

Message and publications from: The United Fishermen of Namibia

Dear Comrades,

We have been advised by cd Hewat Beukes that we could send the following documents to you as you are in the same organisation, The Workers International. We hope you will assist in any way in our international campaigns of struggle against the international capitalists and our capitalist government. These documents we have sent to NUMSA with whom we wish to establish brotherly and sisterly links. We also want to establish similar links with your workers.

[The United Fishermen 2](#)

[The United Fishermen 3](#)

[The United Fishermen 5](#)

Mbapewa Kamurongo, Matheus Lungameni
On behalf of the Steering Committee

Urgent International Appeal

Help fund our work in Southern Africa

Dear Comrades,

WE are launching an ambitious [Appeal](#) to members and supporters to raise funds for our work in Southern Africa.

It is there that the global re-awakening of the workers' socialist movement is most concentrated and advanced, and where material resources are most needed if the movement is to

make the progress which it can and should make.

The Workers Revolutionary Party in Namibia has won a position where all oppressed and exploited groups in the country turn to it for help in their struggles.

This is possible because of the party's thoroughgoing understanding of the role the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) government plays as a caretaker for imperialism, based on corrupt rule by a narrow tribal leadership imposed in a deal between the Soviet Union and various imperialist powers in the early 1990s. This regime is both a mockery of democracy and a copy-book example of milking public assets in collusion with imperialist financial interests.

The heart of the WRP(N)'s work is among the country's miners. The Party's leadership has worked closely over many years with the TCL miners in their campaign to get back the pensions stolen from them when the company which employed them was liquidated. It has united with the most advanced leaders of the current mine-workers with the aim of making their union (Mineworkers Union of Namibia – MUN) an effective and class-conscious weapon of the country's working class. Meanwhile, the WRP collaborates with other present and former miners and smelter workers campaigning to protect their homes threatened by financial chicanery by former mine-owners in cahoots with the government and in pursuing claims against their employers for work-related illnesses.

The WRP(N) also stands four-square with:

Railway workers trying to track down the theft of state property;

Road workers protesting against bullying, malpractice and neglect of health and safety by their foreign employers contracted to develop the country's road network;

Fishery workers on the Atlantic coast who have been on prolonged strike against diminishing wages, overwork and dangerous conditions. From being the best-paid workers in the country, they have become among the lowest-paid, while government-sponsored corruption lets foreign businesses ransack the rich fisheries around Walvis Bay;

Home-owners defending their homes against collusion between crooked lawyers and financiers who try to dispossess them;

Young people demanding access to homes;

Small farmers protecting their traditional lands against seizure by business interests;

Ethnic groups who suffered under German colonial rule seeking access to the compensation pocketed by SWAPO ministers;

Bushmen too now have a WRP(N) member among their leaders.

Former soldiers seeking access to their pensions, also stolen by SWAPO ministers;

Former Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) fighters seeking acknowledgment of and compensation for the deaths and other sufferings inflicted on them by the SWAPO leaders during liberation.

The WRP(N) won two parliamentary seats in the 2014 elections, but is denied the official resources which should accompany this electoral success. The party has had to spend a good deal of time fighting off a state-inspired sham "breakaway" which seriously impeded its work.

Nevertheless it held a very successful second congress in 2015 and is now developing a network of branches and conducting a serious programme of theoretical education in Marxism for the new forces coming into the leadership of the Party.

And the WRP is now in touch with the United Front established

by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and is preparing to collaborate in its work.

A decisive political break in South Africa

NUMSA launched the United Front initiative in connection with the decisive break with Stalinism in which it is engaged. NUMSA has correctly declared the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to be bourgeois parties and called for a Movement for Socialism to build a Marxist workers' party.

What they have established is a genuine United Front bringing community groups together with trade unions led by the working class. Its purpose is to stand up for real working class communities in the context of extreme inequality, exploitation of workers, unemployment (especially among young people) and mass poverty.

NUMSA's aim in building the United Front (and a Marxist workers' party) is to transform the National Democratic Revolution of 1994 (which left the working class out of the picture and maintained the imperialist exploitation of South Africa intact) into a socialist revolution led by the working class.

The United Front has appealed directly to Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International for political, practical and material assistance in standing United Front candidates in South Africa's local elections on 3 August.

We are sure these developments inspire and encourage our sympathisers and supporters as they do us. We have a target of £5,000 and very little time. Please give generously.

How you can donate

1. Use the button on the top right hand corner of the *workersinternational.info* home page marked 'donate',

making clear that your donation is for the Southern Africa Appeal.

2. To transfer from your bank account, send donations to:

Unity trust Bank

Account: *The Correspondence Society*

sort: 60 – 83 – 01

account: 20059400

3. Send cheques made out to Correspondence and marked on the back “Southern Africa Appeal” to : PO Box 68375, London , E7 7DT, UK.

Yours in solidarity,

Bob Archer

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

By Hewat Beukes 11 June 2016 at UN PLAZA, Windhoek

Introduction

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

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

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

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

In the meanwhile a new evil had arisen under South African colonialism. Contract labour. In 1943 as a measure to institutionalise slave labour from the populous northern areas of Ovambo and Kavango lands, the South West Africa Native Labour Association (SWANLA) was established by the South African Administration. It brought young men from the north under conditions tying them to specific employers

(owners/hirers) in the south in particular the mines, but also to the farms. Farmers and even small businesses of all races and tribes in the south used the facilities of this slave system.

Farms became killing fields for many of these young workers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

airport in Windhoek from where they went to Pretoria after which they returned to Zambia.

REPRESENTATION

By 1970 the nation was politically represented by tribal chiefs, SWAPO was an Ovambo tribal organisation, SWANU a nationalist organisation supported by workers and lower middle class elements. Workers were embroiled in labour struggles in particular the contract labourers but by 1978, there was a fully-fledged national workers movement led by the Rössing miners articulating broad workers' demands.

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

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

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

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

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

closed door upon closed door and was informed of SWAPO's Sole and Authentic Representation status.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is within the above historical background which the

question of the SWATF and PLAN must be viewed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SWAPO reneged on these terms immediately upon taking over government.

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

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

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

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

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

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

etcetera, etcetera.

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

1. No effective counter-propaganda;
2. No effective action plan;
3. No clear set of demands.

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

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

Appeal: Help fund our work in Southern Africa

Dear Comrades,

WE are launching an ambitious [Appeal](#) to members and supporters to raise funds for our work in Southern Africa.

It is there that the global re-awakening of the workers' socialist movement is most concentrated and advanced, and where material resources are most needed if the movement is to make the progress which it can and should make.

The Workers Revolutionary Party in Namibia has won a position where all oppressed and exploited groups in the country turn

to it for help in their struggles.

This is possible because of the party's thoroughgoing understanding of the role the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) government plays as a caretaker for imperialism, based on corrupt rule by a narrow tribal leadership imposed in a deal between the Soviet Union and various imperialist powers in the early 1990s. This regime is both a mockery of democracy and a copy-book example of milking public assets in collusion with imperialist financial interests.

The heart of the WRP(N)'s work is among the country's miners. The Party's leadership has worked closely over many years with the TCL miners in their campaign to get back the pensions stolen from them when the company which employed them was liquidated. It has united with the most advanced leaders of the current mine-workers with the aim of making their union (Mineworkers Union of Namibia – MUN) an effective and class-conscious weapon of the country's working class. Meanwhile, the WRP collaborates with other present and former miners and smelter workers campaigning to protect their homes threatened by financial chicanery by former mine-owners in cahoots with the government and in pursuing claims against their employers for work-related illnesses.

The WRP(N) also stands four-square with:

Railway workers trying to track down the theft of state property;

Road workers protesting against bullying, malpractice and neglect of health and safety by their foreign employers contracted to develop the country's road network;

Fishery workers on the Atlantic coast who have been on prolonged strike against diminishing wages, overwork and dangerous conditions. From being the best-paid workers in the country, they have become among the lowest-paid, while

government-sponsored corruption lets foreign businesses ransack the rich fisheries around Walvis Bay;

Home-owners defending their homes against collusion between crooked lawyers and financiers who try to dispossess them;

Young people demanding access to homes;

Small farmers protecting their traditional lands against seizure by business interests;

Ethnic groups who suffered under German colonial rule seeking access to the compensation pocketed by SWAPO ministers;

Bushmen too now have a WRP(N) member among their leaders.

Former soldiers seeking access to their pensions, also stolen by SWAPO ministers;

Former Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) fighters seeking acknowledgment of and compensation for the deaths and other sufferings inflicted on them by the SWAPO leaders during liberation.

The WRP(N) won two parliamentary seats in the 2014 elections, but is denied the official resources which should accompany this electoral success. The party has had to spend a good deal of time fighting off a state-inspired sham "breakaway" which seriously impeded its work.

Nevertheless it held a very successful second congress in 2015 and is now developing a network of branches and conducting a serious programme of theoretical education in Marxism for the new forces coming into the leadership of the Party.

And the WRP is now in touch with the United Front established by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and is preparing to collaborate in its work.

A decisive political break in South Africa

NUMSA launched the United Front initiative in connection with the decisive break with Stalinism in which it is engaged. NUMSA has correctly declared the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to be bourgeois parties and called for a Movement for Socialism to build a Marxist workers' party.

What they have established is a genuine United Front bringing community groups together with trade unions led by the working class. Its purpose is to stand up for real working class communities in the context of extreme inequality, exploitation of workers, unemployment (especially among young people) and mass poverty.

NUMSA's aim in building the United Front (and a Marxist workers' party) is to transform the National Democratic Revolution of 1994 (which left the working class out of the picture and maintained the imperialist exploitation of South Africa intact) into a socialist revolution led by the working class.

The United Front has appealed directly to Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International for political, practical and material assistance in standing United Front candidates in South Africa's local elections on 3 August.

We are sure these developments inspire and encourage our sympathisers and supporters as they do us. We have a target of £5,000 and very little time. Please give generously.

How you can donate

1. Use the button on the top right hand corner of the *workersinternational.info* home page marked 'donate', making clear that your donation is for the Southern Africa Appeal.

2. To transfer from your bank account, send donations to:
Unity trust Bank
Account: *The Correspondence Society*

sort: 60 – 83 – 01

account: 20059400

3. Send cheques made out to Correspondence and marked on the back “Southern Africa Appeal” to : PO Box 68375, London , E7 7DT, UK.

Yours in solidarity,

Bob Archer

[Issue 16 of the Journal April 2016 out now!](#)

Inside [this issue](#):

Europe:

Who can solve the ‘Refugee Crisis’ by Mirek Vodslon

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

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

Namibia:

Director of Elections, a letter and a communiqué

Committee of Parents / Truth & Justice Commission demands

Continued Human Rights Abuses

Report of a book launch

MUN Regional Committee supports Marikana inquiry call

Namibian Road authority’s reckless roads

Religious ideology:

Discussion Article by Allen Rasek

South Africa:

UF march call

April 2015 Journal. Out Now!

Inside this issue:

Namibia:

'This house will have to hear the independent voice of the working class' Maiden speech of WRP parliamentarian Benson Kaapal

'We will put forward the seizure of our natural resources to enable us to fund the upliftment of the working class and poor peasantry' Salmon Fleermuys addresses Parliament

WRP Namibia's response to Sam Nujoma

'You are not welcome at our commemoration' A letter to the President of Namibia from the Baster Community in Rehoboth
Hewat and Erica Beukes on behalf of the Beukes and Thiro families: Do not attend!

South Africa

Statements and postings by the United Front

Irvin Jim's input to the conference for socialism

Report of a Workers International delegation to Johannesburg

Bosnia:

Suicide bid of two workers, former combatants

An appeal to the international labour community

Special supplement of "The

Journal”

In this special supplement of [The Journal](#) we publish the full text of the “True State of the Nation Address” issued by the United Front in South Africa on 11 February 2015, the 25th anniversary of Nelson Mandela’s release from prison.

THE UNITED FRONT was initiated by the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA). We believe that this statement is of special interest to the People’s Assembly in Britain and people standing up for socialism all over the world.

NUMSA explained that for them the massacre of the Marikana miners “marked a turning point in the social and political life of South Africa”. It could not be “business as usual”. They put the question: “How do we explain the killing of striking miners in a democracy?” They had to conduct “a sustained and thorough analysis of the political meaning of Marikana”.

The leadership concluded that the decisions of the union’s ninth Congress “were no longer enough to guide [them]. The situation had changed to a point where [they] needed a new mandate from the membership”, and their Special Congress in December 2013 decided to break with the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) and call upon the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to re-establish its independent campaigning role, for “there is no priority more important than safeguarding the capacity of the working class to act in its own interests”.

In so doing NUMSA raised matters of vital importance for workers everywhere “engulfed by the crisis of capitalism which manifests itself in mass unemployment, deepening poverty and widening inequalities”. To end the rule of capital, workers are faced with the task of breaking with fake “socialist” and “communist” parties acting on behalf of the capitalist class

and “failing to act as the vanguard of the working class”.

The Special Congress therefore decided on a new united front to coordinate the struggles in the workplace and in communities, to explore the establishment of a Movement for Socialism and to conduct a “thoroughgoing discussion on previous attempts to build socialism as well as current experiments to build socialism” and “an international study on the historical formation of working class parties”.

[South Africa Dossier](#)

The posts below are on political developments in South Africa including a report on steps by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) towards establishing a [United Front](#), a warning of a growing witch-hunt against NUMSA and her United Front allies, with particular reference to a recent speech by the South Africa Communist Party General Secretary “[Blade](#)” [Nzimande](#), and responses to recent written and oral statements by Cosatu General Secretary [Zwelinzime Vavi](#) and NUMSA General Secretary [Irvin Jim](#).

[Urgent appeal for assistance
from the Workers](#)

Revolutionary Party of Namibia.



WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY TO REBUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 3349 Windhoek Fax: 088641065 Tel: 061-260647
jacobusjosob@ymail.com

14 December 2014

INTERNATIONAL APPEAL

Our party is a member of the Workers International for the Rebuilding of the Fourth International. Its leadership emanated from the liberation struggle of Namibia and were part of the socialists in the SWAPO Youth League, which in 1976 unsuccessfully challenged the SWAPO Leadership for all-encompassing corruption and imperialist collaboration due to imperialist intervention.

In 1984 we started building our party clandestinely and stood in the forefront of the struggle against the terror campaign and mass killings of SWAPO members by the SWAPO leadership in exile in Angola and Zambia. In 1988 our party called out the mass protests of 4 May 1988 against South Africa just prior to independence obtained in 1989.

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

We dealt with trade union issues, the homeless, the landless

and workers who were in struggle over the past 24 years. We participated in elections to articulate a workers program and self-determination for national groups.

We did not stand in the 2009 elections due to our work with mass workers groups such as the TCL miners whose pensions were stolen, teachers who were being pauperized, fuel workers who were being brutalized, the Truth and Justice Committee seeking historical restitution of history, landless whom the regime sought to bulldoze after they had taken their land by themselves.

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

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

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

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

Unlike the bourgeois parties we immediately establish contact with our voters and supporters to organize and to consult.

The Workers International supported us financially with their support crucial to our success over this vast country.

We now face a problem with a shortage of funds for follow-up work which is crucial for consolidation. We herewith appeal internationally for further support of at least one-thousand British pounds to sustain our work.

We further need to put out our own paper "The Worker" nationally to counteract the incessant attacks by the bourgeois media which seeks to portray us as unrealistic and misrepresent us.

We need to bring our true history to the regions through our branches and we are now in a position to take the next step to join the United Front with the NUMSA in South Africa.

At the moment there is no way in which we can meet the costs for this work ourselves until we have established proper organization.

You can donate to the following bank directly:

- Bank of Scotland
- Miss Eva-Panduleni Beukes
- Sort: 80-45-13
- Account No: 10164363

or send cheques made out to EP Beukes to P0 Box 68375, London E7 7DT

Hewat Beukes,

Leader.

**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