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Out now! The latest issue of Namibia's Proletarian Newsletter.

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Why they voted leave

Mirek Vodslon, 5 July 2016

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

The supposed need to "take our country back" or "make Britain Britain again" comes up early on. These concerns are first and foremost on the minds of two interviewees. The main reason

(mentioned by one of these workers) is to control immigration.

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

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

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

We are not talking here about the nationalism of an oppressed nation. These workers have been falsely persuaded that their oppression is the result of the oppression of their British

nation by the European Union but, no, this is the nationalism of a medium sized decadent imperialism, part of whose ruling class dreamt of becoming “great again” by abandoning the EU and especially by getting rid of EU’s minimal social standards. Workers supporting this act against their own immediate interests. The irony on top of this bitter irony is of course that the success of that project is already accelerating both the decadence of British imperialism and the demise of the EU.

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

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

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

demands to make Europe a place fit for working people.

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

Unfortunately, most working class Leave voters have apparently already made up their minds that British subjection to the EU and especially immigration imposed by the EU are the problems. Coming back to the film, its thrust is to adapt to this position instead of offering an internationalist alternative to it. The interviewer may be an internationalist herself but she refuses to consider reforms of the EU and thus any real steps along a path of an international transition to a socialist Europe. This disarms her when it comes to arguing for internationalism and this may be why she does not even try to take up the subject of internationalism with her polite interviewees. Had she tried some abstract internationalist proclamations on them (called “socialist” or “left” “argumentation for Brexit” by some ultraleft groups), she might have reaped polite disinterest or even a remark that such proclamations have no connection with their plight.

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

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

These contortions are required to try to underpin the main thesis of the film, which is: the Leave vote of workers was a class vote. What the film really shows is that the vote of the five "Leavers", including the interviewer, was not about the *struggle* of their own class. It was desperate and in part it

was about slogans adopted by a fraction of the enemy class: "national independence" of Britain, mostly in order to curb immigration. If these five voices did cast a class vote, then it was the vote of a class that despairs of herself and has given up being a subject with a goal in life. So, by what it really shows, the film warns us of the possibility that *this sort* of working-class consciousness might prevail. If it does prevail, it will pave the way for barbarism to engulf humanity. Instead of glorifying it, socialists need to think hard how to rebuild real, organised, socialist class consciousness, even if it begins – as it obviously does – as that of a class which must first regain confidence and test seriously if it can defend or recover decent working and living conditions without overthrowing the capitalist class and its state.

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

The interviewer wished to correct the view that working-class Brexiters are all racists. She succeeded in that. Even one of the two working-class British nationalists interviewed is no racist, i.e., he does not derive his identity or that of his enemies from skin colour, skull metrics or pedigree. The other British nationalist is a waste collector, was interviewed at work on the road and had no time to explain himself. Both are

certainly afraid of their “foreign” class brothers and sisters and want to keep them out. They are xenophobes.

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

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

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

Socialists, revolutionaries, especially Marxists who supported the “socialist Brexit” or Lexit adventure, need to do no less rethinking than these workers: about their negative role and about how on earth they could make such an enormous mistake.

What is wrong with their “Marxism”, their organisations and their respected “Marxist” leaders who led them into this impasse? I do hope that this reflection starts now. Simply proceeding with whatever each group thinks is next on the agenda is not an option. Or if it is, it is the option of ultimate degeneration and demise.

Issue 16 of the Journal April 2016 out now!

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The Theses of Pulacayo (1946)

[threecolumns]The revolutionary programme of Trotskyism in South America:

The Theses of Pulacayo

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

In 1946 the Bolivian Miners' Federal Trade Union (FSTMB) was a centre of a profound debate between political tendencies which culminated in the Pulacayo Theses submitted by the Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party (POR). Now nearly 70 years old, these Theses stand up astonishingly well as a practical and theoretical guide to action.

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

I. Basic principles

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

2. Bolivia is a backward capitalist country; within its economy different stages of development and different modes of

production coexist, but the capitalist mode is qualitatively dominant, the other socio-economic forms being a heritage from our historic past. The prominence of the proletariat in national politics flows from this state of affairs.

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

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

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

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

6. The backward countries are subjected to imperialist pressure. Their development is of a combined character. These countries simultaneously combine the most primitive economic forms and the last word in capitalist technology and civilisation. The proletariat of the backward countries is obliged to combine the struggle for bourgeois democratic tasks with the struggle for socialist demands. These two

stages—democratic and socialist—“are not separated in struggle by historic stages; they flow immediately from one another.”

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

From this it follows that the ruling class is a veritable feudal bourgeoisie. Given the primitive level of technology, the running of the *latifundia* would be inconceivable if imperialism did not support them artificially with scraps from its table. Imperialist domination is inconceivable without the aid of the national governments of the elite. There is a high degree of capitalist concentration in, Bolivia; three firms control mining production, the heart of the country's economic life. The class in power is puny and incapable of achieving its own historic objectives, and so finds itself tied to the interests of the latifundists as well as those of the imperialists. The feudal-bourgeois state is an organ of violence destined to uphold the privileges of the landowners and the capitalists. The state, in the hands of the dominant class, is a powerful instrument for crushing its enemies. Only traitors or imbeciles could continue to maintain that the state can rise above the classes and paternally decide what is due to each of them.

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

The country follows the town and there the leading force is the proletariat. The petit bourgeoisie follow the capitalists in times of “class peace” and when parliamentary activity flourishes. They line up behind the proletariat in moments of acute class struggle (for example during a revolution) and

when they become convinced that it alone can show the way to their own emancipation. In both these widely differing circumstances, the independence of the petit bourgeoisie proves to be a myth. Wide layers of the middle class obviously do possess an enormous revolutionary potential—it is enough to recall the aims of the bourgeois democratic revolution—but it is equally clear that they cannot achieve these aims on their own.

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

The miners' movement in Bolivia is one of the most advanced workers' movements in Latin America. The reformists argue that it is impossible for this country to have a more advanced social movement than in the technically more developed countries. Such a mechanical conception of the relation between the development of industry and the political consciousness of the masses has been refuted countless times by history.

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

II. The type of revolution that must take place

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

2. The proletarian revolution in Bolivia does not imply the exclusion of the other exploited layers of the nation; on the contrary, it means the revolutionary alliance of the proletariat with the peasants, the artisans and other sectors of the urban petit bourgeoisie.

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

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

III. The struggle against class collaboration

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Compulsory arbitration and legal limitations of workers' means of struggle, in most cases mark the onset of defeat. As far as is possible, we fight to destroy compulsory arbitration.

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

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

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

IV The struggle against imperialism

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

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

We are an integral part of the international proletariat because we are engaged in the destruction of an international force— imperialism.

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

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

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

The Yankees won't just stop at dictating the composition of cabinets; they will go much further: they have taken on board the task of directing the police activity of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie. The announcement of the struggle against anti-imperialist revolutionaries means nothing less than that.

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

V. The struggle against fascism

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

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

another will find himself looking down the barrel of a rifle.

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

3. The struggle against the fascist bands is subordinated to the struggle against imperialism and the feudal bourgeoisie. Those who, under the pretext of fighting fascism, peddle confidence in equally 'democratic' imperialism and the 'democratic' feudal-bourgeoisie are only preparing the ground for the inevitable advent of a fascistic regime. To eliminate the fascist peril once and for all, we have to destroy capitalism as a system.

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

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

VI. The FSTMB and the present situation

1. The revolutionary situation brought about on July 21 [the overthrow of Villarroel] by the irruption onto the streets of the exploited, deprived of bread and liberty, and by the combative defensive action of the miners forced to defend the social gains and to extract further gains, has allowed the representatives of the mine owners to construct their state apparatus thanks to the treachery and collusion of the reformists who have made a pact with the feudal bourgeoisie. The blood spilled by the people aided its executioner to consolidate its position in power. The fact that the governmental Junta was a provisional institution did not in

anyway modify this situation. The mineworkers were right to adopt an attitude of distrust vis-à-vis those in power and to demand from them that they oblige the companies to comply with the law. We cannot and must not solidarise with any government which is not our own, that is, a workers' government. We cannot take this step because we know that the state represents the interests of the dominant social class.

2. "Worker" ministers do not change the nature of bourgeois governments. As long as the state is the defender of capitalist society, "worker" ministers become common pimps in the service of the bourgeoisie. The worker who is weak enough to swap his battle station in the revolutionary ranks for a bourgeois ministerial portfolio, joins the ranks of the traitors. The bourgeoisie has created "worker" ministers the better to dupe workers and so that the exploited will abandon their own methods of struggle, giving themselves over heart and soul to the guardianship of the "worker" minister.

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

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

We harbour no illusions about the electoral struggle, we workers will not come to power by stuffing a ballot paper in a ballot box, and we will get there by social revolution. That is why we can assert that our behaviour towards the future government will be the same as towards the present Junta in

power. If the laws are complied with, so much the better; that is what governments are supposed to do. If they are not, the government will find itself up against our most strenuous protest.

VII. Transitional demands

Each union, each mining region has its particular problems and the trade unionists in each of these must adapt their day-to-day struggle to these particularities. But, there are also problems which affect worker militants throughout the country and create the possibility of uniting them: growing poverty and the bosses' boycott, which are becoming more menacing each day. Against these threats the FSTMB proposes radical measures.

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

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

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

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

We will put an end to the ceaseless manoeuvres that consist of swallowing up wage rises through devaluation and the hiking—almost always artificial—of the cost of living. The unions must take charge of the checking of the cost of living and must demand from the companies the automatic increase of

wages in line with this cost. The basic wage, far from being static, must rise in line with the increase in the price of basic necessities.

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

The introduction of machinery into the mines has resulted in the intensification of the work rate. The nature of work underground itself means that the eight-hour day is in fact longer and that it destroys the workers' vitality in an inhuman way. The very struggle for a better world demands that we free, however little, man from the slavery of the mine. That is why the FSTMB will fight to win the forty-hour week, complete with the introduction of the sliding scale of working hours.

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

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

3. Occupation of the mines

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

The big companies use a double accounting system. One is

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

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

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

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

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

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

An action that, from all points of view, goes beyond the limits of capitalism cannot be catered for by already existing

legislation. We know that in occupying the mines we are breaking bourgeois law and we are on the way to creating a new situation. We know that from now, the legislators in the service of the exploiters will give themselves the task of codifying this situation and will try to smother it by means of regulations.

The Supreme Decrees of the junta in power forbidding the seizure of the mines by the workers does not affect our position. We knew in advance that it is impossible in such cases to count on government support, and we are aware that we are not operating under the protection of the law. Therefore, no other perspective remains to us but the occupation of the mines without conceding the slightest compensation to the capitalists.

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

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

4. Collective agreements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Workers' control of the mines

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

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

Savings Fund.

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

6. Trade union independence

The realisation of our aspirations will only be possible if we are able to free ourselves from the influence of all sectors of the bourgeoisie and its "left" agents. "Managed" trade unions are a cancer in the workers movement. When trade unions become appendages of government, they lose their freedom of action and lead the masses on the road to defeat.

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

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

WAR TO THE DEATH AGAINST GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED TRADE UNIONISM!

7. Arming the workers

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

with powerful explosives?

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

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

8. A strike fund

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

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

9. Control of the abolition of the pulpería barata system

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

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

10. The elimination of "a contrato" work

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

further, the companies have dreamed up different methods of work called "a contrato." We are obliged to thwart this new capitalist manoeuvre aimed at increasing their spoils. Let us establish a single system of daily wages.

VIII. Direct mass action and the parliamentary struggle

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

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

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

2. The parliamentary struggle is important, but in periods of

upturn in the revolutionary movement, it takes on a secondary character. In order to play an effective role, parliamentarism must be subordinated to the direct action of the masses. In times of retreat when the masses abandon struggle and the bourgeoisie takes back the positions it has abandoned, parliamentarism can play a prominent role. In general, bourgeois parliaments do not resolve the essential problem of our epoch: the fate of private property. This question will be resolved by the workers in the streets. Although we do not renounce parliamentary struggle, we subject it to definite conditions. We must send to parliament tried and tested revolutionary militants who are in full agreement with our trade union activity. Parliament must become a revolutionary tribune: we know that our representatives will be in a minority, but we also know that they will undertake to expose, from inside the assembly itself, the manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie. But above all, the parliamentary struggle must be tied to the direct action of the masses. Worker deputies and mineworkers must act according to one line only: the principles of these theses.

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

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

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

1. We are soldiers of the class struggle. We have said that the war against the exploiters is a war to the death. That is why we will destroy every attempt at collaboration within the workers' ranks. The door to betrayal opened with the famous

popular fronts, which, drawing away from the class struggle united the proletariat with the petit bourgeoisie and even with certain sectors of the bourgeoisie.

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

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

3. To counteract bourgeois influences, to achieve our ambitions, to mobilise the masses towards proletarian revolution, we need the Proletarian United Front. Revolutionary elements that identify with our declarations and proletarian organisations (factory workers, railway workers, printers, lorry drivers, etc) all have their place in the Proletarian United Front. Lately, the CSTB has been calling for a Left Front. Even now, we do not know for what purpose such a front is to be formed. If it is only a pre-electoral manoeuvre and if they seek to impose a petit bourgeois

leadership on it—the CSTB is petit bourgeois—we declare that we will have nothing to do with such a Left Front. But if it will allow proletarian ideas to be dominant and if its aims are those of these theses, we would rally all our forces to this front which, in the last analysis, would be nothing other than a proletarian front with minor differences and under a different name. Against the united front of La Rosca, against the fronts which the petit bourgeois reformists think up almost daily:

Let us forge the Proletarian United Front!

X. Union confederation

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

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

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

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

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

XI. Agreements and compromises

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

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

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

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

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

unions and must work with the Indian communities.

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

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

Suggestions for Further Reading

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Rojas, Juan, and June C. Nash. *I Spent my Life in the Mines: The Story of Juan Rojas, Bolivian Tin Miner*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

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

Letter from Workers International to Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia

15 June 2015

To Mr. Peter Katjavivi

Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia

Sir,

we write to you in great concern about a campaign of slanders and threats, including death threats, which is targeting several members of our Namibian section, the Workers Revolutionary Party.

The authors of these criminal acts are members of a group around lay lawyer August Maletzky and former member of parliament Benson Kaapala. August Maletzky took this campaign to its highest point to date on Wednesday, 10 June, at about 18H30 when he shouted several times across the street at the house of our member and the legal representative of the WRP, comrade Hewat Beukes, that Hewat Beukes would be killed.

These threats by the Maletzky-Kaapala group have been multiplying and intensifying since you, Mr Katjavivi, as Speaker of the National Assembly, chose to promote this same group of violent and dishonest elements around Maletzky and Kaapala as a "faction" of the WRP on equal footing with WRP's legitimate leadership and its only legal representative, comrade Hewat Beukes. You choose to ignore the fact that comrade Hewat Beukes is indeed the only legal representative of the WRP, a fact that is legally binding for everybody and especially for you in your function as Speaker of the National Assembly.

This is evidenced by your letter of the 21st of May, 2015, Ref

3/1/5/1, published by the Workers Revolutionary Party, by which you try to justify withholding from that Party the funds and offices to which it is entitled by law and by the votes of 13,328 Namibian citizens. Your arbitrary and illegal decision treats WRP voters as some second-class citizens whose political choice, embodied by the WRP and formulated in its electoral manifesto, are not entitled to be fully represented in the National Assembly and in the political life of Namibia. That the Speaker of the National Assembly deems feasible such a blatant breach of law and such a massive denial of elementary democratic rights sheds a crude light on Namibian democracy. That the victims are the supporters of the sole workers party in Namibia shows unequivocally that the Speaker of the parliament of Namibia especially does not consider workers as worthy of being fully represented in that parliament.

We are sure that this lesson will not be lost on the workers and the poor peasants in Namibia and in other countries. But our primary concern at the moment is for the safety of our comrades. Obviously your promotion of the Maletzky-Kaapala group emboldens this group to ever more daring attacks on our members.

We ask you to rein in this group immediately. The first step to do so is to immediately start acting according to the law and release the funds and offices due to the WRP. Indeed, it is only your illegal stance on this question that entertains Maletzky-Kaapala group's hopes to lay hand on funds and offices and thus encourages it to proceed with its dangerous, fraudulent and criminal activity.

We hold this group to be an instrument with which your party, SWAPO, tries not only to deprive the WRP, its voters and supporters of their democratic rights, but also to destroy the WRP politically and physically.

We inform you that not only our international organisation but the working class movement in Namibia and in several other countries hold your party and you personally responsible for all consequences past, present and future of your continued

promotion and usage of the Maletzky-Kaapala group and of all other attempts to silence and destroy the WRP and the working class of Namibia.

We are certain that none of your actions, Mr Katjavivi, takes place without the knowledge and approval of your party and its supreme representative President Hage Geingob to whom we therefore send a copy of this letter.

Yours Sincerely,

for the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International,

Bob Archer
Secretary

Defend the Namibian WRP! Put an end to the threats, interference, intimidation and harassment!

[threecolumns]The Workers Revolutionary Party of Namibia (a section of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International) is registered as a parliamentary party with long-standing member Hewat Beukes as its official responsible officer. In November 2014 the WRP took part in the Assembly (government) elections and won two seats.

However they faced problems immediately when parliamentary officials tried to insert a certain Willem Beukes as one of their MPs, whereas under Namibian law it is for each party itself to name its MPs. This being the case officialdom was

obliged to back down. But this did not end the threats, interference, intimidation and harassment of the WRP.

The aim of the SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation) government is to silence effective opposition to their state-assisted looting of the country's assets and natural resources. Therefore they are deeply opposed to the policies which the WRP wants to pursue in Parliament. These were detailed in the maiden speeches of the two MPs explaining that "we use parliament to advance the demands of the working class including the poor peasantry". (NOTE: these two speeches are published in full in Workers International Journal no. 12, May 2015: web: workersinternational.info).

In cahoots with officials of the Namibian parliament, disgruntled, opportunist and politically backward elements are now attempting to close down the legally registered party and its responsible officer. These elements with craven respect for the "powers that be" are goaded on by unprincipled figures such as the well-known lay-lawyer Auguste Maletzky, who in text messages on 8 and 9 May denounced SWAPO and its leaders Sam and Utoni Nujoma in gutter language, but on 10 May, hand-in-glove with SWAPO officials, denounced the leader of the WRP saying: "You [Hewat Beukes] are not the leader of the WRP! And we shall prove it to you".

With hopes of personal gain involving the funding available for a parliamentary office and parliamentary duties, these people organised a raid on the family home of Hewat and Erica Beukes (one participant brandishing a gun!). They held a "congress" on Sunday 17 May at a luxury Hotel in Windhoek not far – but a world away – from the great mass of tin huts in the city's suburbs, and then on Monday 18 May a journalist from Republikein newspaper informed Hewat Beukes that the paper had received a press statement from Maletzky stating that this "congress" had "elected" new leaders of the WRP and carried out expulsions!

For over three decades and with huge personal tragedy, the leaders of the WRP in Namibia have stood with the workers, poor farmers and oppressed ethnic groups in their country;

- first in the struggle against apartheid,
- then against “liberation” leaders who held back the struggle, exploited and abused genuine freedom fighters and murdered them, delivered them over to apartheid forces, imprisoned them in holes in the ground and tortured them
- then – against a corrupt regime brought in by an unholy alliance of the USSR, western imperialist business interests and western governments – fought for over two decades against exploitation, legal chicanery and attempted class violence on the part of the new SWAPO state.

This is the principled and recognised leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party of Namibia who dare to organise and speak out. It is therefore easy to see why the authorities urgently need to frustrate the wishes of the 13,328 Namibians who voted for the WRP. Under pressure and in public the SWAPO government is hoping to assuage opposition by “admitting” it has made “mistakes” and it will now work hard to do better, but behind the scenes SWAPO is fuelling attacks on the opposition – the WRP.

The “International Updated Report” from the WRP Namibia details the behind-the-scenes alliance between parliamentary officials of the SWAPO regime (the Speaker of Parliament and the Secretary of the National Assembly) with this group which hopes to “dismantle the Workers Revolutionary Party and set up a surrogate” (<http://workersinternational.info/2015/05/international-report-from-wrp-namibia/>).

We are now calling upon all socialists and upholders of democratic rights to defend the WRP of Namibia. The following questions are being put to the Speaker of the Namibian Assembly:

- On what legal basis does he disregard due communications by

the WRP's statutorily authorized representative?

- On what legal basis does he communicate with unauthorized persons?
- On what basis does he accept illegal communications (without the registered logo, name, address, authorized rep) which constitute criminal offences?
- On what legal basis does he suspend payment and offices?

We in the Workers International have spent our lives facing down attempts to bully and intimidate us, and we do not take such threats lightly. We will take all necessary steps to stop any intimidation. The WRP Namibia has over many years of struggle established a real alliance with the many oppressed and exploited sectors in the country:

- ethnic groups struggling to maintain their lands against sell-off to foreign business interests, and for a fair share of the reparations from the former colonial power;
- home-owners who are unconstitutionally foreclosed;
- miners and civil servants and others robbed of their pensions;
- workers struggling for a living wage.

The WRP Namibia has made considerable progress over the last couple of years. The party may suffer setbacks and blows orchestrated by the SWAPO regime manipulating opportunists who follow individual and sectional agendas. Such people have no confidence in the way forward involving the working class and poor farmers acting in their own class interests. But the WRP is a section of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, and that body is precisely based on such confidence, not just in Namibia but all over the world.

So we will support each other in resisting and overcoming all such setbacks along the road of rebuilding the international leadership of the working class. We ask all those who have the interests of the working class at heart

1. To protest at these attempts to stifle and silence the WRP of Namibia.

Protests can be sent to:
j.jacobs@parliament.na and
parliament@parliament.gov.na

2. Contact the WRP Namibia (at P0 Box 3349 Windhoek, tel 061-260647, or email jacobusjosob@ymail.com) to express your support and solidarity and if possible arrange to donate to the comrades' fighting fund. Donations to the Workers International account: Account name: "Correspondence", Unity Trust Bank, Sort Code: 08-60-01, Account number: 20059400
[/threecolumns]

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

Political victory for Polish Miners

The Polish miners' strike ended last Friday evening (they went back to work on Monday) with a political victory and an economic compromise. The managing director has left, the sacked trade unionists have been re-employed.

Information and video published on the Syndicat Solidarnost Tuzla website and the Zagreb Workers Front website (see: <https://www.facebook.com/Radnicka.Fronta/posts/915345861833247>)

Miners Strike and repression in Poland

Jan Malewski, 13 February 2015 (Translated from <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article34332>)

Polish miners at the Jastrzebie Colliery Company (JSW) have launched an appeal for international solidarity signed by Bogusław Zietek, president of the "August 80" trade union (1). We would be grateful if you could disseminate it as widely as possible.

The strike started on 28 January when the managing director of JSW, Jarosław Zagorowski, sacked 9 trade unionists at the "Budryk" mine for organising a solidarity strike with the miners at another company, KW (Kompania węgłowa ["mining company"]) Europe's biggest mining business, which wanted to close four pits and sack the miners. This strike, was successful, with the backing of the whole population. The four mines were not closed and there were no sackings, according to the agreement with the government signed on 17 January. At that time the government made a commitment that there would be no reprisals against the strikers and those who solidarised with them... The managing director has also suspended the collective agreements signed two years ago when JSW was converted to a PLC with shareholders. Among those sacked was Krzysztof Labadz, leader of the "August 80" union and of the 46 day-long strike in 2007-2008.

All trade unions supported the strike – "Solidarność", ZZG (the mining branch of OPZZ), FZZ (Forum of trade unions), WZZ "Sierpen 80" ("August 80" Free Trade Union), "Kadra" (Cadres), etc. etc. There is a united strike committee made up of the five main unions in the region.

Negotiations were carried out via a mediator, a former deputy prime-minister, but the managing director was not there and the company was reluctant. Besides reversing the sackings (agreed in principle during negotiations but not signed) and respecting the collective agreement (partially agreed but not signed), demands included the sacking of the managing director Jarosław Zagorowski, who the miners no longer want to see and who they accuse of trying to bankrupt the firm so he can buy it back cheaper.

On Wednesday police fired 37mm rubber bullets on miners gathered outside the JSW company HQ, injuring 20, some of them seriously. As the police fired, miners shouted "Are you trying a re-run of December 1981?" (General Jaruzelski's coup d'état). A video of the rally the police fired on shows that they did

so without any valid reason against a gathering of miners who were singing (2).

The confrontation actually does look very serious. Miners' families (women and children) demonstrated on Thursday, saying that even if they went hungry they would hold out to the end.

19 miners are on hunger strike. According to management, there are more than 5 000 confirmed strikers, but the mines are at a standstill (a lot of miners have taken annual leave days, since they cannot manage 16 days on strike ...)

The court at Gliwice has just declared the strike illegal and threatened to make the strike leaders (including the 9 sacked trade unionists) pay JSW's "losses", which the company states amount to several million euros ... Krzysztof Labadz is among those worst affected ...

On Thursday, Boguslaw Zietek told the Polish Press Agency "We live in a country run by bandits, thieves and Mafiosi who are more powerful than the government". That gives a pretty accurate picture of the mood.

Jan Małewski

1. See [1] on Europe Solidaires Sand Frontières (ESSF article 34331), Un appel urgent des mineurs polonais : Ne tirez pas sur les ouvriers !.
2. See <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=669643963153352&set=vb.100003232629300&type=2&theater>

Namibia: WRP election

successes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

themselves.

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

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

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

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

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