

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

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*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 2nd Deputy President Comrades Basil Cele on jobs for Youth demonstration**

Read this here:

<http://www.numsa.org.za/article/speakers-notes-numsa-2nd-deputy-president-comrades-basil-cele-jobs-youth-demonstration/>

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# An end to apartheid or a new form of slavery?

This article examines the background to the talks between leaders of the African National Congress and the South African government. Based on discussions at the executive of Workers International, it was written by J.T.Barney. It was first published in *The International* no. 2, July 1990

South Africa is the leading capitalist country in Africa and a major ally of world imperialism. A successful proletarian revolution here will be a turning-point for Africa, and its effects will be felt throughout the whole world.

Thus today the main issue gripping the attention of everyone in the country is the talks that have begun between the National Party and the African National Congress. These talks are aimed at creating a climate for negotiations which are supposed to lead to the dismantling of apartheid. The unbanning of the ANC and all the other political organisations, together with the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, are steps forward which all revolutionaries support. But what is the political programme of the ruling class? Why did they unban the ANC? And why are they now willing to talk to an organisation which until recently was said to be the 'main enemy'?

The hated apartheid system has never known a time when it was not under attack from the oppressed and exploited masses. Not even the state of emergency – which has not been lifted – and the detention of tens of thousands of activists has been able to break this spirit of resistance. But as the class struggle has intensified, with the working class organised in COSATU and NACTU playing the leading role, so the pressure on the racist ruling class to change their form of rule in order to ensure their survival has intensified.

The ruling class are determined to prevent the destruction of their system of oppression and exploitation. Their political power, profits, wealth and privileges are all bound up with maintaining apartheid and capitalism. But how are they to save this system when the masses have shown so clearly that they are no longer prepared to live under it? This is the key to understanding their willingness to talk to the ANC.

To preserve their system they desperately need to co-opt a section of the black petty bourgeoisie who still have credibility among the majority of the oppressed. And the section of the section of the black petty bourgeoisie they have turned to is the ANC led by Nelson Mandela. But even before agreeing to hold these talks with the ANC, de Klerk made it clear that the only basis on which he was prepared to negotiate was the protection of group rights and the preservation of the system of private property as the bourgeois press was quick to point out:

'De Klerk spoke again on Friday [2 February 1990, in his speech announcing the unbanning of the ANC] of a "basic principle" being one of "no domination" in the new South Africa, which [means] his insistence on "group rights". That in turn effectively means a white minority veto on any substantial changes to the socio-economic system ...' (Observer, 4 February 1990). In other words, the ruling class will not be negotiating about dismantling apartheid-capitalism, but about how to extend the life of apartheid-capitalism. The bourgeoisie is talking to the ANC about how to save itself from the working masses.

### **How has the ANC responded to the plan of the apartheid rulers?**

The ANC has nothing but praise for this plan of the ruling class. In the first press interview after his release, Nelson Mandela spoke highly of de Klerk: 'I am on record as saying that I regard Mr de Klerk as a man of integrity. And I sincerely believe in this and I believe that he himself wants to have a new chapter in the history of this country.'

But Mandela did not stop here. He went further, saying that he did not rule out 'the possibility of a future coalition between the ANC and the National Party in government ...' Why? Because according to Mandela, there was no such thing as a 'non-negotiable' issue. The ANC had to be 'flexible over fundamental issues even minority rights.' (Weekly Mail, 16-22 February 1990).

Mandela was even more positive about talking to the bosses, stressing that they would have a very important role to play in the future South Africa: 'It is a natural thing to have discussions with businessmen ... and our struggle has been supported by (some) businessmen from all over the world. There is nothing so logical as meeting them, exchanging views and trying to allay their fears. Sanctions and disinvestment were specific political tactics ... but once the situation is settled, investment in the country is the normal development which we will want.' (Weekly Mail, 23 February – 1 March 1990).

Mandela has now also dropped all talk of nationalisation of the big multinational companies, saying that this was something for the 'experts' to decide upon, and that the ANC would follow the advice that it was given. But what is clear is that Mandela will not be following the advice of the workers for workers' control of the economy.

Mandela himself made this absolutely plain in a speech to capitalists in the Transkei: 'Regarding the ANC's position in relation to businessmen, Mandela said the organisation was not anti-capitalism and rejected the commonly-held belief that the Freedom Charter was fundamentally socialistic. Mandela said the youth had perpetuated the belief that the ANC opposed businessmen.' (Weekly Mail, 27 April – 3 May 1990).

The political programme of the ANC is no different from that of the ruling class. That is, no fundamental change and no attack on the system of private property. This programme is in

direct conflict with the struggle of the working class and oppressed masses, who are seeking an alternative to apartheid and capitalism, and whose most politically conscious sections put forward a Workers' Charter aimed at ending both oppression and exploitation.

How does the ANC defend this betrayal of the oppressed masses? And how does it hope to carry out this betrayal when it knows that the masses will not accept it without a fight? To understand the confidence of the ANC and its ability to confuse and deceive large sections of the oppressed and exploited masses it is necessary to understand the role that the Stalinised South African Communist Party, led by Joe Slovo, has played and continues to play in the liberation movement.

### **The role of Stalinism**

Stalinism has its roots in the betrayal of the Russian Revolution of October 1917. Under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky was transformed from an instrument of the working class into an instrument against the working class and for the ruling class. Using the Soviet Union's immense standing among the international working class as the first workers' state, Stalin also transformed the Third International from a world party of socialist revolution into an agency of the international bourgeoisie. Marxism was abandoned and trampled upon, and substituted by a crude and vulgar falsification of revolutionary theory.

One such theory to emerge was that the working class of the so-called 'Third World' Asia, Latin America, Africa had to subordinate their struggle against their national bourgeoisie to the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. The working class had to give up its political independence, and not only accept the political programme of the bourgeoisie but also fight under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie.

**This theory was given the name 'two-stage revolution', which meant that the working class had first to struggle for democracy, and only after this had been achieved could the struggle for socialism begin.**

This political strategy had disastrous and tragic consequences in China between 1925 and 1927. The Chinese Communist Party was ordered by the Stalinist bureaucracy to accept the leadership of the Kuomintang the political organisation of the Chinese bourgeoisie and dissolve their own independent political party into this organisation.

But when workers began to put forward their own demands and occupied the factories, the Kuomintang turned on them and massacred thousands of communists. Completely disarmed by Stalin's two-stage conception of revolution, the Chinese Communist Party was unable to defend itself and the masses that supported it. This theory became a central part of Stalinism. The modern examples of this theory are Nicaragua and Zimbabwe. In these countries the working class was also told: first overthrow colonialism and only then can you struggle for socialism. And with what results?

In Nicaragua a bourgeois government firmly allied to American imperialism is now in power; and in Zimbabwe the multinational companies are as powerful under Robert Mugabe's 'black majority government' as they were under Ian Smith's 'white minority government'.

The two-stage revolution has not meant an end to imperialism, but the consolidation of the power of the bourgeoisie. Today it is this very same theory that the South African Communist Party is defending on behalf of the ANC in South Africa. As the self-appointed 'vanguard' of the South African working class the SACP says to the workers:

'First overthrow apartheid. But to do this you must first accept the leadership of the ANC. You must give up any ideas of an independent political programme and an independent political organisation. Only after apartheid has been

destroyed can the struggle for socialism begin.'

But what does this mean? Is the SACP saying that apartheid can be destroyed without destroying capitalism? That there can be democracy in South Africa without socialism? These are life and death questions for the South African working class, and the fate of millions in our country and the rest of the world depends on the answers that we give to them.

### **Permanent Revolution and the Fourth International**

The Fourth International arose as a challenge to the betrayal of Marxism by Stalinism. Its political programme is based on the continuity of revolutionary theory and practice. For this the members of the Fourth International were slandered and persecuted by the Stalinists, and tens of thousands of its best fighters were murdered by Stalin's gangs.

Its leader and founder, Leon Trotsky, was assassinated by an agent of Stalin's. But Stalinism did not succeed in destroying the Fourth International, and in May 1990 in Budapest, Hungary, a Workers International was founded with the main aim of rebuilding the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

At the centre of this theory is an uncompromising struggle against the bourgeoisie and the influence of bourgeois ideology in the working class movement. The theory of permanent revolution does not ignore the anti-colonial and democratic struggle or underestimate their significance. Just the opposite.

Because the theory of permanent revolution attaches so much importance to these struggles, it insists that it is only the working class that can provide the leadership for these struggles. Why? Because the working class is the only revolutionary class in society. But to lead the anti-colonial and democratic struggle, the working class must be organised into their own independent political party, and must struggle on the basis of its own independent political programme.

The alternative to this political independence of the working class are the Popular Fronts and People's Governments that Stalinism imposed on the working class, which resulted in betrayals and bloody defeats (as happened in France and Spain in the 1930s, and in the present day is happening in countries like Angola, Mozambique and Nicaragua).

But once the working class takes leadership of the anti-colonial and democratic struggle, it will carry this struggle through to the very end. It will not stop at any so-called 'first stage', but proceed to the socialist reconstruction of society because it is on this basis that colonialism can be destroyed and genuine democracy achieved. Trotsky outlined the perspective of permanent revolution as follows:

'The theory of permanent revolution ... pointed out that the democratic tasks of the backward bourgeois nations lead directly to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the dictatorship of the proletariat puts socialist tasks on the order of the day. Therein lay the central idea of the theory. While the traditional view was that the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat lay through a long period of democracy, the theory of the permanent revolution established the fact that for backward countries the road to democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus democracy is not a regime that remains self-sufficient for decades, but is only a direct prelude to the socialist revolution. Each is bound to the other in an unbroken chain. Thus there is established between the democratic revolution and the socialist reconstruction of society a permanent state of revolutionary development.' (L. Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, New Park Publications, 1997, p.2.)

The correctness of the theory of permanent revolution was proved during the October Revolution of 1917. The Russian working class showed concretely that it was only under their dictatorship, exercised through the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, that democracy could be won and the land

question solved. But to break the power of the bourgeoisie the working class was forced to attack the system of private property. Thus the revolution grew over into its socialist stage. The phrase that Lenin used to describe this process was 'uninterrupted revolution'.

## **The position of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International**

### **1. On a negotiated settlement**

The ANC-SACP lies to the South African masses, saying that fundamental change can come through negotiating with the racist ruling class. The Workers' International says that fundamental change can only come through the revolutionary overthrow of this ruling class. This means the revolutionary mobilisation of the working class on the basis of its own political programme and under the leadership of its own independent political party. Why must the masses believe that their oppressors and exploiters will willingly hand over power to them? When and where in history has this ever happened?

The very nature of the talks between the National Party and the African National Congress is itself a clear indication of the kind of democracy that the masses can expect from a negotiated settlement. The talks are profoundly anti-democratic and a negation of all the democratic demands that have been advanced by the South African masses over the years.

No free and open election of delegates took place. The ANC simply appointed people to speak on behalf of the masses. The talks were closed and secret. The ANC agreed that there would be a news black-out while the discussions were still in progress. The talks went on for three days, but at the end only a one-paragraph communiqué was released. Why can the masses not decide their own destiny? Why can they not know what the ANC has been saying on their behalf? The masses have spared nothing in their struggle for democracy. They have been detained, tortured and killed. But now the ANC says to them:

'Leave everything to us. We are your leaders. We will decide for you.' To this, the Workers International replies:

**The talks are a swindle. They are the main means to prevent a revolutionary outcome of the struggle against apartheid. This is the only meaning of the negotiations. Therefore the working class has to build its own party to achieve democracy. Workers have to take into their own hands the struggle for democracy that is being betrayed by the ANC.**

This means putting forward the demand for a Constituent Assembly with full powers, elected by universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage, which excludes all fascists and racists. But who can convoke such a genuinely democratic and representative assembly? The racist ruling class who has no interests in democracy? The ANC that is prepared to share power with this racist ruling class? No! Only the mobilisation of the working class can lead to the convening of such a Constituent Assembly.

In Russia it was only after the working class had taken power that it was possible for such an assembly to be convened. Thus for the South African masses to convene a genuinely democratic Constituent Assembly they need to build their organs of struggle. That is, they need to build their own party and they need to build soviets (workers' councils).

But even if the racist ruling class were to convene a Constituent Assembly, which is highly unlikely, such an assembly would be powerless to implement any of the democratic demands one person, one vote; a non-racial united South Africa; the expropriation of the land and its redistribution to those who work it so long as economic power remains on the hands of the capitalists. Only the working class organised in factory committees, locals, trade unions and soviets can break the power of the capitalists and ensure an end to the injustices and repressions of apartheid perpetrated against all of the oppressed.

In Namibia it has been seen what happens when the bourgeoisie convenes a Constituent Assembly. There the Constituent Assembly did not advance the struggle of the working class against imperialism, but was used against the masses to strengthen imperialism. And the most important democratic demand of the Namibian masses the expropriation of the big landowners was not, and will not, be carried out.

In all great revolutionary struggles the masses strive to take their destiny into their own hands. This happened in South Africa during the uprising of 1984-1986 when the masses created their own street and area committees. Is it a surprise that the ANC remains silent about these committees? That any attempt to learn the lessons of these events is suppressed? For contained within these street and area committees was the germ of soviets, that is, the revolutionary councils of the working class.

To struggle for the Constituent Assembly therefore means to rebuild these organs of struggle. It means to build soviets. That is why the ANC chose secret negotiations and not the struggle for a Constituent Assembly. The ANC knows that if the working class was mobilised on a revolutionary democratic programme, it would struggle against both apartheid and capitalism. Thus the ANC presents itself as the 'saviour' of the masses, but only in order that it can prevent the independent organisation of the working class.

## **2. On apartheid and capitalism**

Apartheid has grown up together with capitalism and is inseparable from it. It has served capitalism well by providing it with cheap black labour; dividing the working class; policing the oppressed masses; and ensuring that 87 per cent of the land remains in the hands of a small Afrikaner bourgeoisie. The army, police force, legal system and state bureaucracy are all in the direct service and pay of the apartheid system. For the whites it has meant one of the highest standards of living anywhere in the world.

The average income of a white person in South Africa is R14,000 a year, compared to R1,400 for a black person. For the blacks it has meant misery, poverty and human degradation. Out of every 1000 black children born, 63 die at birth compared to 9 white children. Over 60 per cent of black people are illiterate, compared to 7 per cent of white. Black unemployment is over 40 per cent, while white unemployment is hardly known. The racist legislation, physical separation of people, and so forth, are there to keep all this in place.

What perspective therefore can there be of eliminating apartheid without a radical change in the material conditions of life of the oppressed and exploited? But this means attacking the very foundations on which apartheid rests. That is, the capitalist system of exploitation.

On the basis of their own experience, the workers have already identified the inextricable links between apartheid and capitalism. And on the basis of these experiences, they have put forward demands which not only call for the destruction of apartheid, but also for the destruction of the capitalist system.

Thus a main demand of the Workers' Charter put forward by NUMSA was that the mines and banks had to be brought under workers' control. For the workers knew that while capitalism survives, the conditions of apartheid will survive. That is, cheap labour will remain, unemployment will remain, racism will remain, poverty will remain and the land will remain in the hands of a small minority.

The ability of the capitalist class to prevent any advance to democracy while it still owns the means of production is easily realised when it is seen just how powerful this capitalist class is. The ownership and control of the major sectors of the economy mining, finance, banking, manufacturing and transport is in the hands of a tiny number of big corporations. Close to 70 per cent of the South African economy is controlled by eight private corporations. Of these

private corporations, the biggest, Anglo-American, controls assets worth more than the combined income of the nine member countries of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference.

In other words, Anglo-American on its own has more assets than Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania put together.

Agriculture has also been heavily penetrated by the monopolies. For example, today 80 per cent of the sugar industry is controlled by two of the country's biggest monopolies, Anglo-American and Barlow Rand. These big corporations, in turn, are completely integrated into foreign monopoly capital. Anglo-American, for example, is the largest single investor in the United States.

How then does the ANC hope to eliminate apartheid, while not disturbing the existing economic structure? A handful of monopolies control our lives and the ANC promises fundamental change without taking power out of the hands of those monopolies!

The working masses of southern Africa have direct experience of what it means not to break the power of monopoly capital. In Zimbabwe over 80 per cent of the economy is still in the hands of the bourgeoisie. This means that the bourgeoisie have the power to prevent any advance of the working class. As a result, most of the gains from independence have been lost.

Today Zimbabwe has trade union legislation which is no different from that which it had under Smith's regime. The domination of Zimbabwe's economy by the multinationals and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has also meant that it has not been able to assist the poorer countries of the region to overcome their chronic problems. Angola is on the brink of economic collapse and Mozambique has become one of the poorest countries in the world. It is clear that while monopoly capitalism still has the economies of southern Africa in its

grip, there can be no hope of a solution to the problems in the region.

### **3. On democracy and socialism**

South Africa is a highly developed capitalist country which has advanced to the stage of imperialism the rule of monopoly and finance capital. But capitalism has reached this highest stage of development without introducing democracy in South Africa. This indissolubly bound up with the socialist revolution is the struggle for democracy. That is, the overthrow of the apartheid state and its replacement by a democratic state based on majority rule. But the question is: how are the democratic tasks of the revolution to be solved and who alone can solve these tasks?

The working class has already made clear that the struggle for democracy is at the same time the struggle for socialism. On the basis of its own living experience under apartheid, it put forward a Workers' Charter which challenged the ANC's Freedom Charter.

In opposition to this bourgeois nationalist programme of the ANC, the Workers' Charter advanced the position that there could be no democracy in South Africa while economic power still remained with the bosses. The working class was thus consciously moving towards a socialist solution to the democratic struggle.

### **But what has been the response of the ANC to the demands of the working class?**

Since its unbanning the ANC, with the full support and backing of the SACP, has been making every effort to take over COSATU and subordinate it to its structures. This work is being carried out mainly through the trade union bureaucracy. In Natal it is NUMSA that is used as the main recruiting agency for the ANC, and in the Transvaal this same role is being played by NUM. And this is the same ANC which only recently said that it is prepared to integrate Umkhonto We Sizwe into

the SADF.

**In other words, by subordinating the trade unions into its structures, the ANC is preparing for the physical integration of the trade unions into the bourgeois state that will emerge from the negotiated settlement.**

The class independence of the trade unions has always been a big problem for the ruling class. Since the formation of independent trade unions in the 1970s and 1980s, the apartheid state has used every means to break the trade union movement. It has used violence to suppress strikes; harassed and detained union organisers; bombed union buildings; and only recently, introduced the Labour Relations Act to try and curb the militancy of the working class. But every effort failed, and the independent union movement continued to grow in size and strength.

But now the ANC has come forward to do the job of the apartheid state. Through using the trade union bureaucracy, the ANC hopes to smash the class independence of the trade union movement. But the ANC can only have confidence to attempt this because it knows that it will have the complete support of the Stalinist South African Communist Party.

To dupe and confuse the working class, the SACP has put forward its own so-called 'Workers' Charter'. But this Workers' Charter is a complete fake. Unlike the Workers' Charter of the trade union movement, it says nothing about the inextricable links between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism. Instead, it tries to spread the illusion among the working class that there can be democracy while economic power still remains firmly in the hands of the big capitalist bosses.

This fraudulent 'workers' charter' has therefore nothing to do with the struggle for democracy, and even less with the struggle for socialism. What it is quite simply is a Stalinist

manoeuvre to save the bourgeoisie.

**Only the working class can lead the struggle for democracy. It is the only class that is able to unite all the oppressed behind it on the basis of a programme for permanent revolution. The working class has no interests in seeing any vestiges of apartheid remain.**

Take a concrete example. Mandela says he wants justice for all. Everybody will support this demand. But who is to apply this justice? Who are the judges going to be? Are the courts going to remain in their present form? Who is going to be in charge of the army? Mandela says that the present executioners of the people can be relied upon to bring about this justice. But it is only the working class, by smashing the apartheid state, that will be able to guarantee justice for all.

The examples could be multiplied. How is the chronic housing shortage to be solved if the building industry is not taken out of the hands of the profit-hungry capitalists and brought under working class control. How is unemployment to be tackled if the power of monopoly capital is not broken? How is migrant labour and the compound system to be ended if gold mining is not organised on a different basis?

And the killings in Natal? The unbanning of the ANC and the release of Mandela has not brought an end to the vicious cycle of violence. Instead, Mandela has given his approval to the deployment of the South African Defence Force in the Natal townships. His only concern is that the ANC should have been consulted before the troops were sent in. Is this then the justice for all that Mandela wants?

**Like every other problem, only the working class can solve the problem in Natal. But in order to do this it has to take the lead. COSATU has to set up its own peace committees in the factories which bring together all workers, and not entrust the solution of this problem to those who do not wish to see**

## **an end to the violence.**

It is only the working class that will be able to solve the land question. A minority group of private white landlords holds 87 per cent of the land. The rural working class is paid starvation wages and not allowed to organise into trade unions. Landlessness is an acute and growing problem. All the 'homelands' are overcrowded and unable to support the people living in them. In Bophuthatswana, for example, 142,000 families are living on land that can only support 26 000. Environmental problems, like soil erosion, are spreading rapidly.

How else is the land question to be solved except through large-scale nationalisation and re-distribution of the land? But the ANC has already promised the big white landlords that they have nothing to fear from an ANC government, that the ANC does not intend to take the land away from them.

But the position of the working class will be that only those farmers who work the land themselves will be allowed to keep their land, the big capitalist farms and the agribusinesses will be nationalised and the land will be redistributed to the landless. The precise way in which this will be carried out will be decided by the agricultural workers and peasants themselves in their own freely-elected organisations.

It is also only the working class that will be able to protect the small businesses and traders against the banks and the big capitalist conglomerates. By nationalising all the banks, a workers' government will be able to provide easy and ready credit to these small businesses and traders who are presently at the mercy of finance capital.

## **Trotskyism and Stalinism two roads**

Given the betrayal of the masses that is being prepared by the ANC-SACP, what is the programme of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International? The starting point for

the Workers' International is the principle that the liberation of the working class is the task of the working class itself.

This means that the working class has to build its own organs of struggle and its own independent political party. Only on the basis of its political independence will the working class be able to fight for its class interests and for the interests of all the other classes and groups who also suffer because of the control that finance capital has over every aspect of the lives of the oppressed and exploited. Thus apartheid cannot be overthrown in South Africa without the overthrow of capitalism. The working class will have to attack the power and rights of the capitalist class in order to secure its own power and rights.

But the South African revolution, while beginning on national terrain, cannot succeed as a national revolution. It forms an inseparable part of the international struggle of the working class and can only be completed as part of the world revolution for socialism. In the immediate term the South African revolution will have to be spread to Southern Africa.

While imperialism divides southern Africa, imposing austerity programmes on the working masses, the programme of the Workers International strives to unite southern Africa in a Union of Workers' States. This United Workers' States of Southern Africa will be based on the principle of self-determination of all the countries and nations of southern Africa.

The ANC-SACP turns to the world bourgeoisie and the IMF to solve the problems of southern Africa. Is this international policy of the ANC-SACP merely a mistake? To believe this would be dangerous. This policy is the other side of Stalinism's theory of two-stage revolution, that is, peaceful co-existence with imperialism. This is the logical consequence of Stalinism's abandonment of the struggle for socialism.

Today, as Stalinism decomposes under the blows of the working class in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, its dependence on the international bourgeoisie becomes even stronger. In fact, it is the profound crisis of Stalinism which has led to the present situation in southern Africa. To protect its position in the Soviet Union, the Stalinist bureaucracy needs the support of imperialism. But to get this support, Gorbachev has to give something in return. This Cuban troops were withdrawn from Angola, and a deal was made in Namibia. Pressure is now being exerted on the ANC to make a deal with the racist South African government that will not threaten the interests of monopoly capital in the region. That this means sacrificing the masses of southern Africa to the IMF and the World Bank is of little concern to the Stalinist bureaucracy. In a meeting with Kaunda of Zambia in November 1987, shortly before leaving for talks with Regan in America, Gorbachev made clear what his new political thinking will mean for southern Africa: 'The principle of political settlement is fully applicable to the solution of issues in southern Africa. If guarantees are needed for reaching a political solution, it might be a good idea to think of such guarantees being made by the United Nations and the permanent members of the Security Council. As for the Soviet Union it is ready to play a positive (?) role in this matter.' (Novosti Press, Moscow, p. 82)

The Stalinist bureaucracy has made it clear that socialism is not on the agenda in southern Africa, and will not be on the agenda for at least a century! Thus on the one side of the struggle in South Africa is imperialism and its main agency in the working class movement, Stalinism. Together with the ANC, Stalinism and imperialism are working to politically disarm the South African working class and smash any movement for democracy and socialism.

**On the other side is the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist**

Revolution with its section now being established in South Africa. The Workers International has no other interests but those of the working class, and no other class to serve but the working class. It is still weak and its numbers are still small. But the Workers International is the only international organisation that has a revolutionary programme and that is committed to an uncompromising struggle against both imperialism and Stalinism.

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## **A Marxist reflects on the death of Nelson Mandela**

What a pilgrimage, as the world bourgeoisie's political chiefs rushed off to South Africa to show their respects at Nelson Mandela's funeral! Bush, Obama, Clinton, Sarkozy, Hollande, Cameron et.al.: the whole lot – friends and enemies, old and new – all reverently joined together to canonise him. Even their enemies (declared or nominally non-aligned), from the Chinese delegate to Castro from Cuba, or Lula from Brazil, not to mention “socialists” like Tony Blair, would not have missed this pious communion for the world; attendance was a point of honour! Which raises the question: How on earth can you explain this planet-wide assembly to celebrate a dead man?

August Bebel was a lathe-operator and outstanding leader of the German working class and the Second International in the 19th and early 20th centuries. “What have I done wrong now?” he used to wonder whenever the bourgeois press had anything nice to say about him. But Mandela was made from different stuff. It did not bother him to be smothered in glory by a

grateful bourgeoisie. He knew perfectly well why it was; he even said as much when they gave him a Nobel Prize. He made no bones about telling the jury: "Forgiveness frees the soul, it makes fear evaporate. That is why forgiveness is such a powerful weapon."

The die was cast the moment he emerged from his long captivity. Mandela cared more about the opulent South African bourgeoisie's "soul" and their "fear" than he did about the real suffering of millions of urban and rural proletarians outrageously exploited and crushed by fear every day. His forgiveness freed the bourgeoisie's soul while thinly gilding the chains of exploitation with a varnish of fictitious equality. And Bob's your uncle: the venomous fruit of social and political class collaboration mutated into a Christian-inspired psychological virtue.

But you would be wrong to say or think that he was always so accommodating towards the possessing class and the oppressors of his people. Immediately after World War II he founded the Youth League together with Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo in an attempt to radicalise an ANC (African National Congress) that was pledged to Gandhi's old conciliatory opportunism based on non-violent resistance to British imperialism. They launched a more combative and assertive policy on the part of African nationalism. With the banning of the Stalinised South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1950, there was a rapprochement between that party and the ANC, of which Mandela became the unchallenged leader in 1952. This alliance was strengthened by the Sharpeville massacre in 1961, when the leaders of these allied organisations launched the armed struggle. Later they were also all in gaol together on Robben Island.

And that was where Mandela – the radical rebel of African nationalism – and his companions adapted their outdated and compromised radical Gandhism to the very latest modern version of class-collaboration embodied in Stalinism, which has just

emerged triumphant from World War II. It was not a difficult adjustment; Trotsky had already exposed the complicity between Gandhism and Stalinism in 1939, for example. When he wrote: "... the Comintern has completely gone over to Gandhi's position and the position of the conciliationist colonial bourgeoisie in general." ("India Faced with Imperialist War", Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939-1940, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1977, p.31)

Indeed, this shift flowed directly from the dreadful policy of the Popular Front which Khrushchev and company further extended and generalised into the lying and suicidal policy of "peaceful co-existence".

There is little point speculating which way the ANC and Mandela would have gone without the close link to the SACP. However, reality reveals very close collaboration culminating in the as it were natural conversion of the ANC from its own homespun Gandhism to the very latest version of class collaboration represented by Stalinism – with all its cruel consequences. The Bolsheviks of old used prison and exile to sharpen a Marxist understanding of their revolutionary tasks. The 27 painful years spent together with Stalinists on barren Robben Island were the complete opposite, and thoroughly moulded Mandela into an evangelist for the Stalinist gospel of a social peace dominated by the powerful. The criminal pimp who thus prostituted what was – for all its hesitations and shortcomings – a great liberation movement into a resolute instrument of social conciliation was none other than the Stalinist SACP.

Towards the end of the 1980s the whole South African socio-political system was rapidly deteriorating in line with the worsening world crisis of capitalism and ultra-liberal attempts to find a way out. In South Africa, the whole bourgeois edifice was spectacularly ablaze and proletarian revolution was imminent, especially since that South African version of fascism, apartheid, had ruled out any intermediate

formation that might have acted as a buffer to soften the violence of the collision between the fundamental classes.

The terrified leaders of the bourgeoisie panicked, revoked the bans on the ANC and SACP and rushed off to implore the gaoled leaders to put the fire out. The enormity of this self-humiliation on the part of so proud and arrogant a class gives some measure of the scale of the revolutionary threat and the trouble the system was in.

No-one can say that Mandela and his associates gave way without getting anything in return. Like their Stalinist models who between 1940 and 1945 rescued the bourgeoisie from the threat of revolution in return for a few real but clearly limited and temporary improvements, Mandela too negotiated a price for acting as fireman. Nor can anyone say the price was worthless, when in fact a whole mortally offended nation felt the abolition of racist apartheid very positively.

From the outset, however, we Marxists very severely criticised this agreement; not just because it was limited – as if we gamble all or nothing, which is completely alien to our methods – nor because we disagree with its anti-apartheid content, which a great and long-suffering nation wanted. We were and are utterly opposed to this pact between the bourgeois South African state and Mandela's ANC because the latter substituted their anti-apartheid demands in place of more fundamental social demands. They purely and simply replaced class demands with general anti-racism, as if racist apartheid was not the immediate and natural product of essentially colonialist, rapacious and parasitical South African capitalism.

Negotiations of this sort normally turn on what is at stake in the confrontation and the relative strengths of the two sides. From this point of view, the result of these negotiations fell clearly short of both the colossal stakes involved in the confrontation between the revolution and the authorities and

the regime's congenital weakness in the face of the overwhelming strength of a proletariat fully standing up for itself. These exceptional conditions are the proper yardstick against which to judge the agreement and understand its inevitable and logical consequences. Exactly like their Stalinist mentors who previously allied themselves with the so-called "democratic" bourgeoisie against its twin brother, fascism, Mandela and the ANC demanded a "normal" capitalism without apartheid. Separated in time but close in their content, their negotiations and agreements were praised to the skies by the enthusiastic bourgeoisie, but merely put a brave face on what the Bible calls "selling their birth-right" (the revolution and power) "for a mess of pottage".

Set aside the slightest hesitation about describing this pact of complicity in these terms. It would be wrong and dangerous to imagine that the same mistaken and cruel illusions which had seized the great masses also nourished the ANC leaders. Unlike the former, Mandela and friends were not dupes. They acted deliberately to get this agreement, fully conscious of what it meant. That is proved perfectly well by two major phenomena.

First is the immediate stampede by a good number of the cadres and leaders of the ANC and the unions jostling for lucrative positions up there with the bourgeoisie. The well-known ANC and miners' union leader Cyril Ramaphosa, who was catapulted straight onto the board of directors of various mining companies, is undoubtedly the most repulsive of these newly-rich, but by no means the only one. There may be some ANC leaders who never got involved in bourgeois businesses, but almost all of them are up to their necks in enormous corruption, starting with President Jacob Zuma. South Africa is regularly reported to be one of the countries where corruption is most widespread.

The other irrefutable proof that they sold out the revolution and workers' plans cheaply is that this huge shift by the ANC

leaders and cadre into the ranks of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a profound re-adjustment on the part of leading ANC members, led by Mandela, in the objectives of their programme. At the beginning of the 1990s they were already turning its collectivist social orientation into a catalogue of demands shorn of any reference to the labouring classes, meticulously weeding out demands raised by rank and file workers and peasants.

If any more eloquent proof is needed, then look how from the start there were massive protests from the unions and within the ANC against this real treachery and for a return to the movements' original Charter of demands. On this we must mention our Comrade Mkhungo Bongani, Durban engineering worker, NUMSA trade union representative and ANC member who tried to prevent this rightward turn, raising his voice and organising workers against this treachery. While seeking support from British trade unions in his search for a revolutionary way forward, he recognised the correctness of the revolutionary orientation of Trotskyism. It was then as our close comrade that he returned to Durban to rally workers and revolutionaries into a fighting political organisation. Sadly, illness and poverty defeated this fighter, who died prematurely. But the South African working class can be proud to have had in its ranks a Marxist revolutionary of his temper, as perspicacious in understanding the tasks as he was firm and resolute in his convictions. This class has great need of the stimulating example of Comrade Bongani in its current struggle to build its revolutionary party.

Indeed, that struggle has already started. The catastrophic situation into which they have dragged working people all over the country is decisive, irrefutable, historically verified proof of how treacherous Mandela's pact and his whole policy were. Even official figures reveal what a disastrous situation the super-exploited urban and rural working class are in, eking a painful living with basic conditions of daily life

(work, wages, housing, water, electricity, transport, services, etc.) not met. Social inequality had widened further. Even government statistics – which are probably somewhat flattering – mention that 85% of the population only get 22% of gross revenue. Unemployment is over 25% of the active population, but over 40% of young people (these statistics too are probably embroidered). The Mandela leadership also backed off in the face of the white rural bourgeoisie. There was a rather timid attempt at agrarian reform in 1994 which anticipated that 30% of land would be redistributed by 2014. But by 2009 only 6% of land had been redistributed! So the Mandela leadership completely abandoned the agrarian revolution, a central pivot of the revolution and, in its shameful retreat, renounced practically all the significant tasks even of a consistent bourgeois revolution. The great majority of the black farm-workers live in absolute poverty.

It is therefore completely understandable that the working class and in particular the miners have taken up a struggle against their decline. Not long since, the whole world discovered with astonishment and indignation how the bourgeoisie and its state allied to a corrupt trade union bureaucracy responded with a brutal gunfire and savage, cruel massacre to the demands of the Lonmin miners at Marikana. There were also several trade union leaders among those who provoked and organised this revolting massacre, most prominently the same traitor Cyril Ramaphosa in his capacity as one of the bosses of Lonmin, the firm responsible for laying this murderous trap. The trade union bureaucracy then covered the whole thing up in complicity with the employers. The working class learnt its lesson. A series of strikes broke out and the actions and demonstrations organised showed that, though they had been paralysed by illusions for a while, the working class had started a fight. Its best elements radicalised the trade unions, which are now seeking their independent working-class road, while the most far-sighted

have got involved in building the revolutionary workers' party.

The whole country is in ferment and South African workers, with their Namibian sisters and brothers, are taking their first difficult and cautious but also decisive and promising steps towards the rebirth of their class party. Our comrades in Namibia are in the front ranks of this general ferment and we salute them as brothers. This is a powerful groundswell which will surely grow soon to shake the whole world.

So it is hardly surprising that the world bourgeoisie got concerned and mobilised all its various courtesans and underlings to rush off to South Africa. Their sure class instinct sensed the danger. The looming peril had to be countered immediately, and they thought that poisoning the consciousness of the working class and working people with Mandela's toxic doctrine of general human brotherhood without class distinction was the best way to do it.

But if the bourgeoisie seem determined to raise this lie to the level of international generalisation, they risk colliding head-on with the very thing that working people in South Africa are experiencing. So to open the road to its revolutionary proletarian party, the South African working class needs first of all to complete and deepen the process of learning from this precious experience. The key to success in founding its party is critically surpassing and transcending Mandela's ideology and practice.

A Marxist reflects on the death of Nelson Mandela.

By Balazs Nagy December 2013

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# Nelson Mandela's Legacy by Bronwen Handyside



*“The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has it, to the best of my recollection, ever condemned capitalist society.”*

(Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom, p. 435)

How is it that UK Prime Minister David Cameron can say of Nelson Mandela: “A great light has gone out in the world. Nelson Mandela was a hero of our time”?

How is it that newspapers like the Daily Telegraph, the voice of the British ruling class, can express their regret at Mandela's passing?

Contrast this with Maggie Thatcher's opinion that Mandela and the ANC were nothing but a bunch of murdering terrorists.

Some might say the British ruling class is just jumping on a bandwagon and hoping to bask in some kind of reflected glory from the international outpouring of praise directed towards the ANC leader.

I think their approval of Mandela's history goes deeper than that. It fits in with the world bourgeoisie's global narrative of how the world's brutal inequalities should be solved, which is pumped out on a daily basis by their lackeys in the mass media. It is also propped up by the remnants of the grip that Stalinist ideas retain on the international working class (in particular the idea of “peaceful coexistence” between capitalism and socialism, which arose out of the deal the Stalinist bureaucracy made with imperialism to divide the world between them after the Second World War. This line constantly tended to limit and hamper struggles against imperialism, including those against colonial domination, and blunted them by stifling revolutionary socialist forces and

working through handpicked bureaucratic leaders. This is why uprisings of ANC militants demanding to wage the armed struggle in South Africa were violently, sometimes fatally, suppressed by the ANC's security apparatus(1).)

Brutal systems like apartheid are based on deliberate divisions created between working people across the world. Over centuries they have enabled imperialist countries and capital to exploit labour power and natural resources belonging to other nations and peoples. Apartheid stands out as a particularly anti-human system of institutionalised racism.

The soothing myth the politicians and media are peddling is that such systems do not need to be violently overthrown, but can be resolved peacefully to the benefit of the oppressed through a "negotiated settlement". It says that the protracted and deepening problems of gross inequality between different countries, and different classes within those countries do not emanate, as the siren voices of socialism say, from the capitalist system. They do not require the overthrow of the system of private property (progressing through a programme of nationalisation of the banks, industry, and land) but a process of "civilised" negotiation in which big business (aka capital) preserves the lion's share of the wealth while permitting a minority of the country's bourgeoisie to participate in the feast. The bourgeois narrative tells us that the brutal inequalities we see today (where an Indian child of 11 can be sold into a brothel for life, while on the other side of the world boys like David Cameron and Boris Johnson are born to wealth and power) are nothing to do with the class system, where the majority who produce all the wealth through their labour are exploited by a minority who own all the industries and the land.

This narrative declares that the violence of each side during the oppressed classes' struggle for equality can be brushed over with the "bland screen of moral equivalence"(2) as it was

in South Africa at the so-called "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" (a useful model the bourgeoisie rolled out across the world, notably in Northern Ireland). The just violence of the masses in their fight for the equal redistribution of wealth of their nation is declared to be the same as the reactionary violence of those preserving their right to exploit others.

It says: not only is there no necessity for class antagonisms, there are actually really no class divisions in society. It is just that some people are born clever and resourceful and naturally grow rich, while others are not. The British ruling class, on a roll with its austerity measures and full of confidence, has started articulating much more clearly what really lies at the heart of this fairy tale.

Tory London Mayor Boris Johnson, now positioning himself for the Tory leadership – treading the ground where the rest of the Tories still do not quite dare to go – says: "Like it or not, the free market economy is the only show in town. Britain is competing in an increasingly impatient and globalised economy, in which the competition is getting ever stiffer.

"No one can ignore the harshness of that competition, or the inequality that it inevitably accentuates; and I am afraid that violent economic centrifuge is operating on human beings who are already very far from equal in raw ability, if not spiritual worth."

Tory Prime Minister Cameron now calls for permanent austerity – "a leaner state" – in other words a country in which the hogging of resources by a tiny elite will plunge millions into poverty, illness, despair and degradation. He wants a world in which such inequality is simply accepted – as a kind of natural phenomenon.

Negotiated settlements such as those in South Africa are the plan B the bourgeoisie rolls out at the point where it realises it can no longer govern with the iron fist, murdering

and torturing to repress dissent, and that it is under threat by a militant working class which is looking to the redistribution of wealth from the despoilers to the toilers. It needs to collaborate with a selected layer of the oppressed which it feels will do business, and [cheap MLB jerseys](#) in particular will collaborate in the suppression of the working class and its political programme of socialism.

This plan appeared in South Africa in the mid-1980s, when the country had become ungovernable, brought to its knees by a popular uprising led by an extraordinary and brand new trade union movement – which above all, and most important of all, had at its heart a conscious workingclass socialist current which produced the Workers Charter, demanding the redistribution of the wealth and the land to the masses of South Africa. “The scent of revolution was in the air”<sup>3</sup>. The Workers Charter was founded in opposition to the ANC’s 30 year old Freedom Charter (which as Nelson Mandela explains, was never a socialist document, but rather a programme for the establishment of a black bourgeoisie).

The plan appeared as it became clear to big business and [AngularJS, filter](#) the banks inside and outside of South Africa that the productivity and therefore the profitability of South [home](#) African workers had plunged into terminal decline as a result of the mass resistance against apartheid.

The suppression of the socialist Workers’ Charter in favour of the reformist (i.e. aimed at reforming capitalism and not overthrowing it) Freedom Charter inside the trade union movement, after the formation of COSATU in 1985, was the signal to South African capital that the way was open to a deal with the ANC.

Talks about the possibility of such a settlement had begun in late 1984, between exiled ANC leaders (in Lusaka and in London) and representatives of South African big business.

Some may say: what's the problem? Didn't that negotiated settlement bring about the enfranchisement of the black masses, and the creation of the "rainbow nation" so highly praised throughout the world's media? But that deal between the white bourgeois exploiters of South Africa and a new and very small black bourgeoisie, together with the violent repression of the working class and its socialist programme, is precisely what is currently bearing fruit in the "new" South Africa. Its government openly pursues the worst of the neo-liberal policies (fiscal discipline, deregulation, free markets and trade liberalisation, privatisation, low taxes and secure property rights) and instructs its police force to shoot down unarmed striking miners in the back (not the first time its police force has shot down protesters against its policies). It is clear why the rhetoric of Thatcher and her political allies was different from Cameron's, because when she was making her pronouncements, the South African ruling class was still hesitating between the iron fist of repression and the necessity of a settlement.

The "new" South Africa has resulted in:

The second most unequal society in the world – more unequal now than before Mandela came to office. The greatest inequality exists between blacks and other racial groups. Black income has virtually flat-lined since the ending of apartheid, [wholesale NBA jerseys](#) in contrast to that of other racial groups, particularly white South Africans.

- 40% unemployment. Importantly, 70% of SA's unemployed are younger than 35, while the unemployment rate among people aged less than 25 is around 50%50% of the population living below the poverty lineMore than half of black children are growing up in povertyAverage life expectancy declining from 62 years in 1990 to 52.6 years in 2012A crisis in public services including housingA collapse in social structures which means the highest rate of rape, gang rape and child rape in the worldThe

highest rate of HIV infection in the worldThe slaughter of 34 striking miners at Marikana, shot for demanding a living wage, after ex-NUM and current ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa urged both the ANC Police Minister and the mining company Lonmin to deal with them, referring to them as “criminals”.The fabulous enrichment of a tiny minority, like Cyril Ramaphosa, (currently worth \$700m, which the ANC explains he made out of his business acumen – see Boris Johnson’s explanation for the divisions in society), and current ANC president Jacob Zuma who recently did up his residence to the tune of 17.2m of public money

Was it for this that the black masses fought and died?

And was it for this that the millions in the international workers’ movement, students and others waged their decades-long campaign against apartheid, and gave unstinting political and financial support to the exiled ANC, SACP and SACTU (the South African Congress of Trade Unions)?

### **Confusion**

Mandela was surrounded by political forces from the 1960s to the 1980s which sowed confusion by representing him as a “communist” – including the South African and British ruling classes, and the South African Communist party (SACP) (under instructions from their international leaders). The SACP now declares that Mandela was a secret member of their Central Committee at the time of the Rivonia trial, which completely fits with their theory of the necessity for a two-stage revolution for South Africa. First a revolution in which the native bourgeoisie would come to power, followed many, many, many years later by a socialist revolution against capitalism, bringing the working class to power.

But Nelson Mandela never pretended that the ANC was a socialist organisation, with any desire to attack capitalism. He himself said at his Rivonia trial:

“The most important political document ever adopted by the ANC is the Freedom Charter. It is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state. The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has it, to the best of my recollection, ever condemned capitalist society.”. Later, speaking about [What](#) the Freedom Charter’s demand for the nationalisation of the mines and industrial corporations, Mandela said:

“The charter strikes a fatal blow at the financial and gold mining monopolies that have for centuries plundered the country and condemned its people to servitude. The breaking up and democratisation of these monopolies will open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous non-European bourgeois class. For the first time in the history of this country the non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own, in their own name and right, mills and factories and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before.”.

When the constitution of the “new” South Africa was negotiated (by Cyril Ramaphosa and Thabo Mbeki, ANC leader following Mandela), a clause was inserted which, according to the ANC leadership, entirely negates that section of the Freedom Charter which calls for nationalisation of the land, the mines, and the banks. Throughout his life Mandela acted completely in accordance with his principles, which were to build a society in which a black South African bourgeoisie could partake of power and wealth along with the white owners of the banks, industry and the land.

Unfortunately that has produced a society of brutal inequality.

In 2006 Tory leader David Cameron was able to say: “The mistakes my party made in the past with respect to relations with the ANC and sanctions on South Africa make it all the

more important to listen now. The fact that there is so much to celebrate in the new South Africa is not in spite of Mandela and the ANC, it is because of them – and we Conservatives should say so clearly today.” Fortunately the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and other forces in South Africa continue the battle for the working class and its socialist programme. We should lend them every possible support in their fight against the violent repression promoted by the likes of Cyril Ramaphosa and the other bourgeois rulers of South Africa.

## References

1. See the 1992 report by Amnesty international on the torture carried out in the ANC camps  
[http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR53/027/199\\_2/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR53/027/199_2/en). Based on first-hand research among surviving victims of such abuse, it documents a long-standing pattern of torture, ill-treatment and execution of prisoners by the ANC’s security department.
2. Terry Bell. Unfinished Business: South Africa, Apartheid and Truth. 2001.
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