummated. A complete purge of feudal rubbish from society is conceivable only on the condition that the proletariat, freed from the influence of bourgeois parties, can take its stand at the head of the peasantry and establish its revolutionary dictatorship. By this token, the bourgeois revolution becomes interlaced with the first stage of the socialist revolution, subsequently to dissolve in the latter. The national revolution therewith becomes a link of the world revolution. The transformation of the economic foundation and of all social relations assumes a permanent (uninterrupted) character.

For revolutionary parties in backward countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa, a clear understanding of the organic connection between the democratic revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat – and thereby, the international socialist revolution – is a life-and-death question.

7. While depicting how capitalism draws into its vortex backward and barbarous countries, the **Manifesto** contains no reference to the struggle of colonial and semicolonial countries for independence. To the extent that Marx and Engels considered the social revolution “in the leading civilized countries at least,” to be a matter of the next few years, the colonial question was resolved automatically for them, not in consequence of an independent movement of oppressed nationalities but in consequence of the victory of the proletariat in the metropolitan centers of capitalism. The questions of revolutionary strategy in colonial and semicolonial countries are therefore not touched upon at all by the **Manifesto**. Yet these questions demand an independent solution. For example, it is quite self-evident that while the “national fatherland” has become the most

baneful historical brake in advanced capitalist countries, it still remains a relatively progressive factor in backward countries compelled to struggle for an independent existence.

"The Communists," declares the **Manifesto**, "everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things." The movement of the colored races against their imperialist oppressors is one of the most important and powerful movements against the existing order and therefore calls for the complete, unconditional, and unlimited support on the part of the proletariat of the white race. The credit for developing revolutionary strategy for oppressed nationalities belongs primarily to Lenin.

8. The most antiquated section of the **Manifesto** – with respect not to method but to material – is the criticism of "socialist" literature for the first part of the nineteenth century (Chapter III) and the definition of the position of the Communists in relation to various opposition parties (Chapter IV). The movements and parties listed in the **Manifesto** were so drastically swept away either by the revolution of 1848 or by the ensuing counterrevolution that one must look up even their names in a historical dictionary. However, in this section, too, the **Manifesto** is perhaps closer to us now than it was to the previous generation. In the epoch of the flowering of the Second International, when Marxism seemed to exert an undivided sway, the ideas of pre-Marxist socialism could have been considered as having receded decisively into the past. Things are otherwise today. The decomposition of the Social Democracy and the Communist International at every step engenders monstrous ideological relapses. Senile thought seems to have become infantile. In search of all-saving formulas the prophets in the epoch of decline discover anew

doctrines long since buried by scientific socialism.

*As touches the question of opposition parties, it is in this domain that the elapsed decades have introduced the most deepgoing changes, not only in the sense that the old parties have long been brushed aside by new ones, but also in the sense that the very character of parties and their mutual relations have radically changed in the conditions of the imperialist epoch. The **Manifesto** must therefore be amplified with the most important documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International, the essential literature of Bolshevism, and the decisions of the conferences of the Fourth International.*

We have already remarked above that according to Marx no social order departs from the scene without first exhausting the potentialities latent in it. However, even an antiquated social order does not cede its place to a new order without resistance. A change in social regimes presupposes the harshest form of the class struggle, i.e., revolution. If the proletariat, for one reason or another, proves incapable of overthrowing with an audacious blow the outlived bourgeois order, then finance capital in the struggle to maintain its unstable rule can do nothing but turn the petty bourgeoisie ruined and demoralized by it into the pogrom army of fascism. The bourgeois degeneration of the Social Democracy and the fascist degeneration of the petty bourgeoisie are interlinked as cause and effect.

At the present time, the Third International far more wantonly than the Second performs in all countries the work of deceiving and demoralizing the toilers. By massacring the vanguard of the Spanish proletariat, the unbridled hirelings of Moscow not only pave the way for fascism but execute a goodly share of its labors. The protracted crisis of the international revolution, which is turning more and more into a crisis of human culture, is reducible in its essentials to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

*As the heir to the great tradition, of which the **Manifesto** of the Communist Party forms the most precious link, the Fourth International is educating new cadres for the solution of old tasks. Theory is generalized reality. In an honest attitude to revolutionary theory is expressed the impassioned urge to reconstruct the social reality. That in the southern part of the Dark Continent our cothinkers were the first to translate the **Manifesto** into the Afrikaans language is another graphic illustration of the fact that Marxist thought lives today only under the banner of the Fourth International. To it belongs the future. When the centennial of the **Communist Manifesto** is celebrated, the Fourth International will have become the decisive revolutionary force on our planet.*

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Reinstate NUMSA in its rightful place in the leadership of COSATU

Statement by Workers International

On 8 November, 33 out of 57 office bearers of the South African trade union federation COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) voted to expel the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) from their federation. NUMSA is the biggest, among the most militant, and certainly the most socialist-minded of the South African trade unions. It was a founder union of COSATU.

The decision to expel was taken by a bare 58% of the federation office bearers, because those who had determined to get rid of NUMSA could not be sure that they would win the expulsion vote at a national Congress of all COSATU members.

NUMSA's expulsion was the latest act in a long saga of a developing and increasingly stark division in the South African trade union leaderships, which has now resulted in this very visible split.

The breaking point was 12 August 2012, when the South African police force shot down 34 striking miners at Marikana. Their crime was to refuse to sell their labour for less than a living wage.

At that point the metalworkers' union declared that South African politics could not carry on in the same way. They said, when a government collaborates with super-exploitative foreign-owned mining companies to keep wages at poverty levels by shooting down striking workers, that government can no longer be deemed a democratic government.

The split in the South African trade union movement is a fundamental split – between the class collaborationist pro-African National Congress union leaders, and the union leaders (and members) who know that class collaborationist politics have achieved almost nothing since 1994 for the working class and the impoverished masses.

NUMSA and its predecessor union, the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) has fought since it was formed against class collaboration politics, and for the working class to take the leadership of the South African revolution.

This split between the South African trade union leaders is also the material manifestation of an old argument – the opposition between the Stalinist theory of the two stage revolution, and the Marxist understanding of permanent revolution.

The two stage theory says that in colonial and semi-colonial countries exploited by foreign capital in increasingly brutal ways, the path to socialist revolution and common ownership of the means of production must obey certain rules of development, and pass through two stages.

First must come a bourgeois democratic revolution. The class that must lead and take power is the national bourgeoisie, which will introduce democratic reforms – the right to self-rule, democratic elections, and equal rights for all sections of society (before the law, in education, in employment) and so on. This notion is modeled on the formal premise that every colonial and semi-colonial country in the world must pass through the same stages as the developed countries did in the 17th (England) 18th (France, America) and 19th (Italy, Germany) centuries.

According to the two stages theory, many, many years later, the democratic rights introduced by this first stage will gradually result in a socialist transformation of the economy

and society. The huge hole in the theory is that it cannot explain how the exercise of these democratic rights will gradually and peacefully persuade a brutal exploiting class to hand over the means of production. It is in reality a cover for the permanent handing over of power to that class. The "second" stage is a sop to the workers and oppressed masses of those countries – to persuade them to support their own bourgeoisie into government.

This ideology, proselytised by the South African Communist Party (SACP) into the ranks of the African National Congress (ANC), and the trade union movement, resulted in an understanding of the 1994 elections in South Africa as the "National Democratic Revolution" rightfully led by the ANC, and the first stage in the journey towards socialism.

The democratic elections were brought about through a "negotiated settlement" with the bankers, mine-owners and land-owners made by the ANC leadership with the ideological backing of the SACP. That settlement was made between a national bourgeoisie and its international counterpart.

The deal was that democratic elections would be allowed in exchange for the right of the international bourgeoisie to maintain its super-exploitation of black workers, and appropriation of South Africa's wealth at the expense of the masses of South Africa.

The deal was made only because the foreign exploiters of the country feared they faced the seizure of all their property, the mines, the banks, the land and the major industries by a mass resistance led by the working class.

In the early 90s, the huge self-sacrificing struggle of the oppressed masses of South Africa (led by a powerful and socialist-minded trade union movement) had reached the point where it constituted a challenge to the control foreign capital had over the South African economy. But those trades

unionists and impoverished masses were exactly the people who were to be excluded from the deal. Those who were to benefit were the foreign exploiters and those black South Africans with close ties to the ANC.

The Marxist theory of Permanent Revolution maintains that in the colonial and semi-colonial countries the class which must lead any democratic revolution is the working class, and that it must lead an alliance with the poor peasants in a struggle to realise democratic demands. In order to thoroughly achieve those democratic demands (making them available to the working class and poor peasantry) it must carry over the democratic revolution to socialism. This means starting the overthrow of property relations through the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy under workers' control – at the same time as achieving these democratic demands. The theory of Permanent Revolution is also clear that socialism cannot be sustained in a single country, and can only survive if it is carried out on an international scale. This is a key aspect for a working class party in South Africa, which must reach out beyond its borders as it seeks to establish a socialist society.

Crucial for the development of Permanent Revolution is that the working class must be in the leadership of both the struggle for democracy, and for socialism, and the dual processes cannot be separated. The class must have an understanding that it is not challenging one manifestation of capital (like apartheid) but challenging capitalism itself – and this means that the working class must have its own socialist party to fight for the development of that class consciousness. NUMSA (while remaining a trade union) is currently carrying forward the patient and solid investigation necessary for the building of that party.

NUMSA's document on the Freedom Charter's demands (pages 3 & 4 of the Workers' International journal October 2014) shows how the democratic demands of the South African National

Democratic revolution can't be fully realised for the masses in the context of the continuing poverty, unemployment and inequality resulting from the maintenance of the capitalist economic system.

An example not used in that article is that of South African women. Despite having their equal rights enshrined in the South African constitution, South African women cannot equally participate in society because of the horrifying rate of gender-based violence in South Africa. This flows from the existence of a lumpen layer abandoned with no stake in society through mass unemployment. The lower a South African woman's income, the more she will suffer from sexual harassment, violence and rape.

The most powerful demonstration of all is the fact that striking mineworkers could not exercise their democratic right (enshrined in the South African constitution) to go on strike for a living wage because they were shot down by the "democratic" state.

We should remember that the difference between permanent revolution and the two stage theory – and which class should be in the leadership – had already been fought out in the 1980s through the development of the Workers Charter in the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU), the forerunner of NUMSA. This precious clarification was suppressed in the formation of COSATU when the National Union of Mineworkers under Cyril Ramaphosa used its weight in the movement to sideline the discussion.

That disagreement – over whether the trade unions should have the Workers Charter or the Freedom Charter as their programme – was the fundamental disagreement over which class should lead the South African revolution.

Our Workers International comrade, Bongani Mkungho, fought for those conceptions his whole life long, but that period of

South African working class history has now been airbrushed out. It appears only in hostile formulations on the National Union of Mineworkers' website to what they call "workerists".

It is almost impossible to find the Workers Charter on the internet – one of the few places is on our website here:

<http://workersinternational.info//?s=workers+charter>.

NUMSA General Secretary Irwin Jim's generation arrived after that fight had taken place – and has had to rediscover the class nature of the ANC government at the cost of 34 striking miners' lives. These leaders still speak as if the two stages of the democratic and socialist transformations can be looked at as two separate processes and are putting the ANC's Freedom Charter forward as their programme. NUMSA (and the six other unions allied to them) are demanding to implement the socialist second stage immediately – locked in struggle with those who (under the guise of saying that 20 years is not long enough to change things) are determined that the second stage will never appear. In order to make sure of that, they must ensure above all that the working class does not take leadership and take power.

The pro-ANC office bearers of COSATU undemocratically threw NUMSA out of their federation because they want to expel a force which fights ceaselessly for the rights of South African workers, and which is clarifying for millions of workers what the split in their movement really means.

They and particularly the South African Communist party (of which many if not all of them will be members) are the "splitters" of the movement – and they have split the movement in order to benefit the exploiting class.

Thus, when Gwede Mantashe, Secretary of the African National Congress (and ex-NUM General Secretary, like Cyril Ramaphosa) says that he is saddened by the split in the unions and talks about unity – but then asks NUMSA to look at their actions –

he speaks with a forked tongue.

COSATU must organise the Special National Congress that NUMSA and other COSATU unions have demanded for the past year – so NUMSA can put its case to the COSATU membership against expulsion, and for advancing the policies on nationalisation agreed at its 2012 conference.

The international working class must take sides in this split – between class collaborationist “sweetheart” trade union leaderships and those that clearly and unequivocally are fighting for the interests and the independent socialist programme of the working class.

We are not a group of outside observers but have participated actively in our trade unions and political groups over decades to support the long struggle against apartheid – only to find the government our efforts helped put in power shooting down striking workers.

Just as we took sides against the apartheid regime, we need to take sides in NUMSA’s struggle – so the whole of the international trade union movement can be clarified. Socialism will never be achieved through collaboration with the exploiting class, and waiting for the day that never comes when they hand over power.

In Britain we are not yet at the stage of the most politically advanced trade unions in South Africa.

We are still working our way through the class collaborationist outlook instilled by social democracy and Stalinism over many decades, which manifests itself in uncritical support for an array of national liberation movements which are not led by the working class.

We still look to Stalinism’s most successful international popular front organisation the Anti-Apartheid Movement (now known as Action on Southern Africa) to advise us on

solidarity with South Africa. We are still going through the process of fighting for the Labour party to stand up for crucial democratic rights, like the right to strike unhampered by repressive laws, and the right to the Welfare State.

The issues and the choices are starker in South African because (as a new working class) they have not spent so long under the domination of a trade union bureaucracy saturated in social democratic and Stalinist conceptions, like Stalin's doctrine of "peaceful co-existence" between socialism and capitalism. The very best and most class conscious of the British trade union movement (among which is the leadership of Unite) sees itself still as fighting austerity and not capital.

That is why it is so important that take sides with NUMSA in this split – because they can help clarify us through their hard-won conviction that "the interests of capital and the working class are irreconcilably antagonistic".

Workers International 25.10.2014

Marx falsified and emasculated on the essential question of class

HEWAT BEUKES responds to an article in the Mail and Guardian newspaper

The article reproduced below expressing the class position of an Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) MP appeared in the Mail & Guardian newspaper in South Africa. Ironically, it is an article which exposes the tribal petit bourgeois method of dividing the working class. We need to answer this article in its essential conjectures.

A cursory perusal of Marx's writings will show that it is simply not true that Marx deliberately glossed over the race question. In fact Marx showed in all its profoundness that where national and/or race oppression is present the working class can only emancipate itself after the freedom of the race and/or the nation. Lenin took this further in his "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" by showing that the working class can only unite and emancipate itself through a conscious struggle against such race and/or national oppression.

It is in this vein that Trotsky gave the choice to the South African white workers, either with the black working class or with imperialism. More cannot be said of the Marxist attitude to racism and particular oppression of sections of the class.

Karl Marx examined the historical development of human society as a scientist with the aim of acting upon it to change it, not only to interpret it. In the process he uncovered amongst others, the social forces and the laws driving this development. Amongst them, he identified the central force as the struggle of the classes.

In capitalism he examined the process of the creation of value. He laid bare the social and property relations engendered by this capitalist production process of commodities. He examined the essential contradictory nature of these social and property relations which drives the conflict between the classes. He examined in the most minute detail the nature of labour including wage and chattel

slavery and their impact on production of wealth, and the struggle of the working class. He even distinguished between the form and economic effects of ancient slavery and the trade with African slaves.

In his studies and analysis of class he did not find the national and/or race question a separate issue of interest, but a fundamental issue to be overcome by the revolutionary working class movement as of objective necessity of which moral or any other subjective considerations would naturally be concomitant, but not the departure.

This becomes clear in the following two quotes from Marx:

Letter of K. Marx to A. Vogt in New York London April 9, 1870: But the English bourgeoisie has, besides, much more important interests in Ireland's present-day economy. Owing to the constantly increasing concentration of tenant-farming, Ireland steadily supplies its own surplus to the English labor market, and thus forces down wages and lowers the moral and material condition of the English working class. And most important of all! Every industrial and commercial center in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social, and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude towards him is much the same as that of the "poor whites" to the negroes in the former slave states of the U.S.A. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and the stupid tool of the English rule in Ireland. This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in

short, by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. And that class is fully aware of it. But the evil does not stop here. It continues across the ocean. The antagonism between English and Irish is the hidden basis of the conflict between the United States and England. It makes any honest and serious co-operation between the working classes of the two countries impossible. It enables the governments of both countries, whenever they think fit, to break the edge off the social conflict by their mutual bullying, and, in case of need, by war with one another. England, being the metropolis of capital, the power which has hitherto ruled the world market, is for the present the most important country for the workers' revolution, and moreover the only country in which the material conditions for this revolution have developed up to a certain degree of maturity. Therefore to hasten the social revolution in England is the most important object of the International Workingmen's Association. **The sole means of hastening it is to make Ireland independent.**

Excerpt from K. Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I (Chapter X, Section 7) "In the United States of North America, every independent movement for the workers was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. **Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.** But out of the death of slavery a new life at once arose. **The first fruit of the Civil War was the eight hours' agitation that ran with the seven-leagued boots of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California.**

It is clear from these quotes that to eliminate the race and national questions from Marxian science of class analysis is to stultify it, to pour concrete in its joints and render it meaningless and a futile exercise as in terms of Marx himself

no revolution will emancipate the wage slave without addressing race and national oppression.

The EFF MP's position therefore seeks no less than to emasculate Marxism as the science of working class struggle and revolution. It seeks to do so without facts, by disregarding the written fact and replace it with fiction. It is the petit bourgeois method of renouncing Marx and Marxism.

Fanon was not a Marxist. He treated racism as a thing in itself, some inherent psychological response from whites against blacks. He could perhaps be described as a black nationalist in essence. He was not concerned with the economic implications of racism and its relation to and effect on the class struggle. He was occupied by racism as an empirical manifestation, and not by racial exploitation as a variant form of labour for the creation of value, and he brought to bear on it subjective evaluations rather than scientifically founded expositions.

Two quotes illustrate this point:

"The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation."

"When people like me, they like me "in spite of my color." When they dislike me; they point out that it isn't because of my color. Either way, I am locked in to the infernal circle."

It is clear that Fanon either did not read Marx, did not understand him or simply disregarded his work. From the Marxian quotes above it is clear that Fanon could not form a Triad with Marx and Lenin. Moreover, he does not approach the race question as an analyst or scientist, but as a victim.

The end result was as it is with all revisions, distortions and perversions of science, he could not put forward a relevant programme for the emancipation of the colonial working classes. With such a psychological baggage Fanon

could not possibly reach at internationalism as a precondition for working class (and race) emancipation. He landed at guerrillaism of the peasantry, a class which Marxists consider the breeding place of individualist production, the embryo of capitalism if it develops outside the leadership control of the working class.

This was the model on which Southern African liberation movements built their incumbencies with dire consequences for the working class. This was done in full approval of the imperialists. In a central square in Harare a huge statue of a peasant with a sickle in his hand stare fiercely and derisively down on workers passing through or having their meals. The radio and media used to lambast them for their purported bourgeois values and individualism while the peasants had selflessly sacrificed for independence. It was never true. In Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique the urban proletariat provided the centralisation and organisation for the liberation movement. Due to the need to scupper national self-determination imperialism and Stalinism wrested control away from them.

The intimation from black or race nationalists that imperialism and capitalism had some innate psychological partiality to race is belied by history of South Africa itself: During the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902 about 30,000 Boers mostly women and children died in the British concentration camps. Nothing equalled this in the 400-year colonial history of South Africa in terms of racial brutality. It was surpassed in extent only in neighbouring Namibia during 1904-8 with the near extermination of the Herero and the Nama nations for resisting subjugation and exploitation and not on the basis of racist compulsions.

The ease of the merger of black and white in their collective exploitation of the black and white workers and their collective hatred of the black working class as revealed in Marikana put the issue beyond doubt.

This is actually a phenomenon which was not understood by Fanon. Throughout the several hundred-year epoch of capitalist race exploitation, the emergent African feudal and tribal ruling classes were an indispensable part of that process. Basil Davidson in his "In The Eye of the Storm" relates how the ruling castes of the Central African Kingdom amongst others traded with slaves with European colonisers of the Americas. Likewise imperialism in post-colonial Southern Africa needed the tribal royalties and black petit bourgeoisie for its continuation.

We now turn to South Africa itself. The issues surrounding "black consciousness" – the central theme of the article – have been wracking Southern Africa since around 1970. A black consciousness movement which rejected any compromise with the white ruling class took root at the time. Steve Bantu Biko became its iconic leader. It essentially shunned class analyses, but it demanded no less than a proportional appropriation of the economic resources as a basis of any conciliation between white and black.

This militant black nationalism was counteracted by a "non-racial" alliance of black nationalists and the liberal bourgeoisie which eclipsed black consciousness in the 1980's with the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF), an ANC front. (During this period the ANC and the SWAPO were liquidating thousands of young activists in exile including the youth who had fled Namibia during 1974 and South Africa in 1976 and its aftermath.) The UDF's black-white unity was condition less and they eclipsed the militants which had no class analysis and defence for their purported "reverse racism" against the former's pragmatic unity. Of course, factors that assisted in the demise of the militants were the billions pumped into the promotion of the bourgeois alliance by imperialism, through the Anti-Apartheid Movement and physical elimination. Steve Biko is the most notable example of this physical annihilation by the South African State.

Epigones of the black consciousness proponents remain in South Africa. But, unlike their progenitors, they are eclectic and responsible for the attempts to fragment the working class in tribal and national groups and strata. Of course this is inevitable if one responds to class oppression in race and tribal terms. This position has much to do with the outlook of the petit bourgeoisie in general, the tribal petit bourgeoisie in particular.

There can be no doubt that the production of surplus value and its expropriation is the central objective of the capitalist. There can thus be no doubt that racial exploitation of labour is a sub-relation of class exploitation.

But, in South Africa there is no longer exploitation based on race enforced by law.

There remain no institutional obstacles to the unity of the South African working class.

The task is now to strengthen the United Front with NUMSA and to take it forward to build a revolutionary party for Southern Africa which shall seek unity with the international working class movement. This unity will be obtained within the struggle to redeem the true history of the working class.

By Hewat Beukes, Oct. 2014

From:

<http://mg.co.za/article/2014-09-26-class-theory-finally-decolonised>

“Class theory finally decolonized

26 Sep 2014 00:00 [Andile Mngxitama](#)

Fanon creates a triad with Marx and Lenin, to help the EFF reclaim class from its racist foundations.

We need Frantz Fanon, the black thinker of anti-racism, to keep in check the European sensibilities of the first two (Vladimir Lenin and Karl Marx) in the holy triumvirate. (Supplied)

Ironically, "class" a putatively combative analytical category in the Marxian tradition, has been one of the most effective means to hide race oppression in racist and colonial societies.

This claim would surprise many because class, as a Marxist tool of analysis, seeks to identify more precisely the workings of capitalism and also to identify the social strata imbued with the capacity and interest to carry out the task of being the "grave diggers" of capitalism – those who would usher in the socialist society where suffering will cease to exist. That was Karl Marx's fantasy in any event.

The problem is that Marx was trapped in the Eurocentric, anti-black racism of his time. This truth is part of the DNA of his philosophy. Marx's racist, mechanical thinking on the movement of history leads him to call for the colonisation of non-European worlds to hasten the march towards communist nirvana. So, the foundation of class theory is anti-black.

Class analysis needs be decolonised and subjected to anti-racist analysis if it's going to serve black people. The hegemony of white thought has ensured the acceptance of class unquestioningly. In our universities, which are dominated by Western thought, class is seen as a scientific category, whereas race is considered a mere epiphenomena, a derivative of class, or even a non-category of "social constructionism".

From the above, the conclusion is drawn that race does not exist. Blacks cease to exist because, as we hear, class is the fundamental contradiction. But black radical thinkers such as Frank Wilderson have shown that class cannot account fully for black suffering, which exceeds the capitalist

exploitation and alienation that affect white workers.

Black suffering also includes “fungibility”, the idea that one doesn’t just sell one’s labour power as white workers do, but that one is sold as a commodity. White workers could buy themselves a black person off an auction block during the days of slavery, and they are known to have done so. This is over and above the fact that white workers benefit from the exploitation of blacks.

In South Africa, the early Afrikaner proletariat had access to the slave labour of Africans. Basically, they were workers who owned workers; the story of inboekselings – the African slaves of the trekboere – is still to be told.

Bad history

In South Africa, class reductionism has a bad history. White Marxists insisted on it as a choice weapon to avoid accounting for their complicity in black oppression. Often, the insistence on class instead of race in anti-black, racist societies actually meant the defence of the settler colony.

In South Africa this led to the bizarre situation where black people were trained to deny white oppression and say they were oppressed by an abstract, impersonal “system”, not white people.

This saw guerrilla insurgents sent back from exile at great personal risk to destroy “economic installations” and to take care not to harm white people in the process.

We ended with a war without a war when on the side of the white oppressor, the black person was the actual subject of exploitation and violent repression, as demonstrated by the occupation of the townships by the army and police, hit squads and long-term jail sentences, if not capital punishment. White oppression was personal, the Marxist response was impersonal.

There is a bitter truth to face: to be a class warrior or even a Marxist doesn't mean one is above anti-black racism. The dramatic resignation of Aimé Césaire from the French Communist Party in 1957 shows this reality in clear terms.

Césaire, who was protesting the reality that Marxism was put to racist use, poignantly stated: "What I want is that Marxism and communism be placed in the service of black people, and not black people in the service of Marxism and communism."

At times when listening to black people who have assumed Marxism, one can't fail to notice how their entry to the thought process requires that they deny themselves as black people.

Triad of Marx, Lenin and Fanon

Up to now difficulties of class theory have not been decisively resolved. The self-description by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) as a "Marxist-Leninist-Fanonian" party presents a refreshing attempt to decolonise the anti-capitalist struggle. This triad of Marx, Lenin and Frantz Fanon is recognition that Marxist-Leninism in racist societies falls short of the task of emancipation.

We need Fanon, the black thinker of anti-racism, to keep in check the European sensibilities of the first two in the holy triumvirate.

As far as we know, it's the first time that a political movement has explicitly expressed its ideological framework in this way.

Fanon, a student of Césaire, was to turn the Marxist schema upside down, almost as profoundly as Marx had done with Friedrich Hegel.

Fanon argued that in colonial settings, "Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched" because, he argued, "the

economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich”.

The EFF’s ideological innovation introduces a productive tension that may contribute towards developing a theory and practice of emancipation that reclaims class from its racist foundations and decolonises it in the service of black emancipation.

Class is too important to be left to racists to misuse at will in the defence of white supremacy.

Andile Mngxitama, an EFF MP, is co-editor of Biko Lives! to be launched on September 26, and is the founding editor of New Frank Talk, a journal on the black condition. He writes in his personal capacity”

Capitalism between hammer and anvil

by Balazs Nagy

First printed in Lutte des Classes No. 12, October 2013.

In our last issue, we briefly noted “cracks” emerging in world capitalism, including, among other things, weaknesses in relation to the international monetary system organised on the basis of and governed by the US dollar. We do know that, to ward off the last great crisis, the big chiefs of US finance decided to supply the economy, which was gasping for breath and quite unable to meet astronomic levels of losses and needs, with even greater massively and artificially swollen credit arrangements. To put it another way, the

crisis had revealed the imperative urgent need to deal quickly and urgently with the yawning gap between real production on the one hand, hampered and dragged back by the growing limitations on effective profits, and on the other the phenomenal pile-up of dollars not backed by anything whose job was to make good the market's organic deficiencies. Let me repeat: the whole edifice of runaway and inflamed world finance operates under the auspices of the US dollar.

We know that immediately on the outbreak of the crisis, capitalist governments carefully put the corpse of capitalist economy on life-support, injecting hundreds of billions of dollars (and euros) to soften the sudden absence of billions of fictitious dollars which had gone up in smoke. The managers of the US dollar in the Federal Reserve System (the US central bank) panicked and decided to institutionalise the allocation of billions of dollars into the economy through regular purchases of American Treasury bills, i.e. to buy these bits of valueless paper with billions of newly-created dollars (85 billion a month!) hot off the press and not backed by anything in the proper way. This blatant forgery they pompously baptised "quantitative easing", and it is no more than an act of common counterfeiting. But this time the forgeries are done by the state and swapped for other state bonds which are also worthless, i.e. they are buying government debt with paper. As the notoriously blunt billionaire Warren Buffet commented recently: "The Fed is the greatest hedge fund in history" (Bloomberg.com/news September 20 2013). Indeed, the whole business casts a glaring light on the fact that the whole mechanism of capitalism-imperialism today rests on a swindle.

Now, as we commented in a previous article, the US central bank, the Fed, has stated that it will now aim to progressively reduce these purchases with a view to ending them. Obviously by doing so the Fed hoped to help, in its own way, to contain the unbridled proliferation of un-backed

credit which even they admit is a permanent crisis-trigger. But as our previous article said, the bare mention that they would eventually do this shook capital around the world.

The first consequence of the Fed's announcement that it wanted to turn off the easy dollar-tap was to provoke a swift and inevitable rise in interest rates in the dollar's US home country, and elsewhere, given that currency's preponderant role. This rise in interest rates meant that credit became more expensive, which cut across the imperative need for cheap money. This fact immediately unmasked all the claims about an economic recovery as mendacious bragging. Next, it started a massive flight of capital from the so-called "emerging" countries in search of more profitable investments. This defection abruptly exposed a bitter truth for the bourgeoisie: that the best part of economic growth in these countries (India, Brazil, etc.) is not based on real production, but is artificially doped by financial juggling with the cheap dollar. So the announcement that the easy dollar was shortly to be withdrawn cut the transfusion needed for their economic growth, and as they were left short of blood, their markedly lower real growth rate emerged in the light of day and their currencies depreciated. A terrible new stage in the crisis started to loom on the horizon in these countries. But while they were waiting to hear what the 22 May announcement about reducing and then stopping the flow of easy dollars actually involved, the Fed took everybody by surprise on 18 September by finally announcing its spectacular U-turn. The same Bernanke who had disconcerted capitalists with his astonishing announcement that he would deprive the economy of cheap dollars, caught the whole world napping with the Fed's final decision contradicting its previous announcement. It turned 180 degrees, stating that "the Fed would continue to buy long term treasury paper and other bonds worth \$85 bn a month, believing that tightening financial conditions could slow down the rate of recovery" (Le Monde, 20 September 2013.)

Despite the coded and extremely careful language, this is a resounding and honest public confession. It relegates the servile press's enthusiastic reports of a supposed economic recovery in the US and elsewhere to the level of lying fantasy on a level with the Coué method of optimistic auto-suggestion. More generally it is an involuntary admission that capitalism actually is undergoing a prolonged worsening of its death-agony, and in particular that merely keeping it going pushes and drags the economy towards an even more corrupt state of putrefaction and parasitism than was already revealed by Lenin's analysis of imperialism. The major fact is and remains that finance, or more exactly omnipotent credit and the way it is manipulated, tend to supplant production in simply making sure that capitalist economy keeps functioning (accumulation, investment and circulation). But here we must remember what Marx said about credit in volume 3 of Capital: "Banks and credit become the most potent means of bringing capitalist production out of its own limits and one of the most effective bringers of crises and fraudulent speculation". To support this judgement he quoted a contemporary (J.W.Gilbart, *The History and Principles of Banking*, London 1834, pp 137-8): "It is the object of banking to give facilities to trade, and whatever gives facilities to trade gives facilities to speculation. Trade and speculation are in some cases so nearly allied, that it is impossible to say at what precise point trade ends and speculation begins." To which Engels adds a note: "To what extent the entire business world of a country may be seized by such swindling, and what it finally comes to, is amply illustrated by the history of English business during 1845-47." (Capital vol 3, 1984 p. 406). What would they say about things today!

The dead hand of finance is precisely the concrete form that the increasing rottenness of the system takes today. Massive parasitism in the economy – and in daily life – are its inevitable outgrowths. In the same way, the amazing growth in the social stratum of rentiers, as well as the appearance of

a series of rentier states and their expansion and their significance testify to an unparalleled growth in parasitism.

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

In fact world capital as a whole is trying to walk a tightrope between two pseudo-solutions, both equally risky: either they will continue to pour billions into keeping their system ticking over, and in doing so all the while preparing a series of upheavals even more devastating than the one we have not yet got out of. Or, anxious about that way out, they will try to control credit parsimoniously, which seems to be the option which the ECB favours. But both potential outcomes of this tightrope-walking lead to the same blind alley of capitalism. With or without injecting billions, production in this system keeps marking time and has not even managed to make good past and current losses.

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

Cracks recently appeared in the edifice of world capitalism

By Balazs Nagy

First published in *Lutte des Classes* No. 11, September 2013.

We really ought to draw our readers' attention to two major current events which – each in its own political and economic way – testify to a considerable deterioration in the painful death-agony of capitalism-imperialism. On the one hand, there is the current stage reached in the breakdown of its arrangements in the Middle East with the in itself unusual and surprising but real political blockage affecting this system in relation to the civil war in Syria; on the other, the fresh upsurge of world crisis in the – for many – unexpected shape of a general fall in the rate of growth in production among more or less all the so-called “emerging” countries: India, Russia, Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa, etc., including China. This fall is expressed and accompanied by a real upheaval in their financial system through a brutal fall in the values of their currencies, excepting China. As luck would have it, all of these serious problems of imperialism have matured and are concentrated at the Moscow meeting of the 20 countries which are considered to be the most important, the famous G20 on 7 and 8 September 2013.

The attempt to consolidate imperialism's rickety mechanism in the Middle East has turned into its opposite in Iraq and Afghanistan, accelerating its decomposition throughout the region. This historical set-back has laid bare its congenital weaknesses and its contradictions to such an extent that, faced with the rise of the proletarian revolution, even in its incomplete and unfinished form, in North Africa, and the Middle East, it finds itself almost completely impotent and incapacitated. The civil war in Syria has completely paralysed it; its leaders no longer have a clue what to do or how to do it to win back dominance. And that is their only

pre-occupation. Their breast-beating about the miserable fate of the Syrian people is merely a hypocritical facade to mask their real concerns. To put it more exactly: the existence of a near-unanimous camp of those who advocate inactivity and abstention shows their disarray in the face of uncertainty. Imperialist war-lust has been reduced to the roaring of a toothless lion. But beware – it is still a ferocious predator!

On the other hand, there few better indications of the notable shortcomings and retreat of the workers' movement than the total absence of its voice and independent initiatives on this whole question.

Under these conditions, the process of decomposition will go on, as we can already see in Libya and Turkey. But this disarray is also an opportunity which the various oppressed peoples (like the Palestinians and Kurds) will seize in order to break free from the imperialist yoke and its local satraps, who will not give up easily, so that there is a risk the whole region will become the seat of a future inter-imperialist war. The charges are already laid and the fuses lit.

** * **

The other event of considerable international import is the sudden economic deterioration in the so-called "emerging" countries, with a significant and rapid drop in their economic growth, which since the beginning of the new century had been spectacular. The basis for this fall was when the US central bank (the Fed) decided to stop the artificial issue of millions of dollars not backed by actual production. It is common knowledge that in the last six months alone, this bank has bought back worthless bonds to the value of \$86 billion a month (!) in order to bolster the sickly US economy.

As soon as this policy was announced, US interest rates

started an irresistible rise, so much so that capital massively deserted the economies of India and other "emerging" countries. At the same time their currencies depreciated dangerously, thus expressing the fact that the value of their production was actually rather modest. At a stroke, their real growth was shown to be quite a lot lower than it had appeared to be previously. Even China's growth rate fell because her exports are marking time. At a general level, what we are dealing with is a persistent phenomenon which lays bare the organic inter-dependence of national economies within the contradictions of the system as a whole. Despite what the proponents of so-called "globalisation" say about the economic levels of these countries as a whole tending to converge, with the more backward ones catching up with the more advanced (really?), following the same scheme of development as the advanced countries, this inter-dependence actually makes the differences between their levels greater and more obvious. As it happens, the massive displacement of dollars – the expression of the economic dominance of the US – has placed the "emerging" countries at a disadvantage and caused their fictitious growth to evaporate. In place of growing "equality" or "catching up" harmoniously, what we have is the development of contradictions. In place of the fantasy of the everywhere uniform and even capitalism that was an article of faith for those who swore by "globalisation" or "mondialisation", we see an ever greater accentuation of capitalism's internal contradictions. The problems of China, which still has a non-capitalism system, are at a different level, even if, overall, she cannot absolutely escape the constraining effects of international economic interdependence and its contradictions.

All of this also drives forward and exacerbates international competition, which contains within itself the germ of a new international conflagration, the warning signs of which are already visible. We shall have occasion to return to its

various aspects in greater detail in future.

Numsa and the question of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist political organ of the working class in South Africa today

[*original here*](#)

“It is obvious that the black capitalist class favours capitalism and that it will do its best to influence the post-apartheid society in this direction.

It is obvious that the black middle and upper classes who take part in a broad liberation alliance will jostle for hegemony and attempt to represent their interests as the interests of all Africans.

It is obvious that (like their counterparts in every part of the world) the black middle and upper strata, who find themselves on the side of the people’s struggle, are often inconsistent and vacillating. They are usually the enemy’s softest targets for achieving a reformist, rather than a revolutionary, outcome.” (Joe Slovo, 1988)

It has become necessary, and quite urgent, to emphatically re-state and explain the December 2013 historic Numsa Special National Congress Resolutions, especially the ones that talk to the formation of the United Front, the Movement for

Socialism, the ANC and its alliance, and the formation of an independent revolutionary socialist vanguard party of the working class and the role of Numsa in all this.

The Resolutions adopted in our Special National Congress were a culmination of more than 26 years of working inside the South African Liberation Movement (LM) in general, and inside and building the ANC and its alliance in particular.

Over more than two decades of struggle inside the LM and the ANC and its alliance, by December last year, Numsa came to the inescapable observation and conclusion that there is no chance of winning back the ANC led alliance to what it was originally formed for, which was to drive a revolutionary programme for fundamental transformation of the country, with the Freedom Charter as the minimum platform to transform the South African economy and society.

As for the South African Communist Party (SACP) it was clear that its leadership had become embedded in the state and it was failing to act as the vanguard of the working class. Nor, for that matter, has the SACP any revolutionary programme, post 1994, for the struggle for socialism for South Africa.

By December last year, we became convinced that the chances of winning back the ANC onto the path of radical implementation of the Freedom Charter and the SACP onto the path of genuine working class struggles for working class power had become very remote, truly, had actually evaporated!

We therefore correctly resolved to call on Cosatu to break from the ANC led alliance. We stated that the need for looking for a political alternative had arrived.

*We then resolved that NUMSA was going to lead the establishment of a **new United Front**, which will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities, in a way similar to the UDF of the 1980s.*

The task of this Front will be **to fight for the implementation of the Freedom Charter and to be an organisational weapon against neoliberal policies such as the NDP.** For this to happen, the Special Congress charged our members and shopstewards to be active on all fronts and in all struggles against neo-liberal policies, wherever these policies were being implemented.

Clearly, the United Front is not a political party – it is simply an **organisational weapon against neoliberal policies and for the demand for the radical implementation of the Freedom Charter.** The fundamental purpose of the United Front is to **coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities.**

We have noticed that some creative journalists have gone so far as to announce for us that Numsa's political party is called the United Front. Nothing could be further from the truth. In our Resolutions, we clearly stated that the United Front will be an organization similar to the United Democratic Front (UDF) – a democratic umbrella coordinating structure of the shopfloor and community struggles of the working class bringing together all sorts of working class and progressive community organisations and individuals.

Again and for the record, the United Front **is not a political party!**

Side by side with the establishment of the new United Front, we resolved that Numsa would explore the establishment of **a Movement for Socialism,** as the working class needs **a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a socialist South Africa.**

We said that Numsa would conduct discussions on previous and current attempts to build socialism. We resolved to commission an international study on the historical formation of working class parties, including exploring different type

of parties – from mass workers parties to vanguard parties.

*In our Special Congress we even mentioned countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Greece – as potential sources on socialist experiences we would study. We then said the whole learning process would lead to the union **convening a Conference on Socialism.***

*We said that the work to explore the formation of a Movement for Socialism must be regularly reported to our Numsa constitutional structures and the work must be finalised by **the first NUMSA Central Committee in 2015.***

*In the meantime, in all the work being done, whether on building a new United Front or exploring the formation of a Movement for Socialism, we said that **we must be alert to gains that may present possibilities of either the new United Front, or any other progressive coalition or party committed to socialism, standing for elections in future.** We charged the NUMSA constitutional structures to continuously assess these developments and possibilities.*

It is in pursuit of this objective that we have recently announced that we will consider the possibility of the working class fielding candidates in Metros and Municipalities, in 2016 Local Government Elections, such as in the Nelson Mandela Metro.

*The “Movement for Socialism” is not the name of a political party Numsa has formed. The name of such a political organ (could be a broad coalition of revolutionary socialist formations) or party (could be a straightforward revolutionary socialist workers party – not necessarily of that name!), and how such an organ or party will be formed, **all will be determined in the theater of struggle** – the working class, once sufficiently mobilized and united behind the demand for socialism, will determine the programme, form and name of such a structure.*

From the above, a few things that are very important must now be very clear.

Numsa is and will remain a trade union, inspired by Marxism Leninism. It will not convert itself into a political party. It cannot do so, anyway.

*Numsa sees itself playing **a leading role** in the formation of the United Front and **a revolutionary and catalytic role** in the formation of the revolutionary socialist organ of the working class – it is theoretically and factually wrong to assert that **“Numsa will form a political party”** or more ridiculously and quite incorrectly, that **“Numsa has formed a political party”** in the same way that Julius Malema or Bantu Holomisa formed their parties!*

*The political organ to logically arise out of the processes outlined above (whether it be a socialist movement or a socialist workers party, and called by whatever name) cannot be about **“beefing up, or providing credible opposition to the ANC”** precisely because the process we have outlined above are processes of **the immense majorities** – the South African working class, both black and white, in all their workplaces and communities!*

All other previous and historic political formations, including the birth of the ANC itself, were movements of minorities!

The ANC and SACP are everyday reminding Numsa that the working class organised in Cosatu unions and Cosatu itself will always remain in the ANC and its Alliance. This is arrogance of the highest order, and it reveals shocking ignorance and abandonment of Marxist-Leninist class theory and analysis, on the part of the leadership of both the ANC and SACP, about why the working class both organized in Cosatu unions, and those not organised in any union, have tolerated a clearly dysfunctional and anti-working class

alliance for more than 20 years!

Simply stated, the working class, are not the political property of either the ANC or the SACP – their presence in the ANC and SACP **is premised on the sole fact that these organisations are able to protect and advance the class interests of the working class.** As more than 27 years of our Marxist-Leninist analysis and revolutionary work has shown, both these organisations no longer champion the interests of the working class or socialism. And the advanced working class has, and continues to, abandon these organisations.

The revolutionary strategic objective of all these processes is for the advanced detachment of the working class to rally the immense majority in order to win economic and political power for **the immense majority of South African working class** in all its manifold manifestations, for a socialist South Africa as the only solution to the human crisis in South Africa, and the world, today.

There are no individuals among the Numsa national leadership who harbor **illusions of personal grandeur, or who want political power in order to advance their personal economic interests.** Only a malicious and extremely ignorant imbecile would make such a mischievous and unashamedly false accusation.

Numsa as a revolutionary trade union inspired by Marxism-Leninism, will play its revolutionary part in solving the human crisis in South Africa by advancing the cause for the only alternative and solution available to us: socialism.

Writing in 1988 at a time when many left and revolutionary socialist formations condemned the SACP's strategy of working inside the ANC led Alliance for many reasons, including the possibility of the SACP abandoning the struggle for socialism in favour of the struggle for bourgeois nationalism, Joe Slovo then SACP General Secretary warned the working class

thus:

“It is obvious that the black capitalist class favours capitalism and that it will do its best to influence the post-apartheid society in this direction.

It is obvious that the black middle and upper classes who take part in a broad liberation alliance will jostle for hegemony and attempt to represent their interests as the interests of all Africans.

It is obvious that (like their counterparts in every part of the world) the black middle and upper strata, who find themselves on the side of the people’s struggle, are often inconsistent and vacillating. They are usually the enemy’s softest targets for achieving a reformist, rather than a revolutionary, outcome.”

Twenty years into our neoliberal capitalist democracy, it has become clear to us, the working class, that **sections of the black petit-bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie who took part in the broad liberation alliance are viciously jostling for hegemony and attempting to represent their interests as the interests of all Africans by claiming that the Black and African working class will forever remain in the ANC and the SACP, and in the neo-liberal and capitalist ANC led Alliance.**

The SACP, when it was still led by Marxist-Leninists, further warned the working class about these tendencies of the vacillating strata among Black people, in its 1989 Programme:

“In the period after the seizure of power by the democratic forces, the working class will need to continue the struggle against capitalism. It will need to strengthen its organisations and build the bases of working class and popular power in the economy, in all sectors of the state and in the communities where the people live.

A deliberate effort will have to be made to prevent attempts by the bourgeoisie and aspirant capitalist elements – and their imperialist supporters – to dominate state power and divert the revolution. Constant mass vigilance will also have to be exercised and action taken against such negative tendencies as the stifling of popular democracy, the bureaucratisation of the state and corrupt practices in government or in society as a whole.

In order to prevent the emergence of a seed-bed for capitalist resurgence and ensure an advance to socialism, the working class must win to its side other sections of the working people, both now and after the popular seizure of power. The landless rural masses, sections of the intelligentsia, students, large contingents of youth and women (as social groups) and some small businessmen and other forces stand to gain from the victory of the socialist revolution.

The transition to socialism will be neither completely separate from nor contradictory to the tasks of the national democratic revolution. On the one hand, consistent implementation and defence of the national democratic programme constitute a major guarantee for progress towards socialism. On the other hand, many of the major objectives of the national democratic revolution will be fully accomplished in the process of socialist construction. Among these tasks are complete national liberation and equality, elimination of sex discrimination, and, more significantly, the elimination of monopoly domination over the economy.”

As Numsa we have consistently maintained that the NDR is not on track. The only track for the NDR is towards socialism because we believe many of the major objectives of the NDR can be fully achieved in the process of socialist construction. Our call for a United Front of the working class and a Movement for Socialism is precisely a defence of the national democratic programme, the Freedom Charter, which

remains the only programme that is capable of laying the basis for socialist transformation of South African society.

There is no turning back, for us in Numsa. We will do whatever it takes to contribute to uniting the working class behind the demand for the radical implementation of the Freedom Charter, for the struggle against a neoliberal capitalist post-Apartheid South Africa, and for Socialism. As the Marxist-Leninist SACP said in 1989; “in the aftermath of the democratic forces assuming political power, the working class has the duty to continue the struggle against capitalism, for socialism”.

**Irvin Jim,
Numsa General Secretary
20May 2014.**

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

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

“Nothing demonstrates better the increasing rigor of the colonial system: you begin by occupying the country, then you take the land and exploit the former owners at starvation rates. Then with mechanization, this cheap labour is still too expensive. You finish up taking from the native their very right to work. All that is left for the Natives to do in their own land at a time of great prosperity, is to die of starvation.” (Jean Paul Sarter, 2001)

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

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

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

This Central Committee must help all of us to fully

understand the moment we are in, from a clear Marxist-Leninist class perspective. There should be no confusion over what Numsa resolved to do, in the Numsa National Special Congress.

All of us must be very clear what these just ended elections mean to the working class of South Africa. All of us must be clear what our revolutionary and trade union responsibilities are, post the Numsa historic Special National Congress.

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

Among other important matters this Central Committee must initiate is a serious and urgent national dialogue among all the left formations in general and in Numsa in particular, on the fundamental question of the form and content of the socialism we want for South Africa and the world.

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

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

- A. The state of the world capitalist system;*
- B. The South African revolution: its theory and revolutionary practice;*
- C. The Freedom Charter as the minimum programme and basis of the class alliance of the forces that spear-headed the South*

African violent revolution for freedom in South Africa;
D. The South African negotiated settlement and post 1994 South Africa;
E. Numsa and post 1994 South Africa and the Numsa Special National Congress;
F. The 2014 National Elections and their class significance; and
G. What is to be done, to build the power of the working class and accelerate momentum towards a Socialist South Africa as the only viable alternative to the savagery of the current racial capitalism and imperialist domination?

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. The state of the world capitalist system

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

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

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

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

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

our Earth system as we know it.

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

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

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

Even our poverty, diseases, homelessness, ignorance and all miseries are everyday being converted into businesses for making money. If ways have not been found to make money out of any of our problems, those problems will not receive any attention until money can be made out of them!

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

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

There is so much medical science and health technology that each human being can today have their health problems

attended to, and medicines provided, according to their individual needs and specifications.

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

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

Thus we see that on one hand, at no time have the productive forces been so developed such that every human being can live a full, enjoyable and happy life, on the other hand, precisely because a small and minority world capitalist class owns and controls the world economy for their profits, the majority of the world peoples suffer terribly, and the Earth itself is threatened with total destruction.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Was our struggle for social grants?

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

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

Was our struggles for us to merely participate in choosing which faction of the capitalist class should be in government through the lottery of capitalist elections once in every 5

years, and then pretend that we too have “political power”? Was our struggle merely for “basic services” in our apartheid designed geographical ghettos?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our violent revolutionary struggle was about ending exploitation of the Black and African majority who are the

bulk of the South African working class! Today, the majority of Black and African people cannot survive without selling themselves very cheaply to white or white black parasitic capitalists!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With all the noise making the rounds about “a good story to tell” and the results of the 2014 7th May National Elections, it has become absolutely necessary to remind ourselves of the basic demands that brought together the coalition of forces that participated in the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

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

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

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

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

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

The results of the Elections perfectly mirror the colonial and racist distribution of the racial political groupings in South Africa today. The results are a perfect reminder of the fact that white monopoly economic and political power continues to live side by side with majority Black and African poverty and extreme inequality. Nothing best captures the colonial nature of South African economy and society than the racial voting patterns.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- We now know that the totality of the openly and secretly negotiated settlement firmly entrenched a neoliberal capitalist post-Apartheid South Africa, and threw the Freedom Charter into the dustbin of history!*

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

- *The 1996 South African most liberal constitution guaranteed both existing and created new property rights for the white minority population, especially in land – thus entrenching racial capitalism, post 1994.*
- *We are now convinced that BEE was secured as a means both to pay off and consolidate a Black middle class, post 1994 that would act as the new policeman for the new version of the same Apartheid capitalist society and economy that South Africa became, after 1994.*
- *We are very clear that the 1994 democratic breakthrough was nothing but the mechanism for the racial capitalist transition, entrenchment of the racial social and economic domination order we are now living in.*
- *The 1994 negotiated settlement laid the capitalist foundation for the post-Apartheid rise of a kleptomaniac, corrupt black and African political class.*
- *The negotiated settlement contained the seeds for the dismantling of the popular and revolutionary block that had waged the struggle for genuine freedom in South Africa.*

We are therefore, not surprised that today, 20 years after 1994, Black and African working class communities will, on the same day, participate in the elections by returning a black government into power, even as they are coming straight from a violent protest against their inhuman conditions of life. This is a perfect reminder that our colonial and racist society and economy are alive, and the struggle for freedom continues!

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

Numsa is a socialist Marxist-Leninist inspired revolutionary trade union. We make no apology to anyone for this fact. In our December 2013 Numsa National Special Congress, we

confirmed and resolved that the ANC led alliance no longer serves its revolutionary purpose. We, accordingly, ended our political support for the ANC and resolved to campaign for Cosatu to break the Alliance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Forward to a socialist world!

Forward to a socialist Africa!

Forward to the Socialist Republic of South Africa!

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

*Andrew Chirwa,
Numsa President*

12th May 2014.

original posted here:

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

Book Launch: Marxist Considerations on the Crisis by Hungarian Marxist Balazs Nagy

7pm Monday 31 March 2014, Conway Hall, Red Lion square.

This work was originally planned as “an article explaining the great economic crisis which erupted in 2007 from a Marxist point of view”.

However, while working on it Balazs Nagy quickly realised that a deeper understanding of this development would only be possible through grasping the nature and meaning of this current upheaval in and through the development of the economic-political system as a whole.

Therefore he “could not avoid going back – occasionally a long way back – to unearth the roots of the social content and important components of economic life and trace how they came into being historically”.

The present volume therefore contains Part One of this work. It starts with the efforts of classical socialist thinkers to understand imperialism as a stage of capitalism, then traces the persistent contradictions working in society and economy through the Twentieth Century.

This compelling and original account rescues and re-presents basic Marxist conceptions of these matters which are often overlooked in contemporary political discourse.

Balazs Nagy dedicates this book “to the memory of the pioneer who inspired these Considerations, the outstanding Marxist economist, my comrade and friend Geoff Pilling, who died before his time in August 1997”

Marxist Considerations on the Crisis by Balazs Nagy

190 pages, paperback:

£9.99

ISBN 978-0-9564319-3-6

Published for Workers International by Socialist Studies, PO Box 68375, London E7 7DT,

One of the Secretaries of the Petofi Circle in Hungary in 1956, Balazs Nagy participated in establishing the Budapest Central Workers' Council.

In his pamphlet: 1956: How the Budapest Central Workers' Council Was Set Up, he explains that even before the uprising and the brutal intervention of the Soviet army, workers had spontaneously started to organise their actions.

Forced into exile in Western Europe, Balazs Nagy came into contact with Trotskyism to which he has since dedicated his life. He is a founding member of Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International.

Numsa Launch new paper

Numsa News: We say No to handouts, we need real jobs

Highlights include:

Numsa congress: Breaking new ground

Parliament: So, what is the state of the nation when it comes to policy and direction?

Numsa striking for youth jobs against false solutions

ANC vision: An Assessment of Vision 2014

Shop floor: Eskom salary report

Benefits: Will the government take workers' pension fund money?

The meaning of Marikana tragedy

[Issue One here!](#)