

Down with the bourgeois politics of the Front National! Against reactionary, nationalist fascism!

[threecolumns]By *Balazs Nagy*, May 2014

The forthcoming European elections will no doubt produce unprecedented advances by the French Front National (FN). It gained considerable strength by its spectacular advances in the recent municipal elections, which have clearly given it a head-start in the European elections. So a critical examination of its programme, in particular in relation to Europe, is not only vital in itself but allows us to clarify what the essential problems for Europe are. It also allows to look at all the other parties European policies.

Now, to decode what the FN's orientation towards Europe is and what it means, we must first of all describe its national policy. We must do this not on the basis of that party's own deceptive slogans or what other people say about it, but on the firm basis of the only objective criterion for political evaluation, i.e. its class character.

What is the Front National's real class character?

Actually, we need to establish clearly what the FN's social basis is and indicate unequivocally which class's interests are expressed in its programme and activities. This is the fundamental question which politicians and commentators either evade or completely muddle up, but it is the most important one.

There are, of course, some vague and hesitant answers which describe the Front National as a petit-bourgeois party, or one

that speaks on behalf of layers of de-classed workers. And it is true that in the FN's various shenanigans you will see out-and-out, provocative and panicked members of the petit-bourgeoisie as well as disorientated and desperate working people who follow this party. A large number of bourgeois propagandists also call this a populist party, alluding to its social demagoguery. But the only concrete content of this description is simply the bourgeoisie's familiar contempt for anything in the slightest way connected with the people.

All these descriptions are superficial. The adjective populist is so devoid of meaning that brain-dead journalists, in deference to the futile and inconsistent great minds they follow, apply it not just to the FN, but to Melanchon's Left Party (Parti de Gauche) too! What do they care that the class nature and objectives of these two parties are radically opposed, or that by acting in this way they are depriving themselves of an investigative method that actually has some validity.

But it is also superficial to view the FN as a petit-bourgeois party, even if there is an element of truth in it. It is true that the Front National is petit bourgeois in its composition, like similar bodies all over Europe. That was also true in the past of Hitler's and Mussolini's parties, and the rest of them, before they seized power. This widely-held opinion arises from immediate impressions based on superficial features of these parties, which various cohorts of petit-bourgeois do flock to join. It goes no further than the social composition of these parties, and completely neglects to describe their clearly and explicitly bourgeois programme.

The NF's bourgeois nature is clearly underlined by the party's programme and – as we shall see in detail later on – by what it actually does. But so-called classical bourgeois and social-democratic politicians and all their spokesmen make all that disappear as if by magic. This blindness is the intellectual expression of the class and social stratum to which they belong, and they also display it towards all past fascist movements (from Hitler and Mussolini to Franco and

Salazar).

This conception, which camouflages the social nature of fascist parties behind their social composition, was taken up and amplified by Stalinists in the 1930s and pressed into service for their Popular Front policies to rescue bourgeois society. Certainly the tenacious persistence of this superficial point of view right up to the present owes a lot to the still considerable influence of Stalinist ideology, which continues to poison minds at large, long after its progenitors power collapsed. As for the kinship between the FN and past (and present) fascist parties, it can be confirmed to the extent that their specific – and shared – bourgeois character is clearly understood. To check this we need first to make a brief detour into the past.

Past lessons help us to understand the present

What we need, to help us orientate ourselves correctly, is a theoretical elucidation of the historic experience of those years, in particular Trotsky's Marxist explanation, which remains totally valid today. Against all the general, botched and inconsistent characterisations one encounters today, he alone provided a serious analysis of fascism based on the class struggles and movements in capitalist society in its period of decline. Of all the many writing he devoted to this subject, let us pick his study: What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat (1932), which I strongly recommend to all activists.

In it, Trotsky notes that in the period of its imperialist decline, capital is able to stay in power only through the entire support of either social democracy or fascism. And if the strength of the proletariat is paralysed by the lack of its own political organisation or the inability of its leadership to march towards the seizure of power, these auxiliary arms of capital will grow stronger. But the inevitable accentuation of the general crisis of capitalism and its growing exhaustion sap and undermine the traditional

pedestals upon which social-democratic activity is based: reforms and parliamentary democracy. The exacerbation and prolongation of the general crisis thus abolish the foundations upon which social-democracy rests (reforms) and alters the framework within which it operates (parliamentary democracy). So social democracy grows noticeably weaker while the fascists, with their unbridled social demagoguery, grow stronger.

Only a thin membrane today separates France – or indeed the majority of European countries – from a similar situation. To be able to re-establish capitalism's former equilibrium and check the decline that threatens it, the bourgeoisie urgently needs not just to completely demolish the gains the proletariat made previously, but also to smash (or completely domesticate) its organisations. At the moment, they reckon that they can do that without recourse to the direct terror of fascism. They have already appreciably weakened democracy in an authoritarian and Bonapartist direction both within each country and at a European level. They have also succeeded in destroying a considerable mass of social rights and advantages, and all without any large-scale social shocks. Even if they still have a long way to go, all the signs are that they will be able to continue along the same lines. So you can sum it up like this: The so-called democratic rule of the bourgeoisie, profoundly corrupted by the virus of bonapartist authoritarianism, has already shown much more muscle in imposing tough decisions, while at the same time that class is still afraid of the kind of leap into the unknown involved in going over openly to fascism, the memory of which is still painfully alive. It prefers to stick with the social democrats who anyway seem determined enough to destroy social gains and rights and working class organisations (or at least severely discipline them). Above all, they are reassured by the remarkable weakness and torpor of the workers organisations, the virtual absence of a vigorous response by the proletariat. So everything encourages them to continue as they did in the past.

But despite all that, the crisis has grown more severe and instability has increased. Bourgeois voices are raised demanding a further and more decisive turn, pressing ahead to restore capitalism's health. The European Commission, the French employers organisation, Medef, and other members of the bourgeoisie show no gratitude to Hollande for services rendered but grow yet more demanding and openly arrogant. Alongside this, the fascists' strength and influence spread and they prepare to take power. Under these conditions the bourgeois nature of Front National stands out increasingly and its kinship with fascism becomes obvious.

An aggressive bourgeois party custom-built to save moribund capital at any price.

The class character of the Front National's programme leaves no room for doubt. It is flagrantly bourgeois. At the same time the FN takes care not to place too much emphasis on its total open support for capitalism, so as not to compromise the social posture it has usurped. However, its programme and the corresponding propaganda nowhere put in question capitalism as such as a well-defined social and economic system. Its criticisms are aimed not at the system itself but solely at its current policies, against which it advocates the application of different policies of the same capitalist system.

So of course it carefully avoids seeking to overthrow capitalism or agitating for this. Consequently it is deliberately opposed to the social revolution and looks forward to coming in power in accordance with all the rules and customs of bourgeois parliamentary politics, even if it would not hesitate to shoulder them aside should the need arise. But, like all other fascist formations past and present, they won't lay a finger on the sacrosanct private ownership of capital.

Now unlike the traditional bourgeois parties and their social democrat partners and rivals, the FN and its like do not rest

content merely to present a different programme. These parties base theirs on a virulent and provocative social and political criticism of economic, social and cultural defects, not as something inherent to the capitalist system, but as the direct consequences of alleged corruption of national space and its invasion by various ethnicities and nationalities.

This is where the fascist nature of the Front National and its ilk right across Europe emerges clearly and unequivocally. Sociological and political criteria are replaced by nationalist and racist phrase-mongering. Hitler and his supporters found an explanation for the social sufferings of the masses in an imaginary Jewish plot. We know what atrocities this vile anti-Semitism led to. At present the Front National focuses its attacks on Arab-origin French workers and working people and on refugees. But of course they have merely adapted the self-same genocidal propensities to demographic and political changes and are keen to shrug off the highly-injurious association with the still vivid memories of the death camps. But as long as capitalism continues and tries to halt its decline, anti-Semitism and its fascist thugs will also remain active.

Now this nationalism and racism do not emerge – and never did historically – as excessive national sentiment somehow outside of or above classes. As they always did, they form the foundations of a policy and propaganda with a clearly-defined class basis. Its violent anti-Arab attacks are concentrated on and aimed against the most numerous and most vulnerable section of the French working class and working people, which is those of Arab origin and/or identity. But curiously they spare rich emir parasites and, as if by magic, turn into fascinated admiration when it comes to Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, these great rentier parasites of world capitalism. (Ingrained anti-Arabism on the part of a few fanatical mystics does not alter this fundamental political fact).

This bourgeois-fascist lineage or genealogy on the part of Front National is entirely confirmed by its real attitude to so-called austerity policies. It castigates them in general

and as a whole as mistaken and useless, since in their view all problems would be solved if only all foreigners were expelled, but in reality it does not engage in the slightest struggle against the anti-working class measures involved. One would look in vain for any plan or real struggle by the FN against the constant pension cuts, the systematic erosion of rights at work, or unemployment. On the other hand, it is well known that it was really the FN who thought of slapping the disgusting and contemptuous label welfare dependents on social welfare recipients, especially the unemployed, and call for payments to be stopped. If they have for now shut up on this typically ignoble fascist demand, it is because the fascist contamination is so strong that other bodies are doing their work for them (Like Sarkozy through his fascist adviser Buisson, and after him the Socialist Party interior minister Valls against Roma, or now the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) MP Wauquiez on welfare dependency)

The programme of national isolation is a fascist policy

The fascist character of the Front Nationals bourgeois programme emerges most brutally in relation to Europe and its future. To strip it down, we need first to cast a brief glance at the bourgeoisies own orientation on Europe.

Painfully, and at the cost of two world wars involving massive destruction, this bourgeoisie, or rather its dominant faction, has arrived at a significant pragmatic conclusion: that the powerful contradiction between the forces of production, which have become European (and even global), and the strict maintenance of national divisions, is one of the causes of capitalist decline and thus a permanent source of war; that even this massive destruction, despite an unheard-of level of devastation, has done nothing to stop this decline but only slowed and prolonged it, all the while growing in extent and intensity. It was this empirical understanding which forced the bourgeoisie to undertake among other things the unification of Europe under the iron rod of its larger

monopolies.

Now the whole undertaking of building Europe is completely impossible for the bourgeoisie, whose birth was linked to and completely bound up with the birth of nation states. For the same reason, the death of these nation states will for sure only come over the corpse of the bourgeoisie. Events in recent years completely confirm this truth. The more the bourgeoisie has engaged on the road to its version of European unity, the more it has stoked up its crisis, the more it has weakened itself and torn itself apart. Its very first hesitant and shaky steps towards its alleged European unification already increased the general destruction at every level and increased many-fold the difficulties all working people have suffered. Above all and despite these unprecedented ravages, difficulties of every kind continued to grow, the class struggle has intensified, doubts persist and become widespread – and the death agony of capitalism worsens.

The Front National certainly picks up in a very lively way on what is badly wrong in the traditional bourgeoisies (and its social democratic allies) attitude to Europe, not to correct it, but to denounce European re-unification as an unsuitable, not to say harmful, approach to resolving the general crisis of the system. Against it they advocate the abolition of the Euro and other attributes of unification and a frank return to national sovereignty as we used to know it.

But such a jump backwards into the past is nowadays impossible; it would create immense upheavals which could quite possibly throw humanity a long way back. How damaging that would be was proved by the atrocities of war as long ago as 1914 and confirmed by the even worse atrocities between 1939 and 1945. Nowadays the European jigsaw of nation states existing separately from each other as independent entities is no more than an historic relic based on differences of language and culture. When we look at the material basis of life, we see economies really intertwined, an organic linking or fusion between the economic products of the various countries which has far outgrown any kind of self-contained

national economies existing in parallel and lends them an increasingly integrated character at the European and even international level. Even if this unification is being done in a capitalist way, i.e. by cruelly grinding away involving material destruction, suffering on the part of millions, and above all glaring imperfections and inadequacies, it is concretely being done and there is no possible way to turn the clock back that does not involve general chaos.

This is because what is at stake here is the historic development of the socialisation of production on a grand scale, something that even the bourgeoisie has continually had to adapt to, albeit in its own capitalist way, in order to mitigate the growing and murderous contradiction between this process and the private character of ownership. The absurd, rickety, incomplete character of their European turn faithfully reflects their fear and inability to see things through to the end, and then on top of that they had to adjust to the international socialisation that has been (wrongly) described as globalisation. Their grotesque attempts to mitigate the threats of serious instability that arise in the capitalist system from this growing international socialisation by establishing official but ramshackle European, American, Asian etc. regional groupings and then the G20 are testimony to how potent this socialisation process is. These bourgeois reactions to the challenges posed by the socialisation of the world (and European) economy cannot but be timid and incomplete, because not only do they rest on the basis and framework of capitalism, they also aspire to consolidate the system. But instead of mitigating the sources of disequilibrium and instability, they increase them and sharpen the contradictions even more. And so the bourgeoisies European adventure has considerably increased imbalances across the continent, increased economic instability and further deepened the contradictions between the various countries in the continent. The persistent isolation which has greeted French intervention in Africa (Mali and Central African Republic), then the paralysing cacophony of

contradictory interests over Ukraine and Putins policies express this natural inability to achieve real European unity.

For a workers programme for Europe!

The conclusion is obvious: All criticisms of the Front National which do not expose its bourgeois character badly miss the essential point. Obviously none of the bodies such as the (Conservative) UMP, the Socialist Party (PS), etc., can do that, so their criticisms of this dangerous rival are reduced to angry shouting of a generally moral order. Their hands are particularly tied in this respect in that they all on occasion draw from the same nauseating bourgeois political arsenal as the Front National without a second thought. Their policies towards Roma and other refugees illustrate this perfectly. At a European level they are compelled to defend their own anti-working class machinery in servile and ingratiating terms against the spectre of the aggressive FN nation-state.

In fact, expecting any political organisation that is not itself resolutely opposed to the bourgeoisie to come up with a class critique of the Front National is really like trying to square the circle; its literally impossible! And the absence of such a fundamental critique on the part of organisations which nevertheless put themselves forward as opposing the capitalist system as a whole reveals how seriously they lack any such ambition.

But a few additional comments are required on the European policy of the Left Party (Parti de Gauche), who do aspire to represent working people and so deserve a closer examination. For all our political sympathy for this organisation, or rather, precisely because of the solidarity we feel towards it, we are obliged to repeat a criticism we already made during the French municipal elections: It quite clearly does not have a working-class programme. It didn't have one during the previous elections and the lack is possibly even more glaring in relation to Europe.

Of course we do know this party's criticisms of the

bourgeoisies current European monstrosity and its austerity policies. We agree with them. But it is essential to recall that even the harshest, severest and most extensive criticisms workers pour out on this Europe do not add up to a political programme. If they themselves were enough to create such a programme, you would not need a political party. On the other hand we are undergoing the terrible effects of the Europe imposed by the PS, UMP and their allies. We also know that in this area the Front National wants a return to nation-states. These are the two orientations available to the bourgeoisie. But what, concretely, does the Left Party want? In the absence of a clear and direct answer, one can only speculate.

The party's documents talk about the need to reject Europe as it is so as to open the way to put it right socially, economically and ecologically. It also demands that Europe should be re-founded on social, ecological, democratic and peaceful foundations and also wants a new model of development in Europe. It declares it wants to put an end to the Europe of finance, asserting the need to break with productivism: set up a Europe-wide ecological planning system.

The way these desires are formulated suffers from a dreadful lack of precision, expresses unforgivable naivety and at times betrays crass ignorance. It very clearly shows that instead of an exact and precise political programme, the Left Party presents a fairly confused jumble of vague aspirations and scrambled and indistinct hopes and desires. In any case, the one priority that does stand out clearly in this wish list is to leave the capitalist structure of economy and society fundamentally unchanged, since all this party wants to do is at most alter (or re-found) it in the sense of relegating finance to a subordinate position and reorganising the economy according to ecological doctrine.

In doing so, this list abandons all the tried and tested methods of working peoples struggles such as putting social demands in the foreground and the alliance with trade union struggles. It replaces them with the cheap and tacky ideology of ecology, whose main function is to absolve the capitalist

system of its innate responsibility for destroying nature and to re-direct this accusation against people in general.

Now all these specific wishes are entirely compatible with preserving the continued existence of capitalism. They do not at all demand that it should be destroyed, but merely that it should be corrected and improved. (Clearly this party's leaders do not realise that even some of these innocent wishes are in complete contradiction with capitalism as it really is. And in that case capitalism will either tolerate these garrulous but basically inoffensive charlatans or it will confront them brutally because its crisis is getting more serious. As always happened throughout history, when that occurs, the great majority of these nave quacks will choose capitulation while a tiny minority will decide to fight but, unprepared and overtaken by events, will go down to certain defeat.)

But a workers programme takes an entirely different route: It calls things by their proper name. So it starts resolutely and publicly from how flagrantly and obviously bankrupt capitalism is when it comes to providing the slightest solution to or improvement in the day-to-day difficulties working people in Europe face. The future capitalism holds for them is getting gloomier and less secure, and the system itself cannot accurately predict even the main lines of where it is going. It will not find refuge in any one of its long-past variants: certainly not its old, bankrupt, democratic version and even less whatever it can lash together in terms of the nation-state. Such a programme would clearly enunciate the need to abolish this bankrupt capitalism and replace its pseudo-Europe with the goal of a United Workers (or Socialist) States of Europe, the only road to any real level of continental economic and social integration. We call on all worker-activists and their political organisations, especially the ones in Left Front, to adopt that sort of programme.

It is easy to see that such a programme could not be achieved all in one go, but needs to be prepared and facilitated by a whole series of obvious immediate demands which, as

transitional demands, would lead to the inevitable conclusion that such a programme is needed. Besides providing a framework activists to mobilise, it is essential that, to fulfil the requirements of a genuine workers programme in leading us to socialism (actual break with capitalism, real class independence and living working-class internationalism), such a programme should contain:

1. Joint planning at a European level of the activity of all political formations really fighting for a working peoples programme for Europe, and standing international co-ordination between them.

2. It is important to state the objective of a struggle for a Working Peoples Europe, as the anti-chamber to the Workers United States, in opposition not only to the current bankers Europe but also the fascists goal of nation-states.

Several partial demands can be condensed into this one:

- a. It implies the struggle to unify legislation right across Europe which embodies social advantages and gains on the basis of the most favourable (minimum wage, pensions, social security, etc.).

- b. It involves sustained activity in relation to and alongside the trade unions with a view to extending co-operation to organise this struggle.

3. The demand to cancel the states immense debts should be prominent in the programme. It is through the reimbursement of these debts and the interest that lenders (banks etc.) regularly siphon off a significant portion of the surplus value produced in the debtor countries. On the other hand, the obligation to repay the debt is used as a pretext to cut and destroy social rights and gains. So debt and repayment constitute the main current source of extra profit and a vital lever for exploiting the working class and working people in Europe. To make it easier to understand and popularise this demand, we should co-operate with all movements calling for a public, independent examination and general audit of these debts.

4. Reducing the struggle against unemployment to the national

level is a return to past failed practices or at least represents a serious illusion now that the inter-dependence of the various countries of Europe is so far advanced and the unemployed form about 20 per cent of Europe's active population. This fact makes an active movement essential which challenges capitalisms claim to dominate and direct the economy. That is the demand for workers control of businesses threatened with closure and the establishment of a struggle for workers control to ban unemployment.

5. Finally, a real fight for genuine European democracy is vital against all the bourgeoisies despotic bodies and arrangements. A real general clean-out is needed to close them down and re-organise them (the European commissions and directorates and all bodies such as the European Central Bank, the European Parliament, etc.) to ensure that there exists a new set of European arrangements that function in a healthy way at the service of working people. The pre-condition for such a clean-out is preparing, convening and holding a European Constituent Assembly.

A workers programme of this kind puts to shame all the various schemes and horse-trading which preoccupy the leaders of the Left Front about what organisations are called and whose names is on the ballot paper as miserable squabbles of a cheap parliamentary politics unable to hide the absence of a workers programme worthy of the name. However, perhaps a pathetic result at the ballot box will shake these organisations centrist outlook and unleash a movement for their renewal. It is a hope to cling to.

Balazs Nagy,

May 2014[/threecolumns]

Global Solidarity day for Fast food workers

ITF unions back fast food workers

15 May 2014

ITF activists backed fast food workers in America today, supporting their right to join a union and to earn a decent wage.

The Low Pay is Not OK campaign has highlighted poor working conditions for American fast food workers. Wages are often too low for workers to support themselves, and the right to join a union is restricted. This has a huge impact on communities across the country, with almost seventy percent of fast food workers being the main breadwinner in their family.

ITF unions around the world have answered the call for global solidarity. ITF US affiliates the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) have held demonstrations to support fast food workers, while members of Ireland's Services Industrial and Professional Union (SIPTU) participated in rallies outside fast food restaurants.

In India, activists from the National Union of Seafarers India (NUSI) demonstrated outside MacDonalds outlets in Mumbai. All India Railwaymen's Federation (AFIR) members rallied in Delhi, Colombo, Chennai, Cochin, and Kathmandu.

ITF acting general secretary Steve Cotton said: "As this campaign highlights, low wages hurt workers. This kind of employment drives down wages and conditions for all workers, across all sectors, in a race to the bottom to get a bigger profit at the expense of workers' rights. Unions have a huge role to play in protecting the livelihoods of each and every worker, and I'm proud that ITF activists were out there supporting this cause today."

from: ITF, see more at: fastfoodglobal

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

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

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

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

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

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

This Central Committee must help all of us to fully understand the moment we are in, from a clear Marxist-Leninist class perspective. There should be no confusion over what Numsa resolved to do, in the Numsa National Special Congress.

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

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

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

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

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

- A. The state of the world capitalist system;
- B. The South African revolution: its theory and revolutionary practice;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. The state of the world capitalist system

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

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

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

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

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

as we know it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

South Africa today is firmly and fully imbedded in the world

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

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

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

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

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

Was our struggle for social grants?

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

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

Was our struggles for us to merely participate in choosing which faction of the capitalist class should be in government through the lottery of capitalist elections once in every 5 years, and then pretend that we too have "political power"?

Was our struggle merely for "basic services" in our apartheid designed geographical ghettos?

Why was our blood shed? Why did we shed blood? Was it for BEE?

For Nkandla? For Ghuptas? For tenders perhaps?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our violent revolutionary struggle was about ending exploitation of the Black and African majority who are the bulk of the South African working class! Today, the majority of Black and African people cannot survive without selling themselves very cheaply to white or white black parasitic capitalists!

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

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

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

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

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

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

The extra water, electricity, small poorly located and constructed houses, poor quality but expanded health care, and

a raft of empty liberal political rights (precisely because these rights are not backed by economic equality – which is the only foundation of real political freedom) in the past twenty years do not amount to even the smallest achievements of the promise of our violent revolutionary struggle for freedom.

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

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

Our poor rural populations have simply been forgotten!

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

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

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

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

1. The People Shall Govern!
2. All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!
3. The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!

4. The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!
5. All Shall be Equal Before the Law!
6. There Shall be Work and Security!
7. The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!
8. All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!
9. There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!
10. There Shall be Peace and Friendship!

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

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

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

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

The fundamental point to note here is that as long as a minority controls and owns the economy, with the support of US, British and other imperialist backers, the essence, the fundamental reason for our violent struggle for liberation

will remain unachieved: the transfer of the wealth of the country into the hands of all South Africans!

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

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

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

- While the working class in the townships were making the Apartheid government and society “ungovernable” and sorting out traitors in their communities, even by using burning tires, the Black and African middle class elites at the heart of the negotiations were busy stitching together with the enemies of the working class, secretly, a neoliberal anti working class and capitalist post-Apartheid South Africa, without the formal democratic mandates of either the ANC or SACP members and leadership structures.
- We now know that the totality of the openly and secretly negotiated settlement firmly entrenched a neoliberal capitalist post-Apartheid South Africa, and threw the Freedom Charter into the dustbin of history!
- We now know that the racist dominant and exploiting white block won by simply mutating racial social and economic dominance into economic class domination and exploitation through the South African liberal constitution which protected their old and newly created economic and property rights.
- The 1996 South African most liberal constitution guaranteed both existing and created new property rights for the white minority population, especially in land – thus entrenching racial capitalism, post 1994.
- We are now convinced that BEE was secured as a means both to

pay off and consolidate a Black middle class, post 1994 that would act as the new policeman for the new version of the same Apartheid capitalist society and economy that South Africa became, after 1994.

- We are very clear that the 1994 democratic breakthrough was nothing but the mechanism for the racial capitalist transition, entrenchment of the racial social and economic domination order we are now living in.
- The 1994 negotiated settlement laid the capitalist foundation for the post-Apartheid rise of a kleptomaniac, corrupt black and African political class.
- The negotiated settlement contained the seeds for the dismantling of the popular and revolutionary block that had waged the struggle for genuine freedom in South Africa.

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

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

Numsa is a socialist Marxist-Leninist inspired revolutionary trade union. We make no apology to anyone for this fact.

In our December 2013 Numsa National Special Congress, we confirmed and resolved that the ANC led alliance no longer serves its revolutionary purpose. We, accordingly, ended our political support for the ANC and resolved to campaign for Cosatu to break the Alliance.

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

politics and in the South African revolution.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the black parties may be!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

world.

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

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

Forward to a socialist world!

Forward to a socialist Africa!

Forward to the Socialist Republic of South Africa!

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

Andrew Chirwa,
Numsa President
12th May 2014.

original posted here:

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

[/threecolumns]

Statement on the decisions of the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa by the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International Conference 29-30 March 2014

The Special Congress (17-20 December 2013) of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), with 1,200 delegates representing 338,000 members, unanimously decided to break with the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) as the first step towards establishing a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a Socialist South Africa.

For NUMSA 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 unions 9th 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 decided to break with the ANC and 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 is raising 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.

For the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International these decisions of the NUMSA Special Conference and the unions subsequent statements and actions towards socialism are historic and crucial for the working class and its organisations internationally.

Inspired by the example of NUMSA we are making every possible effort through our own currently small and isolated organisations to oppose all the opportunism and anti-working class politics which are so widespread in the so-called advanced capitalist countries, with a view to preparing socialism. And, like NUMSA, in the midst of the majority of organisations which have gone over to the side of anti-Marxism or falsification, we are guided by Marxism.

We support, and will circulate and publicise, NUMSAs Special Congress Resolution and Statement throughout the working class;

We support and will act on NUMSAs decision to build a

Movement for Socialism;

We enthusiastically welcome and want to take part in NUMSAs decision for an international study on the historical formation of working class parties.

Long live the South African working class as they get ready to storm the heavens!

by Balazs Nagy, April 2014

[threecolumns]Here in France, as elsewhere, the media have hardly mentioned the social and political ferment currently convulsing South Africa, which is no surprise actually. This evasive and rather suspect silence contrasts oddly and strikingly with the unprecedented enthusiasm these same media showed during Nelson Mandelas elaborate funeral rites, an enthusiasm whose real purpose was to glorify the mans politics. The sleight of hand that makes important information like this simply disappear also contrasts strangely with the endless, servile, outpouring of easy-reading chatter when the President of France visited the US. (This sycophant never once stopped licking his hosts boots, although they hack into his private communications like they do everybody else on the planet, and US-owned businesses in France dont even pay their taxes).

These glaring contradictions clearly reveal what these media are really like and what they are there for. All working people, especially the politically active among them, should ponder this. It exposes the highfaluting idea that the media are there to provide reliable information as a gross,

outrageous fiction. The deception they are currently trying on exposes even more clearly exactly what this vast brainwashing mechanism is for: to stop workers becoming conscious of the situation they are in and what they really need to do by mutilating, obscuring, and in this instance deliberately camouflaging, the great, irresistible strength that lies in workers international unity. This colossal strength, whose development is as uneven as that of capitalism itself, is still deeply divided and fractured along national and regional lines. It is split and stunted even more by the crying lack of political organisation, a genuine, powerful International, on the part of this working class.

So what have the bourgeoisie and its purveyors of mind-altering mush been trying to keep from us in recent months? An initial answer to this question will just focus on the essential facts about this qualitative development in the workers movement in South Africa, since this exceptional groundswell is something we really will have to return to in days to come.

South Africas biggest trade union takes some amazing decisions

To start with, these are admirable and astonishing decisions which break up the class-collaboration that the bourgeoisies power is based on and theoretically and politically re-arm the South African working class. Moreover, their character is such as to shift the international relationship of forces between the working class and the bourgeoisie, halting the long process of defeats and set-backs the international proletariat has suffered.

In December 2013, the powerful South African engineering workers union NUMSA (the biggest union in the country with more than 341 000 members) held a Special National Congress (SNC) attended by more than 1 000 delegates. After passionate debates it took a number of historic decisions (see Workers International Journal no3, March 2014) . To summarise:

The Congress paid appropriate homage to the miners massacred

at Marikana, collecting a huge sum in financial support of the victims families, and condemned the compliant attitude, not to say downright complicity, on the part of the countrys political and trade union leaderships. Then in the same spirit it resolved:

To reject the tripartite alliance between the governing party, the Stalinist Communist Party and the trade union confederation (ANC–SACP–Cosatu) as agencies of the bourgeoisie and its policies. As NUMSA General Secretary Irvin Jim stated in his speech of 11 February 2014, the ANC and SACP leadership has consistently attacked the working class, because the current leadership, the very same leadership that calls itself anti-imperialist, is in a lucrative alliance with international capital. The delegates emphatically declared that The chance of winning back the SACP onto the path of working class struggle for working class power is very remote, something which Deputy General Secretary Karl Cloete re-stated in another speech in early February. Consequently the SNC decided to suspend payment of financial contributions to the ANC.

Evoking the disturbing situation the country faces, especially the growing impoverishment of the working class, the SNC launched a call for the nationalisation of the mining and finance sectors as an immediate and urgent requirement to save our nation.

This gathering of workers also resolved that NUMSA will play a central role, as a catalyst, in the building of a united front. That United Front will take up the bread and butter issues of the working class. It will link our struggles on the shop floor with our struggles in our communities.

The Congress then took a vitally important step. As Irvin Jim emphasised in the speech quoted above, there was in the SNC a profound understanding that unless the working class organises itself as a class for itself it will remain unrepresented and forever toil behind the bourgeoisie. For this reason the SNC decided to study, research and investigate various forms of independent working-class parties and to serve as a catalyst

to form a party. Deputy General Secretary Karl Cloete was obliged to add in his speech that, as a trade union, NUMSA could not commit itself to setting up such a party, but it should explore the means and methods leading to it. So he recalled the exact words chosen by the SNC, according to which NUMSA should organise a Conference on Socialism as a stage in organising a Movement for Socialism to now be initiated by the trade union. In preparation for this conference, the whole union should look at experiences of building socialism, now and in the past. At the same time: We must conduct an international study on working class parties.

He went on to explain this fundamental decision by saying: that the building of such an instrument needs patient and consistent work. Parties require political programmes that clearly spell out what they are fighting for. Such programmes need to inspire millions of people as alternatives to the existing order. A socialist political organisation needs to be rooted within the working class and its struggles. History is littered with initiatives to form parties that came to nothing and where such parties collapsed like packs of cards. History is also full of experiments to build socialism that went in other non-socialist routes. And he summarised NUMSAs position thus: While we understand the urgency, we are not rushing as we are not building an electoral machine but an instrument of revolution and transformation with very deep roots within the working class.

We cannot here present in detail the full richness of these resolutions, which trace the innovative revolutionary path taken by this working class in South Africa. We will return to this very shortly. Now, in line with its political line of class combat against the bourgeoisie and for socialism, the SNC took further substantial decisions.

It voted to call on the leadership of the trade union confederation Cosatu to convene a Special Congress and to break the alliance (with the ANC and the SACP) which, according to General Secretary Jim, failed to use the political power it secured in 1994 to take ownership and

control of the national wealth of our country and replace the white racist colonial economy.

Going straight from words to deeds, the congress decided to launch a campaign of rolling mass action initiated by the NUMSA structures to demand fundamental change in the direction of the South African economy and society. For a start, NUMSA launched a powerful call for a General Strike and mass and community actions for 26 February. As Irvin Jim emphasised towards the end of his speech: We are starting to build the irresistible force that will take back our nation and build it in the interests of the majority.

A few days after this speech, which clarified and explained the Congress decisions, nine trade unions affiliated to Cosatu, at NUMSAs prompting, launched a Statement which testifies to the fact that a tumultuous awakening of the working class is underway in South Africa. Note the names of these trade unions: Public and Allied Workers Union, the SA Football Players Union, the Democratic Nurses Union, the SA Municipal Workers Union, the Food and Allied Workers Union, the SA Commercial and Catering Workers Union, Communication Workers Union and the SA State and Allied Workers Union. There can be no doubt that this list will soon grow, although this will involve intense internal struggles in each union. The nine unions which signed this Statement urged the Cosatu leadership urgently to call a Special National Congress of Cosatu, which the factional leadership (an obvious reference to the line-up of leaders behind the right-wing leadership of ANC and the Stalinist party) has prevent from meeting for some time. At the same time they demand the re-instatement of Zwelinzima Vavi, the elected secretary of Cosatu, who was arbitrarily removed because he refused to follow slavishly the opportunist watchwords of the ANC and the SACP.

To complete its resolutions, which profoundly alter class relations within the country, NUMSA decided to organise Marxist-Leninist Schools for trade union delegates to explain, discuss and assimilate the unions socialist orientation and to explain what it means and how to do it. The first of these

week-long schools took place in early February 2014.

What the historic rebirth of NUMSA means and what it teaches us

It would be impossible to squeeze into one short article everything that can be learnt from the way this big trade union adopted radical positions, even just in relation to South Africa, not to mention the rest of Africa, starting with her neighbours, or indeed the international working class movement, especially Europe. So we are obliged to confine our remarks to some essential points, with a promise to return soon to a more complete and systematic evaluation of the invaluable contribution to Marxist theory and socialist practice this section of the great South African working class is making as it starts to move.

First and foremost, this class vigorously states that, faced with the bourgeoisie and its policy of enslaving working people, the only way forward is to commit firmly and openly to smashing capitalism and opening the road to socialism. This clear and unequivocal slogan, backed up by energetic commitment, stands in striking contrast to the reticence, not to say downright confidentiality, in relation to their programme, on the part of the great majority of organisations on the so-called Left in Europe and elsewhere. Even the most advanced political formations such as the Front de Gauche, Syriza and die Linke (France, Greece, Germany) drown their programmes in a fog of mealy-mouthed phrases and random, unexplained and non-committal hints. In the unflattering popular phrase, they try to hide behind a matchbox. One wonders whether they have any plan at all apart from somehow improving capitalism. We urge our comrades in these organisations: be inspired by the example of NUMSA in South Africa. Steer a clear course towards socialism! All the experience in South Africa and in Europe proves that there is no third way between this path and the reign of the bourgeoisie with its attendant attacks and miseries.

Such a clarification would allow us to take the South African road, and so cleanse from top to bottom the theoretical source that illuminates workers struggle for emancipation, by opting for creative Marxism, as the African workers did, the only theoretical guide for such a struggle. Of course such a choice goes hand in hand with a complete rejection of the jumble of all sorts of left-over ideologies and conceptions the bourgeoisie uses to keep working people chained to them. It is urgently necessary to get rid of the mish-mash of the most widely-held—but all bankrupt—fragments of conceptions about class-collaboration, from the insipid hotchpotch of stale Keynesianism to Stalinisms various—catatonic but still clinging on—popular fronts.

For all trade unions, even the most combative ones, like the CGT in France, the message from South Africa should ring like a persistent wake-up call. It is frontally opposed to the opportunist and degrading conception and practices of partnership with the bourgeoisie and its state which the European trade union leaderships put forward for their unions, following their bourgeois gurus, anti-reform reformists and de-frocked Stalinists. This is where NUMSA has made a radical break. By taking up the resolute defence of the interests of the working class against this class-collaboration, it has necessarily chosen and politically committed the union to fighting for the interests of the independent working class as a whole. By doing so it has entirely confirmed and reinforced the correctness of Trotskys analysis in *Trades Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay*, the writing of which was interrupted by the ice-pick of Stalins assassin. All working people and the activists among them should study this pamphlet afresh in the light of the formidable break-through opened up by the South African trade union.

By its very nature, said Trotsky, imperialism in its death agony provokes violent and repeated aggression on the part of the bourgeoisie which mean that must urgently fulfil a political role in relation to the fundamental choices the working class as a whole faces. Now the trade union

leaderships have done and still do everything they can to divide up trade union activity and restrict it—at best—to the absolute minimum of defending their members immediate interests. They have erected this separation, which in reality is the same actual break already advocated by the syndicalism of old, into a rigorous, strict dogma in union work, which the majority of organisations, even ones claiming some attachment to Lenin and Trotsky, cheerfully adopt, promote and ruthlessly apply. Now NUMSA flatly repudiates this whole trade union swamp in a way whose ultimate ramifications are still difficult to foresee.

The only European trade union which to my knowledge has decided and adopted a definite, truly political role on the side of the working class is the biggest UK trade union, Unite. This surely demonstrates that NUMSA is not at all on its own and that the awakening of the world working class really has begun. Clearly opposed to the so-called neo-liberal policies of the Labour Party, Unite has rejected its opportunist leadership and pushed the party to break with this policy and adopt a workers programme. The significance of the tenacious struggle going on in the UK is not confined just to that country; its implications are and increasingly will be valuable for the working class as a whole right across Europe. Similarly, there is no doubt that the meeting between NUMSA and Unite, which was planned before these most recent events, will involve fruitful exchanges of considerable interest not only for the working class of these two countries but for the whole international working class.

As against this renewal, our Journal has already denounced, in particular in a recent article, the class collaboration on the part of many unions, their consequent refusal to take on a political role for the working class and their insistence on confining themselves to an obsolete, ossified, narrow and sterile trade union practice which has led a great mass of workers to turn their backs on them and reject them as blunt and rusty tools. Even a weapon as powerful and deadly (and double-edged!) as the general strike, which the Greek,

Portuguese and Spanish working class have boldly and repeatedly wielded in the course of recent years, showing remarkable courage and spirit of self-sacrifice, has ended up each time in a bitter setback. All that these repeated general strikes have actually achieved has been to exhaust the working class and undermine its morale, since their leaders have refused to open their only way out, i.e. the political assertion of the working class taking over the economic and political leadership of the country. As for the half-hearted mobilisations in partial strikes and demonstrations, whose pathetic results merely emphasise the contradiction between what the situation demands and a trade union movement embalmed in routine, the less said the better.

This sclerosis has eaten its way so deeply into the unions that their leaders now constrict and limit their actions even further, not even fulfilling their basic responsibility to organise workers and defend their interests. Just take unemployment! Deferentially adopting the doctrinal precepts of bourgeois ideology, trade union leaderships only consider those who are directly—and officially—employed in an actual job to be workers. Capitalists are throwing more and more workers out of the production process, but these leaderships are no less eager to get rid of them out of the unions! They don't think that the unemployed deserve to belong to trade unions at all, and any attempt to organise them systematically on a wide scale is sabotaged and abandoned.

Fortunately, pretty well all over Europe workers will not accept being thrown on the scrap heap in this contemptible, humiliating way, like worn-out rubbish. Spontaneously, but at the initiative of local former leaders and cadres, they have gathered in various other structures at the margins of or outside the official unions. In the UK, the Liverpool dockers, after a long and difficult two-year dispute sustained and encouraged by port workers around the world, which was the stuff of legend, were nevertheless deprived of their jobs and the historical Liverpool docks wiped out. But they never said die. Inspired by local leaders and cadres such as Jimmy Nolan,

Terry Teague and others, they organised, in this ravaged working-class city, around their Casa with its intense political, social and cultural life to maintain their class as a living, active force. And in the North East of the country, in Tyneside and Durham, former miners whose mines have all been completely closed and the miners left to rot, like one of our former comrades, Dave Temple, have woven back together the broken threads of the union and kept alive the collective activity of the miners. They even revived their disused links with the Spanish Asturian miners when they came under attack.

It is no coincidence that this rock-solid working-class resistance has kept going in the UK, the historical cradle of the working class and its movement, a country where working peoples consciousness of belonging to a distinct working class is incomparably stronger than anywhere else. But even in Europe, various groups of workers are stubbornly trying a variety of ways to resist degradation. They are essential component parts of a united and powerful working class and of re-constituting its general movement as a whole.

The deterioration caused by the massive destruction of the productive forces, in the first place of workers themselves, has been made even worse by the way in which the aims and methods of their organisations have been obscured and by the general de-naturing and impoverishment of their trade unions. However, the determined orientation and decisive action of South African workers bring the reviving message of a real global awakening of the workers movement.

NUMSAs SNC has opened the floodgates to a development of profound importance in the trade union movement, comparable to the general shift from craft unionism to industrial unionism which started in the first half of the twentieth century. Whereas the trade union bureaucracys practices, ossified into a dogma by reformists and Stalinists, stop at the gates of the workplace, the NUMSA SNC resolved to smash through this barrier. It decided to extend the activity of the union to the struggles waged in the communities (townships, suburbs, settlements, towns and villages) for workers and unemployed

peoples basic demands for water, electricity, housing etc.,—struggles which are intense in South Africa. Consequently the union has taken the initiative to take on and directly organise these struggles and the activists involved. These struggles already have a long history stretching back to the 1990-1994 period, and even then NUMSA wanted to link them up with what it was doing. Its then leader, Moses Mayakiso, worked out a whole political and organisational plan to that effect, to which NUMSA now refers. But the union abandoned these plans when its revolutionary line buckled under the right-wing influence of the overall ANC-SACP-Cosatu alliance. And it was precisely then that these community struggles really took off as the way in which the impoverished masses defended themselves against the violent destruction of their living conditions by the governments class-collaboration policies.

As a member of a NUMSA delegation to the UK led by Mayekiso, the young Durban engineering worker Bongani Mkhungo easily grasped the correctness of the Marxist orientation of our day contained in Trotskys teaching. And so it was as a member of our Workers International that he returned to Africa, where from the outset he was marginalised by NUMSA. But he completely dedicated himself to organising these community struggles to obtain and improve water and electricity supplies and other essential services and for a decent life. Illness and privation struck down our comrade, whom we sorely miss, before he could witness this re-birth of our movement, but what he did greatly contributed to its preparation and current flowering.

The struggle is particularly lively and violent throughout the region. In neighbouring Namibia, our comrades Erica and Hewat Beukes and their group have spent years organising a whole movement of impoverished and dispossessed working people for access to decent housing and against various abuses at the hands of their bosses and the state.

Over the last two years, these comrades have broadened out this activity to include the defence of miners and teachers

robbed of their pensions by the mining trusts and state organs, and of the rights of various ethnic groups of farmers and agricultural workers. To organise and centralise them, they and their supporters and associates have established the Workers Advice Centre, whose activities and influence have become quite extensive. Rapid and brutal reaction from the Namibian bourgeoisie, its old colonial master South Africa, and its own repressive legal organs was not long in coming, especially once our comrades resolved to prepare to set up the Namibian workers party in the very near future. A raft of administrative hassles, legal threats and arbitrary measures, fines and charges and police summonses and harassment, cutting off of water and electricity supplies, warnings, intimidation and arbitrary accusations paralyse their work and disorganise and even put in question the very existence of the Workers Advice Centre. Certainly they will not be put off doing what they do, and especially not their big project. But active and effective solidarity on the part of working people across the whole world provides precious support which, even in modest forms, helps the Namibian comrades efforts and forges and cements international unity of the working class and all working people.

For a South African turn everywhere!

The immense scope of this initiative by South African workers in NUMSA arises in an international atmosphere where sharpening class contradictions have already provoked a series of revolutionary explosions. Since the Tunisian people unleashed their revolutionary march, spurred on by the working class and rapidly spreading to Egypt and then more or less all Arab countries, the massive mobilisation of working people against the bourgeoisie and the intolerable measures they are taking has accelerated and taken on increasingly sharp and violent forms. The inevitable avalanche of the world revolution has started, even if its various manifestations have a spontaneous character which makes their rhythm somewhat

jagged, and even though they dress up in the nationalist or religious garb of past dominant ideologies. A spectre is haunting Europe (or rather the world): the spectre of communism. Even in the last year it has appeared noisily in Egypt, then entered the scene albeit briefly in South Korea and Turkey, while more or less gate-crashed and disguised by nationalist and religious stand-ins, defied the powerful from Palestine to Pakistan by way of Iraq and Afghanistan, and it is ready to burst out in our old Europe, albeit tempered, softened and enfeebled. And all the while, travestied and disfigured as it has been, side-tracked and losing its bearings in Syria, it terrifies the possessors and drives their rulers all over the world to either desperate self-defence or complete paralysis.

This is the explosive powder-barrel within which the working class masses in Ukraine frontally attack the authorities with exemplary determination—but wrong and confused ideas. Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian workers in Bosnia-Herzegovina in turn have courageously and with great determination launched into an attack on the bourgeoisies feeble rule and its nationalist henchmen. Imperialism and bureaucrats joined together to impose this through the rotten Dayton Agreement, which divides these peoples and ties them down in the straitjacket of the failed and unviable pluri-national framework. Now they are under pressure from all sides to accept the so-called proper application of this Agreement, whereas it is precisely the yoke against which they rose up, as Comrade Pavlovics article explains very clearly (Lutte des classes no 20, February 2014).

At the same time in Ukraine the revolutionary explosion of the working masses has advanced legitimate demands but gets bogged down in the swamp of a false choice between the suffocating embrace of Putins dictatorship or the deceptive siren voices of a capitalist Europe that has itself lost its way.

The lucidity of NUMSAs position and its explicit orientation towards socialism cuts through this whole dense morass to bring vital clarity into the chaotic tangle of wrong roads. It

brings the light people need to separate the good seed from the various kinds of bourgeois chaff fed to it, and opens the way to the only solution, which is socialist. It is also entirely valid for all organisations, even those claiming to speak for working people in the more developed countries. It spurs us on to either act like South Africans or take sides with the oppressors or, at best, fall into historical oblivion—and in both latter cases to drag working people into a defeat.

Now, this re-orientation of the whole international workers movement that NUMSA has started—to take up once more and unequivocally the class struggle and the goal of socialism—is absolutely essential to combat the opportunist perversion of the movement. But other dangers immediately arise along the way to recovery. The most dangerous is probably the adventurous impatience inspired by panicking petit-bourgeois intellectuals—followed unfortunately by young people who are, by nature, necessarily impatient—who try to push this profound correction towards an ultra-left practice that is the licensed midwife of sectarianism.

In South Africa itself, on 14 February 2014, the small, recently-created, workers party WASP (Workers and Socialist Party of South Africa) published a statement. Having greeted the NUMSA decisions, the statement hurries to advise them that the time has come for NUMSA to lead the way to a new trade union confederation. In other words, whereas elsewhere in the same document it supports NUMSAs action in fighting inside Cosatu and forming an opposition group along with nine other unions, it also repeatedly calls for an immediate break with the Cosatu confederation! But that is exactly what the right-wing ANC-SACP leaders want! They would love NUMSA to leave Cosatu and abandon the fight inside it. It would save them a lot of grief. No, the struggle is inside Cosatu and in all the affiliated unions, and fortunately NUMSA shows not the slightest intention of following this suicidal recommendation to put the knife into this struggle by giving up in mid-stream. In particular, this short-sighted haste would limit

the horizon to just Cosatu, whereas what is boiling up here is the whole South African working class with all its movements and organisations.

Not only is a bitter struggle developing inside every union, but the ANC and the SACP are undergoing an unprecedented crisis in which oppositions and groupings along a new line are endangering the right-wing monolith Stalinism built up within them. Even the radical turn made by the NUMSA SNC would not have been possible without a decisive political turn on the part of communist and ANC activists who are NUMSA members and delegates. Do the WASP comrades seriously think that NUMSA and its leaders are going to put the brakes on this huge movement of renewal and strangle it by giving up the fight and looking for a hole to hide in somewhere outside this whole class in ferment?

They want nothing to do with this kind of siren call. Only recently it was very evident how this rash impetuosity allied to sectarian adventurism blocked and isolated the broad scope of the movement that developed after the Marikana massacre. They saw with their own eyes how a lot of activists, advised and guided by the UK-based Committee for a Workers International (CWI) launched themselves against the ANC-SACP right-wingers running the big miners union (NUM) in partnership with the mining trusts and compromised in the Marikana massacre. The CWI also urged them on to set this workers party (WASP) up in a hurry. Knocked off balance by the CWIs inveterate ultra-leftism, itself resting on the young workers genuine—understandable but ill-advised—impatience, activists encouraged the break with the union and with Cosatu and the establishment of an improvised and therefore botched left union. In that way they put themselves outside the battle in the unions and were absent from the actual renewal of NUMSA and the ferment going on throughout Cosatu. Alongside that, by over-hastily declaring the workers party WASP, they bungled its own process of growth to maturity and they are now marginalised in the workers movement as a whole and even stand outside of NUMSAs work for a new party.

These are recent examples which speak volumes to all activists about the CWI-WASPs methods. The great working class mobilisation following Marikana was disrupted and blocked and ended up at the back of the queue. Thoughtless excessive haste meant that the mountain of a huge upsurge by the working class gave birth to a mere mouse.

WASP and its CWI inspirers try to distract NUMSA from the job of winning the other unions for its socialist positions through a struggle inside Cosatu and winning the confederation back. Instead they urge it to break away, as if that struggle was already over, and to stand on the side-lines as spectators. Which is where they themselves are.

Instead, the WASP comrades could have grasped the real job facing Marxist worker-activists by thinking through for themselves, for example, the implications of the NUMSA resolutions, instead of following the CWIs ultimatisic watchwords. That organisation is known in various parts of Europe as a body locked in sectarian isolation which prefers brandishing ultimatums to democratic discussion either in its own ranks or beyond. WASP comrades have nothing to gain by following these watchwords; on the contrary, by doing so they risk doing damage to the South African workers movement. It isnt NUMSA which should break with Cosatu, but WASP which ought to break with the CWI.

All in all, sectarianism constitutes a significant obstacle throughout the whole great international movement, and one which it we must oppose from the outset. The struggle against the bourgeois degradation of the movement and the job of cleansing it of every nuance of its methods and agents is a greater, more urgent and more complex task, and that is what we need to get down to now.

The most obvious and natural thing to start with is to call on all trade union and political organisations anywhere which claim any attachment to the working class to publish the NUMSA resolutions and statement in full and organise a discussion about them as urgent, necessary tasks. That is an elementary duty, for if it is true that recent weather conditions have

been somewhat out of kilter, it is no less true that to see the sun of workers struggles rise, from now on we should look not East but–South![/threecolumns]

Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine Statement To the International trade union movement

Originally posted here 11.03.2014

[threecolumns]The People of Ukraine took to the Maidan in Kiev and other Ukrainian cities, struggling peacefully for a civilized, European future. Protesters sought democracy and decent social protections for working people in the face of the corruption and lawlessness of Yanukovich regime and they were victorious. The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine and its member organizations took an active part in this struggle from the first days. Unfortunately there were victims. As a result of armed violence against Ukrainian people more than a hundred killed and nearly 300 missing. More than 2000 people were wounded.

Having understood that people cannot be defeated even by force, Viktor Yanukovich together with his associates fled, leaving the country devastated. This staggeringly corrupt clique emptied the state treasury and bankrupted the country.

During this difficult time for the state and the people, Ukraine was subjected to aggressive interventions by the

Russian Federation, which, having abused all International and inter-governmental treaties, invaded the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and actively destabilized the situation across the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine.

Naked aggression of the armed forces of another country against the peaceful citizens of Ukraine has led to profound political, economic and social crisis. Unemployment and decreasing in living standards, already a reality under Yanukovych, have worsened in the current emergency.

That is why our country now more than ever needs international support and attention to social and economic problems as well as financial assistance. Unfortunately, we are confronted here with another tragedy, that of economic austerity. The failed policies of austerity are inexplicably still supported by some parts of the international community and international financial institutions. Recent experience in Europe shows that International Financial institutions (IFI) continue to demand a type of austerity that disproportionately impacts lower income works and their families. This targeting of average people is unacceptable and counter productive, all the more so in a country with extreme inequalities of wealth. Ukraine's wages, pensions and other social payments are the lowest in Europe. Combined with a high unemployment rate, an effort to push austerity cuts in social benefits for the poor risks further destabilizing the country. Social insecurity was one of the major reasons pushing the Ukrainian people to Maidan.

Threats of western supported austerity were also heavily used by the Yanukovych regime, and now by Russian propaganda, to intimidate average Ukrainians against their European sympathies. Austerity cuts to pensions, wages, fuel or utility subsidies that disproportionately impact workers and the poor will fan the flames of conflict in Ukraine. Further, we believe that aid proposals from the IFIs that do not address wealth inequality as root cause of economic malaise and decline in Ukraine are doomed to failure. Wealth

inequality is not just the result of corruption and undemocratic governance; it is a core cause of these problems.

We call on the international trade union movement to support the efforts of the KVPU and its member organizations in the struggle for peace for our country, its independence, integrity and the inviolability of its borders. We call for trade union solidarity support for democratic values, decent work, and a decent level of life for Ukrainian workers. The current conflict as well threatens peace and progress across Europe.

We address the International Trade Union Confederation and global trade unions asking for clear statements of support for the Ukrainian trade unions in their assertion of fundamental rights and freedoms of working people. We ask the international trade union movement to strongly condemn armed incursions into the territory of Ukraine. We ask the international trade union movement to further strongly condemn austerity conditions that target poor and working Ukrainians, as a part of any foreign aid.

Mikhailo Volynets

Chairman of the KVPU[/threecolumns]

Numsa Views on the state of Class Struggles in South

Africa and the Crisis in Cosatu

"Numsa is calling ALL South African workers, Black and White and African, to join us in our United Front to demand the immediate and radical implementation of the Freedom Charter as the only basis for a truly democratic South Africa and in our fight against all neoliberal manifestations."

Numsa Headquarters, Johannesburg

"People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises."

Lenin in "Three Sources and Three Component parts of Marxism",
March 1913

"Nothing demonstrates better the increasing rigor of the colonial system: you begin by occupying the country, and then you take the land and exploit the former owners at starvation rates. Then with mechanization, this cheap labour is still too expensive. You finish up taking from the native their very right to work. All that is left for the Natives to do in their own land at a time of great prosperity is to die of starvation." (Jean Paul Sartre, 1964)

A. The world we live in today and our 20 years of "Democracy"

It is impossible to deny that the world has seen the most severe crisis of the global capitalist system. And, there is no end in sight, to this crisis.

[threecolumns]More than anything else, what makes the current systemic and structural global crisis of capitalism more

dangerous and frightening than in the past is the total intellectual, ideological, political and moral bankruptcy of the world capitalist leaders and their capitalist theorists: they have no answer to what increasingly appears to be the world's relentless progression towards mass poverty, worldwide unemployment, growing extreme global inequalities within and between nations of the world, vicious and extremely violent civil and international wars, global warming, environmental destruction – all pointing to the eventual destruction of our Earth and all life on it.

The neoliberal “Washington Consensus” has been completely discredited and confirmed dead especially by the 2007/8 global financial capitalist crises.

There is no alternative to discarding the theories and practices of capitalism, if we must save the Earth and its living systems. No amount of cosmetic reforms either in the centre of the global capitalist system nor anywhere in its periphery can hide the most obvious fact today: at a time when humanity has the most profound knowledge and technology, the world capitalist system of private greed risks all our lives and the very Earth we live on.

Mankind today is faced with one choice: abandon the capitalist system or perish by it.

We at Numsa have no illusion that only a total destruction of capitalism and all it represents can save the Earth and give birth to a new civilisation, a new reordering of common and democratic ownership, production and consumption patterns along a higher human life and Earth respecting human civilisation. Such a civilisation is Socialism.

A.1. The South African “Democratic Transition” and squandered opportunity

We at Numsa have taken the trouble of reading the South African economic and political history, ultimately focusing on

the imported capitalist revolution in the 20th Century and our “negotiated settlement”, and their impact on the South Africa we live in today.

We have come to the following conclusions, very well captured in our policy papers and resolutions of our December 2013 National Special Congress, also found in the SACP “Path to Power” document of 1989:

a. The South African capitalist state did not emerge as a result of an internal popular anti-feudal revolution. It was imposed from above and from without.

b. From its birth through to the present, South African capitalism has depended heavily on the imperialist centers.

c. Capital from Europe financed the opening of the mines. It was the colonial state that provided the resources to build the basic infrastructure – railways, roads, harbours, posts and telegraphs.

d. It was an imperial army of occupation that created the conditions for political unification. And it was within a colonial setting that the emerging South African capitalist class entrenched and extended the racially exclusive system to increase its opportunities for profit.

e. The racial division of labour, the battery of racist laws and political exclusiveness guaranteed this. From these origins a pattern of domination, which arose in the period of external colonialism, was carried over into the newly formed Union of South Africa. From its origins to the present, this form of domination has been maintained under changing conditions and by varying mechanisms.

f. *In all essential respects, however, the colonial status of the black majority has remained in place. Therefore we characterise our society as* “colonialism of a special type”.

The 1994 “democratic transition” was supposed to lay a foundation for destroying colonialism of a special type in South Africa, a form of colonialism characterised by the existence side by side, of the colonial subjects and the local agents of colonialism and imperialism in the same geo-economic and political space.

Today, 20 years after the “democratic transition” nothing best confirms the fact that *in all essential respects, however, the colonial status of the black majority has remained in place* than of the 26 million South Africans who live in abject poverty, 25 million are Africans.

Further, all economic policies since 1994 have been incapable of defeating *Colonialism of a Special Type* and the effects of Apartheid capitalism, which condemned the South African black working class to a life of misery and hardship.

The South African government own 2011 Census so well captures this ugly fact, the fact of the continuing colonial lives of millions of Black and African South Africans, post 1994.

Any shallow class analysis of the “negotiated settlement” in South Africa easily reveals the most obvious fact: the “negotiated settlement” was secured on the basis of abandoning the Freedom Charter and the land and property claims of the “natives”.

These devices of protecting white property rights in the “1996 negotiated constitution” effectively guaranteed white property rights and therefore, white economic dominance, and the logical and inevitable continuation of imperialist economic and political domination of South Africa.

A.2. The Freedom Charter and the Negotiated Settlement

At Numsa we are convinced that the abandonment of the property clauses of the Freedom Charter by the ANC and the SACP formed the basis for the “democratic transition”.

We now know that while Cosatu was busy putting together the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), ANC and SACP negotiators, together with representatives of South African white monopoly capitalism and their imperialist counterparts were busy stitching together a neoliberal post-Apartheid South Africa.

We are not surprised, therefore, that the RDP was quickly discarded in favour of GEAR, which has now formally become the National Development Plan (NDP).

It was inevitable that in 2012, in the ANC Mangaung Conference, GEAR mutated into the neoliberal National Development Plan, and, in the ANC, the matter of expropriating land and the commanding heights of the economy without compensation was formally buried. Effectively too, was buried any prospects of a worker friendly “National Democratic Revolution” and all hope of a seamless transition to a Socialist Republic of South Africa.

Today in South Africa, black and African poor people must wait for the profits to grow of white people and their sprinkling of a tiny filthy rich black and African middle class for any changes in their mass poverty and widespread unemployment.

It is this cruel reality, post 1994, and 20 years into our “democracy”, which caused Numsa to hold its historic 2013 Special National Congress, and to take the resolutions it did, prominent among which is the recognition that the ANC led Alliance no longer serves any revolutionary purpose in South Africa today.

A.3. The State of the South African black and African working class

At Numsa we are, following the class analysis above, not surprised that in all black and African communities there is a state of restlessness, there are widespread protests now increasingly turning violent, against the bitter and cruel

conditions of life in these communities.

We are not surprised that 20 years after the negotiated settlement, very little real wealth has been redistributed and as a result, education, housing, water services, sanitation, electricity, distance from quality social and economic productivities activities and so on continue to be disastrous problems for black and African people of this country.

We are not surprised that South Africa, post 1994, has become the most unequal and socially violent place on Earth today.

We are not surprised that the white population continues to dominate in the economy, society and culture, today.

It is against this background that we examine the President of South Africa's State of the Nation Address of 2014, and the ANC government 2014 Budget Speech. Further, we examine the election promises using this background.

We in Numsa understand the crisis in Cosatu as simply a reflection of the on-going class struggles in the wider South African society in general and inside the ANC led alliance in particular.

B. State of the Nation Address (SoNA)

There is nothing in the State of the Nation Address that even remotely indicates that the ANC and its government are embarked upon a "radical transition" for full social justice in South Africa.

Nor does anything in the SoNA remotely signal the fact that the ANC is worried that virtually ALL Black and African communities, 20 years into democracy, are at war inside themselves!

While the SoNA correctly recognizes the ongoing extreme burden of unemployment, mass poverty and extreme inequalities, the SoNA simply treats all these as products of the failure of the

South African economy to grow fast enough post 1994, and on the global crisis of capitalism.

The SoNA lamentably fails to locate the real roots and causes of the South African crisis of unemployment, poverty and extreme inequalities – the ongoing economic and social domination of South Africa by white capital and its black and imperialist surrogates.

The SoNA celebrates liberal democracy in South Africa without any shame at the exclusion of more than 25 million South Africans from this system that is black and African.

We see that the 2014 Budget Speech takes its cue from the SoNA, and also wastes time singing praises of the neoliberalism of the past 20 years.

C. ANC's Elections Manifestos: a look at the ANC's 2014 Vision

In 2004, the ANC launched its "Vision 2014". The 2004 Manifesto was framed within this vision. We have now reached 2014, and the ANC has produced another Manifesto and yet another vision, which is now called "Vision 2030". It is therefore propitious that we evaluate the ANC's performance in relation to its "Vision 2014" and in relation to its subsequent Manifestos.

In its 2004 Message from the President, the ANC called for ***"A People's Contract to Create Work and Fight Poverty"***.

The combination of some of the most important targets and objectives making up Vision 2014, together with our findings, are as follows:

- Reduce unemployment by half through new jobs, skills development, assistance to small businesses, opportunities for self-employment and sustainable community livelihoods.

Today, unemployment has in fact increase beyond the 2004 levels today, self-employment has dwindled, and, more dangerously, Black and African communities are reeling from violent crimes and daily violent protests!

- Reduce poverty by half through economic development, comprehensive social security, land reform and improved household and community assets.

Precisely because unemployment has in fact increased beyond the 2004 levels, we see today that more than 26 million South Africans are classified as extremely poor!

- Provide the skills required by the economy, build capacity and provide resources across society to encourage self-employment with an education system that is geared for productive work, good citizenship and a caring society.

Marikana sums it all: the bulk of the population remains poorly educated, unskilled, living in abject poverty and in a very uncaring society. Today we are being conditioned to accept that every community protest will lead to deaths of some protestors!

- Ensure that all South Africans, including especially the poor and those at risk – children, youth, women, the aged, and people with disabilities – are fully able to exercise their constitutional rights and enjoy the full dignity of freedom.

Violent crime and crimes against women and children are still intolerably high. An African child in South Africa today is many times more likely to be borne in a poor household than before 2004.

- Compassionate government service to the people; national, provincial and local public representatives who are accessible; and citizens who know their rights

and insist on fair treatment and efficient service.

Again, the Marikana massacre speaks volumes about where we are. It is an open secret that the system of local government has collapsed, with very few of them having clean audits. So-called service delivery protests are the order of the day everywhere in the country. South Africa in fact leads in the number of violent community protests in the world today.

- Massively reduce cases of TB, diabetes, malnutrition and maternal deaths, and turn the tide against HIV and AIDS, and, working with the rest of Southern Africa, strive to eliminate malaria, and improve services to achieve a better national health profile and reduction of preventable causes of death, including violent crime and road accidents.

While there have been some improvements in these variables, the quality, levels and efficiencies in the health system, especially the public health system, are pathetic. TB cases have actually increased.

- Significantly reduce the number of serious and priority crimes as well as cases awaiting trial, with a society that actively challenges crime and corruption, and with programmes that also address the social roots of criminality.

Unemployment is globally recognized as a “significant contributor” to all crimes, including violent ones.

The fact that unemployment has in fact increased since 2004 is experienced by black and African communities through the high incidence of violent crimes, today with an increasing incidence of extreme forms of violence even among teenagers.

The failure to implement the property clauses of the Freedom Charter is the most profound root cause of violent crime in South Africa, in our opinion.

- Position South Africa strategically as an effective force in global relations, with vibrant and balanced trade and other relations with countries of the South and the North, and in an Africa that is growing, prospering and benefiting all Africans, especially the poor.

The xenophobia that has engulfed post 1994 South Africa is the best test of just how badly positioned South Africa is globally, especially in the South. None of the rhetoric on balanced trade and other relations have materialized precisely because the ANC government has no real economic levers, because it has not implemented the property clauses of the Freedom Charter.

D. The ANC 2014 Budget speech

Numsa has carried out the only comprehensive and detailed class analysis of the National Development Plan (NDP). Our conclusions are that the NDP is simply GEAR dressed up as a populist document.

Not only does the NDP fail to tackle the economic and social structural and systemic foundations of South African colonial economy and society, it quite pathetically promises wholly unrealistic and totally unachievable goals, just like its father – GEAR.

Numsa has consistently argued that South African National Treasury Department has been post 1994, the home and custodian of neoliberalism in the South African government.

Pravin Gordan's 2014 Budget Speech announces that it locates the 2014 medium term budget in the NDP.

Like the SoNA, the 2014 Budget is littered with some self-praise, and the false promise of jobs, more housing, more water, more social security, better health and so on, all of them to be done within the NDP framework.

It is impossible to ignore Lenin's words in 1913:

"People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises."

The sweet coated promises contained in this Budget, including the pathetic increases on the social grants do not succeed to hide the fact that this is a budget designed to please South African white capital and its local agents and imperialism and their rating agents.

There is nothing in this budget which signals a "radical transition". This is why the bosses and their political formations have received it very well.

A most blatant betrayal of the Black and African working class is the bribery to white and black capital the budget gives in the form of the Youth Employment Incentive Tax. This has been done without exhausting the NEDLAC process and actually by contemptuously bypassing NEDLAC.

Rather than abolition the colonial and apartheid wage as demanded in the Freedom Charter, the budget instead bribes capital with free money, to divide the working class!

This budget, more than anything else, confirm the rightwing shift in the ANC/SACP government.

E. The crisis in Cosatu

We understand Cosatu's launching principles and values as being the following:

a. Cosatu is a worker controlled and democratic trade union federation.

b. Cosatu is a Revolutionary Socialist Federation.

- c. Cosatu is an anti-imperialist federation; it fights against foreign capitalist domination.*
- d. Cosatu rejects all forms of cultural, male chauvinist and racist prejudices.*
- e. Cosatu is a militant federation.*
- f. It is a transformative federation.*
- g. Cosatu is a champion of working class democracy.*
- h. Cosatu believes in working class power, and advocates worker control not only of the progressive trade union movement, but of society as well.*
- i. Cosatu believes in the revolutionary power and unity of the working class, which is why it champions the formation of one union in one industry and one federation in one country.*

In our opinion, it is these values and their articulation, which is at issue in Cosatu today.

On one hand, there are those among Cosatu leaders who see a Cosatu guided by the values above as a threat to their potential careers in the ANC or its government. These leaders have long abandoned Socialism and are only paying lip service to the struggle for Socialism.

On the other hand, there are those leaders such as in Numsa and the affiliates Numsa is working with, who are determined to defend and advance the ideals for which Cosatu was founded, including defending a Socialist Cosatu.

Given the abandonment of a radical NDR by the ANC and the cooptation of the SACP into the ANC and its government, it is inevitable that Cosatu must be plunged into a crisis by the fight to the death between these two class positions in Cosatu – one for a Cosatu that simply transmits the wishes of the

right wing ANC nationalists among the working class and the other which wants to fight for a Cosatu with its original values.

Numsa has thus become the “enemy within” among the Cosatu leadership clique that is imbedded in the ANC and SACP. It so happens that this clique is numerically strong in the CEC of Cosatu.

This pro rightwing ANC and SACP clique in Cosatu wants to engineer the expulsion of Numsa from Cosatu. It has already engineered first the paralysis, and later the suspension of the General Secretary of Cosatu – Zwelinzima Vavi.

This right wing Clique ignores the Cosatu Constitution at will. It has refused to abide by the Cosatu Constitution that demands that when a third of Cosatu affiliates demand the convening of Cosatu Special Congress, the President of Cosatu must convene such a Congress or be replaced by a convener.

This rightwing clique, knowing very well that its positions have no mandates from its own members, is very scared of a Special National Congress because it knows the Special National Congress, besides exposing this right wing, may also trigger leadership removals in their unions.

Numsa’s positions are very clear and quite simple:

1. Zwelinzima Vavi’s unconstitutional public humiliation, harassment and suspension must be lifted immediately.
2. All mischievous and unconstitutional efforts to frustrate and expel Numsa from Cosatu must stop forthwith.
3. A Cosatu Special Congress as requested by the appropriate number of unions must be convened immediately, to resolve all the causes of the crisis in Cosatu.
4. Numsa will do everything possible to achieve these objectives, including using the courts to stop the violations

of Cosatu Constitution.

5. Numsa is calling upon all members of Cosatu affiliates to defend their federation from being swallowed into the ANC/SACP right wing camp.

In the meantime, Numsa continues to run with its section 77 campaigns.

F. Progress on the United Front and the Movement for Socialism

In order to understand Numsa, especially in order to understand our resolutions on the United Front and Movement for Socialism, one has to understand what Numsa is first.

Numsa is a revolutionary formation, a red trade union, playing a leading role in the struggle to defeat capitalism and the exploitation that is associated with it. In that role we are unashamedly Marxist-Leninist, rooting ourselves in the traditions of Marx and Lenin. So we defy the boundaries between nations that are set up to divide workers as we proclaim ourselves as proletarian internationalists. That tradition also gives us democratic centralism, that combination of robust, vigorous and democratic debate with the discipline of marching together when we have made a decision. That combination makes us what we are proud to be – a red union.

The leadership of the national liberation movement as a whole has failed to lead a consistent radical democratic process to resolve the national, gender, and class questions post 1994. ***This leadership is predominantly drawn from the Black and African capitalist class; it kowtows to the dictates of white monopoly capitalist and imperialist interests. It is nothing more than parasitic and crony capitalists.***

It is half-hearted and extremely inconsistent in the pursuit of a radical democratic programme and has completely abandoned

the Freedom Charter.

It is these circumstances, combined with the worsening situation of the South African working class as a whole post 1994, which has lead Numsa to rethink and revisit its relationship with the ANC and its Alliance.

Work is well underway to mobilise the working class in all their formations, into a United Front for the radical implementation of the Freedom Charter and against neoliberalism.

During our January Numsa Marxist-Leninist Political School we met with the leaders of some of the social movements and community structures, to begin the process of mapping out how we will work together.

In order to reach out far and wide, Numsa shall convene Provincial and National consultative meetings to share the content of our resolutions on the United Front and Movement for Socialism.

We are happy to note that many social movement organisations and community organisations are joining us in our Section 77 campaigns starting with a national strike on 19th March 2014.

During the course of this year, work will be done to assess the state of the world socialist movement and its formations, to inform our work towards the Movement for Socialism. The Numsa Marxist Leninist School in the first week of April 2014 shall receive representatives of Workers and Communist Parties from countries such as Brazil, Greece and Venezuela to share experiences and to lay the basis for our international research.

G. Engineering and Eskom negotiations in 2014 – The Numsa National Bargaining Conference (NBC)

As always, Numsa has begun our Ear to the Ground Campaign in

workplace general meetings to listen to the aspirations of Numsa members with respect to collective bargaining demands in the Engineering industry and Eskom.

In collecting these demands our key and strategic objective is to improve the benefits and conditions of employment. The demands from the 9 Numsa Regions shall be consolidated and tabled for discussion in our Numsa National Bargaining Conference scheduled for 10-12 March 2014 in Saint Georges Hotel, Centurion.

Without pre-empting anything, we must be upfront that we are preparing for the mother of all battles as we shall champion the struggle for a living wage for workers in the Engineering Industry and Eskom in particular.

The union will use this round of negotiations not only for wages but also take up a very important campaign of defending existing jobs and to fight for more jobs. In extending our work beyond the factories, Numsa shall on the 19th of March 2014 embark on a national strike to demand the scrapping of the employment tax incentive act or the so called youth wage subsidy. We shall do so in defense of existing jobs as we have reason to believe that the current spate of retrenchments notices across various sectors are directly linked to this stupid incentive scheme.

We refuse that the working class of SA must be forced to pay for the global crisis of capitalism.

That is why we calling on the mining bosses and government to quickly resolved the current strike in the platinum belt. It has become abundantly clear there is a joint pack between government and mining capital to destroy union activity outside of the NUM.

With respect to Eskom, Numsa shall not rest until workers at Eskom receive a fair increase. We view the arbitration award

that imposed 5, 6 % as an insult that constitute a wage freeze.

We do need equity of pay. Currently white workers sit at the top of their pay grades while many black workers still languish at the bottom of their grades.

We can no longer tolerate Eskom and Government hiding behind the skirt of Nersa to justify paying lip service to a negotiation process where the power (the only power) of workers to withhold their labour is removed.

We calling on all workers at Eskom to unite behind their legitimate right to demand a living wage if in these round of negotiations Eskom management doesn't move swiftly to make a real offer that will settle workers' demands and hide behind essential service but pay workers peanuts, they would have to take fully responsibility for a load shedding that would come as a result of workers insisting that their demands must be met.

Eskom now has a shareholder compact with government, but it does not call for fair wages rather it focuses on profit targets. Profit targeting mean Eskom is under pressure to moderate wages.

Our members are victims of high standards of living as a result of administered prices that continue to rise and affecting negatively their basket of food and all aspects of their lives.

They continue to receive low wages as there is no National Minimum Wage that can guarantee them a living wage.

Workers are taking loans from loan sharks in-order to make a living.

There is poor or virtually no assistance from the employers.

Unemployment which makes those who are working to support

those not working imposes a heavy burden on our members as a result of the triple crises poverty, unemployment and inequalities.

It is our members who are victims Privatization and Commodification of basic needs/services.

H. What is to be done?

As Lenin so well said, in 2013:

"People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises."

Twenty years into our "democracy", we the Black and African South African working class are sick and tired of listening to the same stories about us having to wait for the rich to grow their profits for us to see some minor improvements in our lives.

The working class can only be defeated because it is not united. United, no force on Earth can defeat us.

As immediate tasks, we state the following:

- Numsa is calling ALL South African workers, Black and White and African, to join us in our United Front to demand the immediate and radical implementation of the Freedom Charter as the only basis for a truly democratic South Africa and in our fight against all neoliberal manifestations.
- We are calling on all members of affiliates of Cosatu to demand that their national leaders explain where they stand today, on the ongoing crisis in Cosatu.
- We call on all members of affiliates of Cosatu to stand

up and defend their federation from the vultures who want to turn it into a toy telephone of the ANC and the SACP.

- We call on all mineworkers to stand together, united against the mine bosses and the government who are both fighting mining workers in their just struggle for a living wage.
- As Numsa, we fully support the just demands for a living wage for the mineworkers. We remain convinced, however, that with the increasing marriage between the ANC and its government and the mine bosses and shareholders, no just wage will be secured by mine workers.

We therefore call upon all workers to intensify the struggle to nationalize South African wealth, including the mines and land.

Our consistent Marxist-Leninist inspired class analysis of the world and South Africa today informs us that we have no option but to fight to the bitter end, for a Socialist world and Socialist South Africa.

Issued by: Numsa National Office Bearers

March the 2nd, 2014.

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On events in Bosnia-Herzegovina: a letter to a Trade Unionist

[threecolumns]Dear Comrade,

Let's think through what positive and appropriate proposals to put forward in discussion with Bosnian worker or socialist activists. We will be of some use if we just find ways to help a given social movement to draw from the experience of the international workers' movement (which we know something about) which is long-buried in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We don't need to invent anything, especially not substituting ourselves for the Bosnians; all we need do is generalise and bring together the demands they themselves are fighting for.

1. **The character of the movement:** (1) it is clearly *social*, workers and young people suffering chronic unemployment; (2) This movement is up against a political regime with the following characteristics: – *political paralysis* as a result of the Dayton Accords which installed a two-headed federation alongside another state (republica serbska), this means no common measures of any significance can be achieved; – *endemic corruption* whose source is the nationalist political parties; – *a liberal viewpoint*, from which the fourth, social-democrat, component of the coalition is also not exempt; (3) The whole has produced the worst possible remedy for a war-ravaged country: all-round *privatisation*. The slogans on the demonstrations and the political programmes of the collectives involved ("Udar" and "Revolt" in Tuzla) reflect this diagnosis.
2. **Our position** consists of: (1) *supporting* this profoundly correct movement; (2) *clarifying it from the class point of view* (to oppose provocations, running battles with the police, looting and arson), things which workers

instinctively agree with; (3) sifting out which of the demands raised are most appropriate to *unite, structure and develop* the movement.

3. The main demand comes from the movement itself:
 - ***Stop all new privatisations NOW, review all existing privatisations, no privatisation without workers' control!*** How? By a national commission of persons of integrity, including qualified economists (like e.g. Stoyanov, currently an economist at the university of Rijeka), independent of the government and the bosses, under the control of elected ***workers' councils (committees)*** in all workplaces and institutions, including students and especially in the big mining and industrial units, and structured at a Federation level; total ***transparency*** of this Commission's work via public media (TV and major dailies): People should know the whole truth about a quarter of a century of fiddles! This Commission should have the authority to set up its own *investigation and enforcement* branches, as there can be no confidence in the state fraud squad, corrupted by the crooks in the ruling political parties who appoint and supervise them. *Immediate payment of unpaid wages! Social security for all! Free access to schooling and hospital treatment for all! Cost-of-living indexing of wages and pensions, etc.*
4. A ***Federal emergency job-creation plan!*** Between those who have lost their jobs and those who have never had one, unemployment stands at 44%. This is a question of life and death for hundreds of thousands of men and women. Unless the government can very quickly come up with a plan to absorb mass unemployment, they should go! They should resign or be thrown out by the people. Working people always prefer peaceful and democratic solutions, but if that means keeping in power the class of capitalist rascals impotent in the face of unemployment, working people and young people will not stand idly by as society decays. If they can find the will, tenacity

and discipline to elect their own **central organ of committees or councils of struggle**, they can put forward a government of suitably qualified people of integrity. Without their own permanent, democratic and durable rank-and-file organisations, all the demonstrations, petitions and cries of anger will go up in smoke. If the country has to look abroad to borrow money, at least it should be used to create jobs. Life is more important than the laws of the market!

5. *Commission to review privatisations and Emergency plan to deal with unemployment* are merely the first measures to put in place. There still remains the institutional Gordian knot of the Dayton Peace, which engendered a state paralysed from birth. Two or three states in one, half a dozen canton-states in each of them, states which straddle each other so that main roads have to leap-frog over each other on flyovers and suffering unparalleled legislative anarchy and negligence – the situation is untenable. Social progress is what brings peace, not the nationalism which rampaged during the war. The only way forward for working people and young people in the Federation is stretch out a hand to their fellow-citizens, workers and young people of the so-called “republica serbska”: For an **independent, united and democratic Bosnia-Herzegovina!** No Bantustans! There is room in such a joint federation for all the peoples of the region, for all nationalities, all religions and all alphabets, but not for war criminals or state mafias. A joint confederation of three peoples ready to turn the page and secure their children’s future is possible. Two or three states in one, pulled this way and that by great power influence, is not. Bosnia-Herzegovina is condemned to political paralysis, economic stagnation and social decay. Working people and young people in “republica Serbska” have a choice: live together in a common state, with the federation guaranteeing national rights, or eke out a miserable existence as hostages of

a state which was criminal when Mladic and Karadzic ran it and has turned into a mafia state under Dodik. Working people and young people in Tuzla, Sarajevo, Bihac and Mostar have shown that they do not want to sacrifice their futures on the altar of nationalist party rule; it is up to their fellows in Banja Luka to respond by joining their struggle for an independent, united and democratic Bosnia-Herzegovina and refusing to be held hostage to rule by a mafia that can neither acknowledge the crimes of Srebrenica nor catch the guilty.

I think that is essentially the size of it. Privatisations and unemployment — immediate key issues. Medium-term perspective: a re-united country, break with the paralysing Dayton arrangements. Means to do it: Committees of struggle (of action) of working people, unemployed and young people — essentially all the stuff nobody else mentions. Long-term perspective: links with the working and young people in Serbia and Croatia, who have had to put up with the same liberal treatment (privatisation, unemployment) and the same nationalist straitjacket. In brief: suggest ways to strengthen and broaden the movement.

All the best

Radoslav Pavlovic, 10 Feb 2014[/threecolumns]

On tactics in the French municipal elections

[threecolumns]How fragile the Left Front (Front de Gauche) still is has been shown by the municipal elections and the tactical disagreements between the two main participating

organisations. We know that the Communist Party (PCF) has advocated – and arranged – local electoral alliances with the Socialist Party (PS) wherever some basis for an agreement made that possible. So they are going for an electoral bloc with the SP, not general and national, but arranged case-by-case as local opportunities permit. The Left Party (Parti de Gauche) on the other hand rejected even a local alliance with the PS from the outset on the basis that it was incompatible with the very justified criticisms the Left Front as a whole has made of the policies of the PS government.

This disagreement has baffled many workers, who expected the Left Front to present clear, united slogans. They feel handicapped by this – to say the least – difference of approach between the main forces in this coalition, which is why it is absolutely vital to examine this disagreement with a view to clarifying what it means and finding a way forward for working people.

What is the Left Front?

We Marxists, we have to say, are not at all surprised by the ongoing disagreements at the heart of the Left Front. Yes, we believe that this front is the first fruits of a genuine attempt to re-build the revolutionary party of the working class, and we are totally part of, but we are still at the very beginning of this process. So, unlike comrades who see this as already the finished form of working class political representation, we think that the Left Front is only a first, promising sketch which has still got a long way to go to fulfil its real mission. It is not united; its class character is still ill-defined; in its composition, Marxists rub shoulders with non-Marxists, consistent revolutionaries with non-revolutionaries, and so forth.

We still have a long way to go to achieve the revolutionary Marxist workers' party the working class and all working

people need. The way may be longer or shorter, more or less painful and difficult and strewn with disagreements and crises, and the progress needed will consist in overcoming these in a positive way. We cannot anticipate everything that will happen along the way, but we can be quite certain that it will be punctuated with disagreements and crises, and what we are currently experiencing is the first manifestation of this.

In general, two exaggerated views of the character of the Left Front can quite often be found among activists clearly situated to the left of the PS – trade unionists, communists and ex-communists and various tendencies which claim adherence to this or that brand of Trotskyism, not to mention all kinds of anarchists. This is hardly surprising, given the present prohibition that has been placed upon Marxist thinking, which has been widely repudiated and suffered recurrent distortion and falsification. The first is to categorically reject the Left Front on the basis of an abstract formalism and professorial pedantry, which sees this re-groupment only as a non-Marxist formation and conglomerate of former social democrat or Stalinist survivors, a formation discredited by the compromised pasts of its various components from a really bygone age. This sectarianism is insensitive and indifferent to the specific forms taken by the powerful dynamics of working class resistance, under the constant attacks from capital at bay that plague it. This view is typical of the tradition of certain organisations claiming adherence to Trotskyism, such as the Lambertist POI (Parti ouvrier internationaliste), “Lutte Ouvrière” and a large part of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste, NPA) and milieus they influence.

The other, opposite, exaggeration assumes that this Left Front – or one of its components – already is the ready-made, finished version of this party the working class so badly needs, which will start to function better as its it grows (occasionally at the expense of the other protagonists). Sadly

it seems to me the overwhelming majority of the participating organisations' leaders share this position with many of their members. One of the drawbacks of such of view is that it cannot grasp the way differences and misunderstandings blow up, however much they are to be expected in a movement that is actually still being build. It sees such things as aberrations disturbing and threatening the smooth functioning of the whole. Consequently, such disagreements provoke a rigid, paralysing blockage which freezes the contradictions and prevents a positive outcome.

Under these conditions, the division over the two different electoral tactics which has hit the Left Front reinforce and accentuate the organisation's overall weaknesses, one of which (there are others) is the evident inconsistency with which the two organisations each pursue their own tactical choices, as we shall see shortly. This, too, reveals that neither the Left Front nor any of its components is yet ready to be considered this new revolutionary party of the proletariat. We all hope it will succeed in making the necessary adjustments. A decisive step towards that goal consists precisely in passing the present test, positively clarifying the difference and overcoming it as a step forward in achieving greater revolutionary cohesion. And this is the solution to which we hope our thoughts and comments will contribute. The first of these is to define the significance of municipal elections in the current struggle and the role they could play.

Contradictions in an unprecedented situation

The unremitting attacks on the part of exhausted, moribund capital; the fragility of the internal contradictions racking the bourgeoisie's classical political resources, including above all the presence of the Socialist Party at the helm and managing the bourgeoisie's bankruptcy; the crushing weight of successive defeats and setbacks the workers' movement has suffered: all this confers on the current stage an exceptional specific character. This exceptional character leaves its

stamp on events and movements, including the municipal elections. It is further accentuated by a growing tendency among working people to defend themselves vigorously while at the same time having difficulty picking their way forward through the lumber of bankrupt ideologies and organisations under the mantle of the workers' movement, surrounded as they are by deadly traps. But it is this, even subterranean, resistance which feeds and renews and reinforces their attempts to rebuild their fighting potential, above all their party. These are the specific features which determine the current situation and prevent us from considering the coming elections according to schemas and clichés we got used to over past decades.

That is why all views and conceptions that see these elections in the traditional way as a sort of joust between two parties in a tournament miss the essential point. They lose sight of the probable character of these elections as a moment expressing a certain shift or re-alignment of class forces that re-draws the political map of the country.

Even the bourgeois parties and Hollande's Socialist Party are afraid of such a possibility and do not know which Saints to pray to for intercession or how save themselves from the National Front (Front National, FN). They do not fear the Left Front because it is split – and that in itself is a serious warning sign. Unlike everyone else, we Marxists do not see these elections, in this situation, as the usual competition, but as a potential opportunity for the Left Front to make a big, extra, step forward towards becoming this new party of the working class. And in this the choice of tactics can play a bigger role than in a calmer, less tense, "normal" times.

On the respective content of the two tactics

The Communist Party tactic, which sets its sights on an alliance with the socialists anywhere and everywhere they can, is undoubtedly closer both to the situation and its

requirements. It finds backing along a whole wave of critical sources of resentment among socialist activists against government policies which feed various oppositions within this party. Moreover, it has already inspired a number of planned or actual local agreements which have actually had an impact on the government's arrangements. It could potentially be an effective way of driving a wedge between the government and a section of its party, opening the way to a broader oppositional realignment.

On the other hand, the main problem with the Left Party's position of rejecting any local alliances with socialist activists is that they see the Socialist Party as one united, homogenous bloc. Against all the evidence, they deny that there is any permanent friction and internal opposition in this party. So, instead of relying on that, they cement this explosively refractory whole together under the leadership of Hollande and co.

Whether or not the competing partners in the enterprise even realise it, differences over tactics also involve different conceptions of or approaches to how effective the Left Front actually is. The Left Front clearly derives its tactics from two profoundly mistaken assessments, both unacknowledged, but all the more deeply held for that.

On the one hand, it is assumed that the Left Front is more or less the fully-fledged and recognised new party of working people, ready to take power and needing only to grow numerically. Too bad if others continue to support other parties or vote for the Socialist Party, even without illusions. Despite popular belief, there are still a lot of them, and even more who turn their back on the SP and do not necessarily go to the Left Front (or the Left Party), but at "best" simply abstain.

Not a million miles from this unrealistic view, on the other hand, the Left Party imagines it can achieve power by

increasing its vote. But it is very hard to see that happening, even for a political formation which does not challenge the capitalist system itself and the measures it is taking to survive. But the orientation and basic line of march of the Left Front go clearly beyond this system. So the majority of its demands are incompatible with keeping the system going and even more with the present desperate attempts to maintain it. This relationship entails a major and permanent confrontation which means there has to be a serious investigation and study of the conditions for this conflict and how to wage it.

What do the lessons of history tell us?

To get a clearer assessment, not just of how inadequate it is to plan a direct raid on power, but also of the many dangers that entails, we need to turn to the past of the Marxist workers' movement, which provides abundant theoretical and practical experiences on this topic. (That is, assuming you really want to replace the power of the bourgeoisie rather than simply amend it.) Here we can only indicate some essential references, without developing the whole topic fully.

The Second Congress of Lenin's Third International opened fire on sectarianism, that "infantile disorder of communism" and twin brother of opportunism. Then in 1923 the Third Congress broadened this struggle into a vigorous campaign against ultra-leftism, working out communist tactics for winning the majority of working people. In its "Theses on Tactics" it talked of the conviction that "(t)he theory of promoting Communism by propaganda and agitation alone ... has been proved utterly incorrect". It goes on to insist that: "Even the smallest Parties should not limit themselves to propaganda and agitation. The Communists must act as the vanguard in every mass organisation. By putting forward a militant programme urging the proletariat to fight for its basic needs, they can show the backward and vacillating masses the path to

revolution and demonstrate how all parties other than the Communists are against the working class. Only by leading the *concrete struggles* of the proletariat and by taking them forward will the Communists really be able to win the broad proletarian masses ...”

(www.marxist.org/history/international/comintern/3rd-congress/tactics.htm)

Already the Third International explained the need to establish a whole “system of” partial “demands” in order to engage in this struggle, which was later developed by Trotsky in the famous Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. These Theses very clearly outlined the character of these “partial demands” which “... in their totality, challenge the power of the bourgeoisie, organise the proletariat and mark out the different stages of the struggle for its dictatorship. Even before the broad masses consciously understand the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat, they can respond to each of the individual demands.”

The majority of the Third International followed Lenin, who in many speeches and articles severely criticised the so-called “theory of the offensive” which several young communist parties had adopted. Lenin emphasised the central importance of preparing the seizure of power. In his speech to the Congress he criticised the Italian, Terracini, who “defended the theory of an offensive, pointing out ‘dynamic tendencies’ and the ‘transition from passivity to activity’,” which, said Lenin, “are all phrases the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries had used against us”. Later he added: “If it is said that we were victorious in Russia in spite of not having a big party, that only proves that those who say it have not understood the Russian revolution and that they have absolutely no understanding of how to prepare for a revolution.”

Speaking of the need to win the masses, Lenin explained: “The concept of “masses” undergoes a change so that it implies the majority, and not simply a majority of the workers alone, but

the majority of all the exploited. Any other kind of interpretation is impermissible for a revolutionary ... what is essential ... is not only the majority of the working class ... but also the majority of the working and exploited rural population".

(<http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/jun/12.htm#s3>).

Then the Fourth Congress's "Theses on the United Front" in 1921 rounded out this tactic, which had actually been prevalent from the very beginning of the Third International. They stated that "The Communist Parties of the world ... are now trying at every opportunity to achieve the broadest and fullest possible unity of these masses in practical activity." They emphasised that the reformists "... will not fail to sell out ... the ... Communists and the revolutionary elements of the ... working class must still approach the reformists before the start of every mass strike, revolutionary demonstration or any other spontaneous mass action, asking them to support the workers' initiative, and must systematically expose the reformists when they refuse to support the revolutionary struggle of the workers. This will prove the easiest way to win the masses of workers who are outside the Party." (<http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/united-front.htm>)

Contrary to popular belief, this proletarian united front policy is a general and permanent tactic, not just a policy applied from time to time in the face of dangers like, say, the threat of fascism. (Albeit that today in France such a threat, represented by the clear advances the Front National is making, is perfectly real). It is an integral part of the arsenal of any workers' party worthy of the name at every point in its struggle to win over a majority of proletarians.

I already mentioned that in the 1930s Trotsky developed this tactic, among other things by elaborating these "partial demands" in the *Transitional Programme*. At the same time he

advanced the united front tactic, particularly in the trade unions and in the socialist parties of the time.

But it is important to emphasise also the less well-known fact that about the same time the Italian Communist leader Antonio Gramsci, imprisoned in a fascist goal, largely contributed to developing this same tactical orientation. Of course the fact that he was in prison, which cut him off from all political activity, explains the more "philosophical" character of his studies and arguments, less linked to immediate practise and less concretised than Trotsky's. But what they thereby lose in political freshness, they gain in depth of generalisation. Be that as it may, Trotsky's and Gramsci's analyses support and complement each other in bringing out and explaining the tactics of the proletarian party.

In his *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci also took as his starting point the rich heritage of Lenin's International. Even before he was imprisoned, these same considerations led him to oppose the adventurist policy of the so-called "Third Period" of the Stalinist Third International through the famous "Lyons Theses" (1926) of the Italian Communist Party, based on these principles and clearly orientated towards the conquest of the masses against the adventurist ultra-left offensive of the Stalinist Comintern. In the years when he was writing the *Prison Notebooks*, he developed these views into a great theoretical whole dealing with the conquest of power. Without looking at the whole scope of this important theoretical elaboration, one can summarise its essence as follows.

Starting from Lenin's thoughts on the more difficult conditions for the seizure of power in highly-developed western countries compared with backward countries such as Russia had been, Gramsci came to the conclusion that in the west the bourgeois state, supported and reinforced by a whole range of institutions and movements, is infinitely more robust than in less-developed countries such as Tsarist Russia. Consequently, instead of a quick, direct and offensive "war of

movement" like the Russian Revolution, the western proletariat, in its struggle for power, needed to develop a whole tenacious and patient "war of position" to achieve a winning majority. As Gramsci wrote late in 1930: "It seems to me that Ilitch (Lenin) understood that a change was necessary from the war of manoeuvre applied victoriously in the East in 1917, to a war of position which was the only form possible in the West ... That is what the formula of the United Front seems to me to mean" (*Antonio Gramsci: Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. by Hoare and Nowell-Smith, London 2003, pp. 237-8).

(The impression this gives that the united front policy had not been applied in Russia is probably due to a lack of precision in Gramsci's formulation quoted, but does not correspond to his thought in general.)

This brief foray into the heritage of Lenin's Third International, as taken up and developed and re-fined by Trotsky and Gramsci when faced with the whole Stalinist degeneration, much discredits the ultra-leftism in which Stalinism frequently indulged. Even today a number of organisations tend to follow this bad tradition, popularised by Stalinist adventurism, rather than the traditions of Marxist theory and experience. Reading this, one could of course object that neither the Left Front as a whole nor its various separate organisations are Marxist parties inspired by Lenin's ideas, nor do they claim to be. And that is precisely why I started this article by talking about shortcomings and inadequacy when it comes to the development of the Left Front as the new, re-built workers' party.

Let's assess recent experiences

In fact the Left Front, too, has sufficient experience of its own in this field to draw some valuable conclusions. Its involvement, and the vote it got, in the 2012 general election provide us with some useful lessons.

The spectacular results the Left Front had previously achieved in the presidential election testified to a rapid and unexpected development. This is very likely the reason why Jean-Luc Melanchon decided to take on the Front National leader in Pas de Calais all on his own outside of any alliance, although that did look more like a personal challenge than a politically-considered attempt to win a valuable seat in the National Assembly. After all, the whole political atmosphere seemed to encourage a bold approach.

Sadly, the election results dashed these hopes, revealing that what had looked like confidence was only illusion. From a closer look at the voting figures, we can draw some conclusions which corroborate the theoretical and practical lessons of history.

The Socialist Party candidate, Philippe Kemel, won the seat with 50.11%, a mere 116 votes ahead of Marine Le Pen with 49.89%. So it was very close. Melanchon could only manage third place with 21.48%, less than half of Le Pen's vote, escaping by a whisker a real political fiasco.

Since 40% of the voters abstained, that outcome really is terrible, but it does help us to get a clearer grasp of why the Left Front was routed. The very high level of abstentions shows that, while a great number of working people have lost confidence in the traditional left parties, they are still far from won over by the new Left Front formation. In any case, in Pas de Calais the Socialist Party was able to keep the support of clearly more of them than the Left Front could win over.

Since then, the only change in the situation is that confidence in the Socialist Party is falling even faster, although that has still not nearly become the mass development the Left Front anticipated. The fact that this development is marking time has not escaped the attention of bourgeois journalists, to their unconcealed satisfaction. The problem is, this is not simply Schadenfreude arising from our

opponents' habitual class instincts.

For example, one of the organisations which has joined the Left Front is the "United Left" ("Gauche Unitaire", made up of former members of the LCR), who have also criticised the Left Party's "go-it-alone" tactics. The party spokesperson, Christian Picquet, openly deplored them in an article evocatively entitled "For a united Left Front that can rally everybody together". Here he roundly states that: "... over the last 18 months the Left Front has not managed to extend the influence that it has gained ... it is even obliged to register a certain stagnation, expressing the problems we obviously have in coming across as a credible claimant to office". This stark assessment entirely coincides with our own observations above, including the fact that this "stagnation" started with the election campaign in Pas de Calais.

Before going on, we should remember, in relation to just that critical assessment by comrade Picquet, the argument most commonly-used against the PCF's tactics and consequently against our own conception of the need for local alliances with socialists. This is that it "would break up the positive dynamic of struggle" engendered by the Left Front in the Presidential elections. But this "argument" is based on an illusion. On the one hand it is clear that the "dynamic" referred to, if it still exists at all, has faded considerably, as the general election showed and various mass actions have confirmed. On the other hand, it is precisely in order to lend new dynamism to the struggle that the Left Front needs to get out of the sort of ghetto into which, defying hopes and expectations, it has been shunted in the course of these elections. Undeniably, comrade Picquet's main concern is to make up for lost time by applying the correct tactics in the municipal elections.

He starts the article by saying: "I wish neither to abstain from the debate on what is at stake in the municipal elections nor to add fuel to a controversy in which *Le Monde* has seen ...

a Left Front on the brink of imploding. But rather to develop the idea that it is a complicated political problem related more to the considerable challenges involved in the period confronting us today than to any electoral calculations, which seem all the narrower for focusing on next March's municipal polls."

This is a prudent and quite timid way of declaring what is actually a criticism, even if comrade Picquet has carefully wrapped it up in a series of mental reservations as if oddly compelled to justify and excuse himself. But nobody gains from waffling about developing "the idea that it is a complicated political problem" instead of tackling the subject head-on. A criticism should be clear and precise if it is going to be useful and effective.

Fortunately, comrade Picquet soon sheds his customary oblique way of talking. He calls on the Left Front to go beyond being a mere radical opposition to urgently set out "to win over sections of the left" and, in an evocative sub-heading, to "Make a move towards the rest of the left". Here he rightly states: "... there is now a majority on the left that can be won for a change of course, we should aim for the broadest possible re-groupment". One can only applaud this aim of regrouping a broader left in the course of the municipal elections.

Laudable as this questioning of the tactic of standing in the elections alone is, however, it stops half way. For one thing because, like absolutely all the groups involved, it, too, is narrowly confined to the elections, and the opportunity to grasp a lever to broaden support is seen only in that context. And for another because, for the same reason, correct as it is, it remains at the mere level of a simple good intention, even if we do see that comrade Picquet, too, feels the need for something more concrete than just a proposal for some vague broadening out. That is why he adds: "... unity cannot be separated from the bold project for transformation ... which is

at the same time the condition for working class confidence that it can once again find its strength". Sadly, entirely valid as it is, this proposal is too hazy, general, unclear and laconic to be taken up.

Political wavering and inconsistent positions

It must be said: the two main parties in the Left Front do not only define their tactics differently, they also apply them in inconsistent and contradictory ways. Although it looks like an opening to healthy forces in the PS, the political line of the Communist Party is not obviously any more than the usual kind of electoral manoeuvre. Instead of being an opening through which working people's struggle can flourish, it is locked even tighter into the strait-jacket of electoral games.

In negotiating these deals, the Communist Party seems to have abandoned any more radical demands and content itself with getting together with SP activists who had already decided to shift the government over certain things. In all this horse trading the Communist Party muffled its drums and behaved as the supplicants. It is characteristic that they held these talks in private, sometimes even behind the backs of the Left Party. All that explains the enormous restraint and exceptionally moderate character – in relation to what the government is doing – of these programmatic agreements.

But what completely devalued and debased these negotiations is that when they were carried out, the working people concerned were totally excluded, not allowed to participate and not even told. But any political agreements, and the negotiations leading up to them, should be carried out in full view of working people and with their actual participation. The bureaucratic secrecy surrounding these talks reduced them to complicity between office-holders. It is a leaden heritage of Stalinism which the Communist Party obviously finds it hard to shake off.

Even if this is not the same, and not as bad, as the "Marchais-Mitterrand agreement" a few years ago, this way of turning to SP activists is a bureaucratic habit which compromises any opening to-wards these activists and makes a caricature of it. It is, then, hardly surprising that it offended their partners in the Left Party and strengthened comrade Melanchon's obstinate determination to per-sist in his line that we saw earlier. (Since then, PCF tactics have even lost their only real justification, i.e. their determination to ally themselves only with local socialists more or less opposed to the government. Specifically, in Lyons they entered a rotten alliance with one of Hollande's worst supporters, the PS mayor, Collomb. This was despite several of their own candidates, faced with this right-wing mayor, linking up with the local Left Party. So it turns out that rather than adopting a correct tactic to break the SP line-up behind Hollande's policies, the bureaucratic local government forces in the CP are actually renewing their unprincipled tactic of allying with the SP government.)

But it would be an unforgivable mistake to imagine that some sort of rigid last-ditch stand involving an ultra-left blockage is a viable alternative to this lashed-together alliance the PCF has opted for, or its capitulation.

We have already said that the Left Party sees the Socialist Party as one uniform bloc, lost for all time. Their contempt extends to all party members, who are identified with the government, and goes so far as to refuse to even describe them as "socialists", instead superciliously (and childishly) calling them "solférénians" (The SP headquarters are in the rue Solférino in Paris – Trs.)

But before even going into the obvious shortcomings of such a view, it is worth emphasising that a summary position of this sort presumes that the Left Party (or the Left Front) can double its influence and take power on its own, standing against all the activists who have stayed in other parties,

including the SP. What few experiences we have contradict any such belief, even though it is this belief that has seized the minds of the party leadership. Despite its programme, which opposes austerity on behalf of working people, and despite its members' will and obstinate determination to convince workers that their programme is right, the Left Front is, as comrade Picquet explained, marking time. Having reached a certain threshold in its development, it is not managing to get over the critical point to achieve the greater dimension that is needed.

Obviously this has to do with a serious shortcoming in the methods chosen and carried out by the Left Party, particularly their desire to convince everybody by propaganda that their policy, and it alone, is the correct one. They are obviously convinced that all you have to do is present the truth, for it to be not only accepted but, above all, put into practice by working people. The party is particularly convinced of the effectiveness of this propagandism because comrade Melançon's oratorical talents really did facilitate their spectacular early progress.

But even the greatest charm or powers of seduction are no substitute for a right method and correct political behaviour. It is time to recognise superstitions for what they are and settle accounts with this magic of the spoken word, which still seems to mesmerise certain activists and their leaders. As we all know, at the last CGT (trade union confederation) congress, Comrade Melançon got more applause than the secretary, Thierry Lapaon. Nevertheless, it is the latter's proposals that count among CGT activists, not comrade Melançon's (more correct) ones. And while, at a meeting of the Parisian members of the PCF, more than 40% of those present voted for a united Left Front campaign and only 57% voted for alliances with the SP, people who use that as an argument against the electoral tactics of an opening to the SP members forget the practical realities. Of course this is a

significant vote, as an indication, and it would be a mistake to under-estimate its scope. But an indication of sympathy, even a serious one, remains an indication, and cannot replace one policy with another. The PCF members who voted for an electoral alliance with Melanchon nevertheless unhesitatingly apply the opposite policy decided by their leadership. There was not even the shadow of a tendency crystallising inside the PCF, not to mention organised opposition. As for members leaving that party and joining the Left Party, not even comrade Melanchon dreams of that.

Of course the Left Party also feels how limited its forces are and it proved that by its attempts, contradicting its own policy of standing on its own, to find allies in the elections. It reached electoral agreements with ecologists in various towns. We have to call that flagrant political inconsistency, even before we say anything about its content or significance. On the one hand, what they did went against their tactic of standing on their own and their criticism of the PCF for doing just that, and, above all, on the other, while they criticised the CP for its alliance with one governing party, the Left Party made overtures to another party in the same government.

So the wheel turned full circle. You have to conclude that the Left Party not only stands on the same wheeler-dealing electoral terrain as all the other parties, but also hopes to win over a few ecologists this time using the accustomed method of sterile propagandism. But that method is even now showing itself to be ineffective. Eva Joly may have expressed sympathy with the Left Front and Noël Mamère may have broken with the official ecologists, but both of them preserve a prudent distance from the Left Front. And actually – given their unshakable illusions in capitalism's ability to fix itself, illusions on which the Left Party's political arguments and programme clearly have little impact – we should be relieved.

Break with electoralism without falling into the traps

In clarifying the problem we are dealing with, it is of the utmost importance to re-establish the original tradition of the revolutionary workers' movement and of Marxism in relation to elections (local or national), betrayed, denied and blunted though that tradition has been. This past nevertheless teaches us that participating in and using elections is strictly subordinated to *direct* methods and organisations of workers' and working peoples' class struggle. Otherwise, any involvement in elections tends inevitably towards parliamentarism, i.e. adherence to bourgeois democracy through adapting to its institutions (including local government) and its rules. In any case, the organisations involved in the Left Front have plenty of time between now and the elections to overcome positively the difference which have arisen based on electoral calculation. But that can only happen if there is the will to go beyond the parliamentary (or municipal) horizon by organising workers' struggles on the basis of a programme that is extra-parliamentary (or which goes beyond municipal politics properly speaking).

In what he writes, Comrade PICquet is quite right to seek a way forward along these lines, but it is going to take a lot more than his rather general guidance. Even his hasty attempt to sketch out three areas for doing this is botched because it leaves out some immediate and fundamental problems working people face. Apart from his call for a turn to the unions (which is left hanging in mid-air because its scope is limited to opposing the increase in VAT), his proposals for unity with various other left sectors and for "going beyond the way the Left Front is run by a cartel" so as to "blend itself together" are far removed from working peoples' vital concerns and the problems they face.

In this connection there is of course no denying the positive fact that the Left Front also feels the need to shake off narrow, sordid parliamentarism and turn systematically to the

working masses, calling on them to demonstrate for this of that real immediate aim or against things the bourgeoisie is doing. And so on 1 December last the two big parties in the Left Front got together to organise a national demonstration in Paris for a “fiscal revolution” and against the planned increase in VAT. Now. Choosing the tax system as a field of working people’s struggles and the object of a confrontation with the government is obviously a huge blunder. Instead of hitting the enemy full-on, it misses its target – at best.

Taxation as such is hardly a central or particularly important concern for workers. It is important for the bourgeoisie, however, because they have a constant drive to cut the taxes they have to pay. In recent times in particular they have made it one of their war-horses in the struggle to do away with social gains. In reducing the taxes they pay, they also hope to solve the crisis in a way favourable to themselves by weakening and then abolishing the financial resources embodied in the social gains working people have made. The tax system also provides a useful weapon for easing the concentration and centralisation of capital through the elimination of the weakest and above all the destruction of petit-bourgeois intermediate classes. That is why lightening the tax burden, concretely, reducing various kinds of taxes, is a central demand of the petit bourgeoisie which, along with bourgeois layers ruined by competition, sees it as a life-belt.

Of course the working class and its organisations can and should offer support to downtrodden and threatened small and middle farmers, craftsmen and shop-keepers in their struggle against the overwhelming tax burden. Similarly the working class wages an incessant struggle for an effective, progressive tax system as one of its transitional demands to defend real and relative wages and increase the burden on the bourgeoisie. But on the express and indispensable condition that these demands in relation to taxation are clearly subordinated to the objectives of the fundamental struggle

against capital and not replace them with a “better” tax system.

This is because, despite the deliberate lies and widespread myths, you cannot have a fair and equi-table distribution of wealth in an unjust and unequal society. The only system of wealth distribution capitalism can provide is one in its own capitalist image, with a tax system as a corresponding means to achieving it. The more the system is cornered, as it is now, the more invasive, aggressive and one-sided its tax system becomes. What this means concretely is that one of the current aspects of the advanced death-agony of capitalism is the colossal, irreparable debt level of all states (to say nothing of other debtors). The preponderantly hawkish character of an omnipresent, arbitrary and unfair tax regime flows directly from this fatal scourge of capital, which uses its state tax system like a wounded beast desperately defending itself and its kin tooth and claw. So it would be a real mistake to separate a tyrannical, unjust and arbitrary tax regime from its immediate source and present it as if it was a sector independent of the socio-economic system as a whole and its current ills, and, moreover, as if it was its main determining feature. Whereas even this capitalism’s own governments openly and cynically describe it as the price to pay for the monumental indebtedness of the state, and a means of paying it.

The general confusion in this field is what made possible the Force Ouvrière (FO) Union confederation’s unfortunate mental lapse on 2 November in Brittany, when it entered an unnatural alliance with the region’s bosses in the Quimper demonstration. (We should note in passing that this perversion on the part of the anarchists leading this union does not mark any significant break with their past, since the anarchist who used to lead FO in the Loire Atlantique department, the late Alexandre Hébert, had already flirted with the local bourgeoisie under the benevolent gaze of his trade-union ally,

Pierre Lambert.)

Comrade Mélanchon was a thousand times right to severely criticise this lapse on 2 November last, so it is all the more regrettable that he immediately fell into the same trap, although he did it as it were “independently”, without the disreputable allies. Worse, he jumped in and promptly lost his bearings. As if outbidding the others in some bizarre rivalry, he went much further than a simple protest to add his commitment (together with the Communist Party this time) to no less than a “fiscal revolution”. But no worker would feel that such an objective was any more than fanciful sermonising under capitalism. Under these conditions, all it does is tarnish the idea and practice of revolution, dragging this orientation down to the level of publicity for some detergent. Whereas the right thing to do would be to rise up not against the increasing tax burden, but against the immediate source of this apoplectic, cruel and violent expression of capital in its death agony – the gigantic and generalised debt.

But we know that the Left Front is deeply hostile to this scourge of indebtedness. It has already risen to demand it is repudiated, or rather, that an independent public enquiry is established to examine its legitimacy. We already know that it is illegal and that it should be purely and simply wiped out. But it has to be demonstrated to everybody’s satisfaction that this is the correct thing to do, and that is why such an enquiry is necessary. So instead of fantasising about an imaginary “fiscal revolution” and competing with the bourgeoisie in this field, the Left Front should simply take up and popularise this slogan. There is no doubt that it will find agreement among working people and support from activists. It will also, at a stroke, take care of the very real problems of municipal councils with no money and unable to do all the things they ought to do and which have been made even more difficult by their excessive debts.

(I am perfectly within my rights in making a little detour,

within the context of a discussion of tax-ation, to the discussion between François Chesnais and Thomas Piketty over the latter's latest book *Capital in the 20th Century*. Having correctly established that in this book Piketty "is going to deal [above all] with the distribution of wealth", Chesnais rightly criticises this conception of inequality [distribution of wealth] "which has very little to say about the ownership of the means of production it is based on".

Now this sort of brief comment is virtually all he says about this in the course of a polite and ami-cable discussion! And yet precisely the main question is this attempt to conceal the fact that the source and origin of all the evils of capitalism is production itself, and to replace it with a quasi-autonomous system of distribution that you could improve independently of production. I cannot deal with Pittkey's book as a whole here, but merely comment that this economist is one of the chief ideologues of the nowadays very fashionable current in favour of channelling the growing resentment against capitalism into this blind alley of distribution. Chesnais understands this completely. So it's all very well him saying, in his inimitable, well-bred intellectual style, that "the social conditions for this (capitalist) production determine the configurations of this distribution from the outset", but he does not develop this short passage into a fuller analysis, and even less does he extend that an-alysis to deal with the role this conception has in the plans and programmes of various currents and political parties made up of those who want to "reform" capitalism. It is a great shame, especially since twenty years ago Chesnais was one of the small number of Marxist economists, from where he has only recently sunk back to the level of petit-bourgeois anti-capitalists in Attac.)

The real meaning of unemployment – Who claims to have an effective programme to fight it?

Even though the forthcoming elections only affect local

government, it would be an obvious mistake to confine the stakes involved to just local problems, important as these may be. On the one hand the advanced stage reached in the bourgeois demolition of social gains in all fields (carried out and organised by the SP-Green government) and the rapidly and continually deteriorating situation working people are in, and on the other the requirements of building and strengthening the political party of the working class, insistently require a fighting programme which can unite working people in every locality beyond their local demands. Such a programme would necessarily have to combat the very source of the evils, i.e. the capitalist system itself, instead of losing itself in the blind alleys of some illusory "improvement". Such an overall orientation would also distinguish it from scattered occasional criticisms whose targets shift on a more or less monthly basis. Necessarily, only through such a project can you set yourself up to really oppose that manager of moribund capitalism that is the present government. That is also the only way to rally the workers for a real fight and for driving a wedge between the government and all those who really want to struggle for the interests of working people, which includes certain members and cadres of the PS.

Such a programme would not be hard or difficult to work out because it would not be some artificial invention. It flows directly from the situation and responds to the immediate concerns of all working people. Today, it concerns the massive unemployment which already affects a growing number of working people and threatens all the rest. It is mass unemployment, and its reasons and causes go far beyond those that produce, maintain and increase the "reserve army of labour", the traditional scourge of capitalism. There is more to it this time. As a mass, it is no longer just the inevitable product of the contradictory expansion of capital, but on the contrary it is the decisive sign and one of the direct consequences and ineluctable traumatic sequels of capitalism in its death

agony. It is no longer just a *reserve* army, from which capital can recruit workers as it expands. The majority of those currently unemployed are *excluded* from production for good, without any hope of getting back in. The fact that their number is growing is the most eloquent and convincing proof that even if here and there and from time to time it can happen, that famous economic growth has everywhere become notoriously inadequate.

The vulgar explanation for this phenomenon is simple. Everybody knows it and everybody talks about it at great length, without, however, really considering it or its causes and consequences at all seriously. Broadly speaking, it has to do with the way industry has been largely dismantled, a veritable industrial counter-revolution which has ravaged all the economically advanced countries in recent decades. With capitalist economy swooning from exhaustion – due to the historic blind alley reached by production based on and ruled by profit – the crisis has mutated from a passing purge into a permanent and universal fever, considerably weakening the moribund patient. Let me just explain very briefly here: This “exhaustion” and “historic blind alley” capitalist production faces signify the general fall in the rate of profit and the concomitant global orientation of world capitalism towards, on the one hand, transferring production to more “profitable” locations and, on the other, the extension of the hegemonic domination of finance.

The bankruptcies of a string of firms one after the other make this picture particularly sombre, painfully marked by the acceleration thereby revealed in the process of concentration and centralisation. I shall not go into the calamitous statistics on this which over the last thirty years have caused growing alarm even for those political managers who enthusiastically maintain the system. A brief comment will suffice to emphasise two important historical facts: On the one hand the sad reality of the unemployment which has always

plagued capitalism as an organic and natural part. Even during the famous “thirty glorious years” (1945-1975) – the age of reference for all the admirers (and dupes) of the system – the years of so-called “full employment” including in the “welfare states”, unemployment was never, anywhere able to fall below an official level of 2.5% per cent of the active population, whereas in the USSR and in the Eastern European countries they dominated, anti-working class and anti-democratic as the Stalinist regime was, unemployment – and capitalists – were unknown. These were palpable reflections of what survived of the October Revolution, despite the fact that many of its legacies were liquidated. These facts are shrouded in absolute silence and obscured by the loud, hateful denunciations of the revolution and the USSR on the part of the bourgeoisie – and renegades – and their servile submission to the bourgeoisie’s dubious traditions.

Since there is no hope of curing the epidemic of unemployment, the system is forced to nursemaid it somehow, and the whole set of political and trade union arrangements for dealing with it in all their manifestations are completely helpless. Their total impotence starts with their utter inability to explain the phenomenon, still less why it keeps getting worse. When they gravely explain that unemployment is caused by a lack of industries, this insight thoroughly deserves its place alongside all other statements of the bloody obvious. Next, they all put forward their own remedy, a whole massive spectrum from simple sticking plasters to universal panaceas. What unites them all is a rather dubious good-will, except for a very few currents and organisations which openly say they want to finish off capitalism. All the rest put forward elixirs for re-invigorating the moribund system and making its raddled face less repulsive. Which is why there is nothing you can do with all this made-up nonsense, and no point wasting time on it.

A central role among these charlatan quacks falls to president

Hollande, elected, among other things, for his pompous promise to put an end to this gangrene in the body of perishing capitalism. But a year later his own statistical services report that over the "... 12 previous months, 43 981 businesses have been liquidated (out of 62 431 bankruptcies) ... 2 per cent more than in 2009" and that "over the last year, the number of liquidations has gone up from 6 per cent to reach a record high". (Le Monde, 22 November 2013). All that despite the minister Montebourg, a tame and useful "left" puppet what with his teeth-grinding and the rest of his grotesque contortions as if to pantomime an interest on the part of the authorities in really finding a solution, while at the same time ridiculing it. And of course unemployment spreads inexorably alongside plant closures.

Its worrying growth threatens to bring the whole damn system into disrepute, and the bourgeoisie and its various agencies try to hide it behind various screens. Generally the most widespread form this latent unemployment takes is casual employment (*précarité* in French) in all its varieties. One of them is the short-term contract (in French *CDD* - "*contrat de travail de durée déterminée*"), something which has recently taken off in a big way. The same issue of *Le Monde* quoted above splashes the sinister news across its front page that: "3.7 million employment contracts for less than one month were signed in the first quarter of 2013: the number has doubled in ten years." And on an inside page the paper tells us that "...more short term contracts have been signed in France in 2013 than ever before", quoting a report from URSSAF (the central body of the agencies which collect the employee and employer social security contributions in France) that "... more than 86 per cent of the employment contracts currently being signed ... are short term contracts. An absolute record since 2000". To provide a striking image of this, the paper also quotes the informed views of a well-placed economist: "Out of 20 million contracts signed each year, two thirds are short term contracts of less than one month. It's spectacular." – more

accurately, it's nightmarish. This way, this capitalist society is ceaselessly and ever faster suppurating at least three large categories of unemployed: Officially-recognised unemployed, the non-recognised unemployed who are lost and damned, and a vast army of latent unemployed, a large proportion of whom are maintained in their precarious existence (while another, far from negligible proportion is shunted off into early and actuarially-reduced retirement, a state that is insecure and instable and precarious in its very essence, a veritable forcing-house of poverty.)

Above, where I mentioned the widespread agreement among all parties, groups, ideologies and currents in political and trade-union thinking, both left and right, about reducing, if not actually abolish-ing, unemployment even within the framework of capitalism, I drew no distinctions between them. But there is one sizable cleavage within this unity which separates them into two distinct and even opposed groups. A minority makes a serious effort to reduce unemployment and sincerely tries to fight for the right to work. Broadly, this embraces the Left Front and its sympathisers and the CGT unions and occasionally the FO unions. Most, on the other hand, (including the bourgeois parties, the CFDT unions and their ilk and, above all, the Hollande government) cynically and brutally plan, present and use their schemes for tackling unemployment as terrible weapons for degrading every aspect of working conditions. The jobs these people offer are nothing but shameless blackmail used to impose, by shock, an indecent increase in both the absolute and relative surplus value extracted by lengthening the working day and cutting wages by holding them down as the rate and intensity of work increases. And that goes nowhere near exhausting the list of measures and forms of refined servitude in return for the offer of a job involving cheap and almost certainly casual labour. So what Hollande and his supporters offer the actual and potential unemployed is the glowing prospect of entering the ranks of the latent unemployed, as long as they agree to being

exploited even more. You can reject out of hand all the Hollande government's efforts and attempts to buy the capitalists' goodwill, with a bankrupt and cash-strapped state handing them billions to employ more people (under much-reduced conditions, obviously). Just as obviously, the capitalists pocketed all these sumptuous gifts, but instead of acting out Hollande's fantasies, they obeyed the implacable laws of their system, and didn't employ any new workers!

Facts are obstinate things, as we all know. Unemployment has continued to rise despite all these plans and efforts, and the scandalous fact that the bourgeoisie has managed to blackmail workers (and all working people) into accepting seriously worse conditions, and to seriously weaken their powers of resistance – with the valuable help of the SP and the conciliator unions (CFDT) etc. But if some unions (CGT and perhaps FO) and parties (Left Front) and groups and other formations do carry on their customary fight against this disaster, they all realise more or less confusedly that their traditional methods of fighting are no longer adequate. The harsh social reality of capitalism with its back to the wall has made the old slogans and methods of fighting null and void and ineffective. You have to go with the evidence: If working people's organisations don't change their slogans and methods, they will all gradually start to look like Don Quixote, exhausted by vain battles. With the notable difference that their wooden swords won't be used on innocent, passive windmills but will shatter on the pitiless reality of capital determined to defend itself with every means at its disposal.

There are extremely worrying signs, such as the loss of trade union membership and the massive levels of abstention, not to say indifference, by working people in elections, which indicate a dumb but critical disapproval of and opposition towards these means of struggle that are past their sell-by date and overtaken by events. Although they cannot by themselves spontaneously and on their own find a way out of

the blind alley they are in, their attitude all the more clearly expresses for them the urgent necessity of changing methods and slogans which are no longer adequate for the struggle. All they need to do, these organisations which claim to represent their interest, is to respond to these preoccupations, foremost among them the Left Front, which should also express what they want in the preparations for the municipal elections.

The starting point for such a project is to state firmly that capitalism and its managers are obviously bankrupt when it comes to resolving the various difficulties in the economy, above all the unemployment blighting the lives of millions. There is abundant evidence that capitalism is not only unable to solve of it but inexhaustibly, tirelessly organises it. The programme of a Left Front that is really up to its mission of expressing what working people say and want should therefore concentrate on the permanent and consistent struggle against unemployment, that nationwide scourge which affects every municipality.

This starting point therefore culminates in a central demand in such a programme, based on the total bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie and its plans and efforts to save businesses within the economic, legal and administrative frameworks of this system. So it must aim to go beyond them. It is high time to stop vainly begging capital to behave responsibly. It has proved many times not just that it simply cannot, but that massive and growing chronic unemployment is necessary for it simply to keep going. So we need to to deprive capital of its ability to arrange the whole economy as its own exclusive property and place it under the watchful control of the workers themselves. Capital has amply demonstrated that its aim is to maintain and extend levels of unemployment. Hence the demand for *workers' control of production*, which grows out of this untenable situation.

It seems that workers at "Goodyear" at Amiens, exasperated by

the light-minded way their bour-geois owners condemned them to unemployment and poverty, are not only keen to re-connect with the great tradition of workers' control and even factory occupations, but have already taken the first steps along that path. The generalisation of their struggle and its conscious expression in a demand for workers' control should therefore be *at the centre* of a Left Front programme for the municipal elections, buttressed by a vigorous repeat of the demand for an independent public inquiry into state – and municipal! – debt. Taking up the demand, betrayed by Hollande and Co., for the right of foreigners to vote in the municipal elections would nicely round off this programme, while at the same time widening the trench between SP (etc.) activists and the government.

Left Front at the crossroads

Ever since the differences broke out over electoral tactics, the respective political lines of all the par-ties and groups in the Left Front have thrown into even harsher relief the mistakes, faults, shortcomings and inadequacies of each of them in turn. These weaknesses have grown more worrying as the situation has degenerated and the dispute, in contrast, has become more poisonous. Lacking the solid backbone which only a bold and adequate programme that responds to the serious problems working people face could provide, these differences have degenerated into a bar-room brawl. The lack of an *adequate* programme, that reflects the bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie and offers a real way out of the general blind alley that capitalism is in, is paralysing and blocking the development of the Left Front and each of its components. Worse, it condemns them to marking time and the threat of a general step backwards.

Even those whose raise the real problems, like the above-mentioned Christian Picquet, lack clarity and serious objectives and fall into the crudest opportunism. He decided to support the Paris SP in exchange for a few miserable paid

positions within its arrangements – but without the SP making the slightest changes to its programme. So Picquet sold his programme (if he ever had one) to secure a place in the future municipal bureaucracy of Paris. Moreover, the real and welcome opportunity of strengthening and widening the contradictions between the SP activists and the government was thus reduced the level of shameless horse-trading.

Now a political programme that arises directly from the untenable situation and matches up with working peoples' needs and requirements, like workers' control of production, which appears to be the only real and effective barrier to unemployment, inevitably requires broad co-operation among all the forces of working people. Only blind belief in the omnipotence of the word could lead one to imagine, as comrade Mélanchon seems to, that it is a waste of time to seek and establish alliances based on a programme with slogans that can be acted upon. But you don't need a programme if you are doing unprincipled deals and sharing out jobs in the municipal bureaucracy, like the CP and following them Picquet.

It is not just sterile propagandism that is on trial here, with its idealist delusion that it can win over the mass of working people with pure verbiage (words and discussion), but also the fact that even this propagandism is reduced to conveying a policy which consists essentially of a partial *critique* of dominant bourgeois policy instead of developing a political line *opposed* to it. It is high time to recognise that such an attitude, *negative* when all is said and done, is a brake on all progress and a source of fruitless dissensions. Only a constructive i.e. *positive* policy expressed in the kind of programme required by the situation would be able to draw workers along with it and at the same time overcome differences.

All the signs are that only a programme like that, supported by a broad mobilisation of working people, can provide the basis for the opening needed towards activists in other

parties (SP, Ecologists, etc.) with a view to exploding the contradiction between them and the government. It is the same path towards strengthen a great proletarian party in the way that is needed, a party whose painful birth-pangs are represented, as it goes and above all, in the convulsions racking the Left Front. The latter is still far from fit for the role, even if it does manage to survive the various stages leading to it.

It is important immediately to emphasise here how vitally essential the trade unions are as partners in such a political programme as formulated and concretised above and, by the same token, associated in a political mobilisation, including for the municipal elections. It is clear that if it, for example, did launch a political programme centred on the demand for workers' control, the Left Front would no longer be able to maintain a polite distance from the unions, nor keep up its accommodating be-haviour towards them as they are now. It would quickly be forced, and already is anyway, to define a consistent worked-out political line in relation to them, the first point of which should be to specify how to turn them from "social partners" of the bourgeoisie into fighting organisations of working people. A political programme in favour of these working people could tolerate the slightest equivocation on this point.

It must be obvious to anyone who looks objectively at society without self-satisfied blinkers that a political party that fights for workers and wants to change the disastrous situation in their favour – in this case the Left Front – could not, as it stands, conquer power in one dash, like a cavalry charge. So audacious an undertaking requires a tenacious and extremely careful preparation, especially under present-day conditions, which are shaped by a long retreat in the international workers' movement and weakened by a series of painful defeats and serious losses. Sadly, we are still in a period of defeats and a general retreat. This is the time to

sharpen our weapons and assemble our forces, in a word, to prepare patiently the inevitable general rise of the working class and all working people in the decisive struggle against capital. Despite the sceptics and those who mock such a “utopian” view, all the “realist” alternatives and shifts and all the artificial shortcuts for getting over problems are condemned to failure.

The Left Front has reached a cross-roads. But at this point it must be realised, on the one hand, that history does not wait for those who do not make it to the appointment on time, and, on the other, that politics abhors a vacuum. Either the Left Front will seize the opportunity offered by the municipal and European elections to raise itself to the level of its historical tasks, or it will inevitably go backwards. [/threecolumns]

Balazs Nagy

The Workers Charter

Workers' Charter

adopted by National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) 1987

Preamble

We, the working people of South Africa, the main producers of our country's wealth, declare:

That, as workers, we are daily robbed of a rightful share of the fruits of our labour.

That, as black workers, we are subjected to even more intense exploitation by a system of capitalism which uses national

domination to keep wages low and profits high.

That, as part of the black oppressed whose forebears were conquered by force of arms, we continue to suffer all the social, political, economic and cultural deprivations of a colonised people.

That, the most urgent task facing us as workers, as black workers and as part of the black oppressed, is to use our organised strength both at the point of production and among our communities, to put an end to the race tyranny and to help bring about a united, non-racial, non-sexist democratic South Africa based on one person one vote, as broadly defined in the Freedom Charter.

That, we see the winning of such a non-racial democracy as part of a continuous process of creating conditions for the building of a socialist society which will be in the interests of all our people; a society free of all exploitation of person by person which alone can complete the liberation objectives in all spheres of social life.

That, we are the most vital social constituent of the broad liberation movement in which we play a part both as individuals and through our trade unions and political organisations. We stand ready to work together with all other classes and groups genuinely committed to a non-racial democracy, at the same time safeguarding our class independence and our right to propagate and mobilise for a socialist future.

That, we extend a hand of friendship to our white class brothers and sisters whose long-term interests lie in the unity of all labour – black and white.

In order to ensure:

that victory in the national liberation struggle is not

hijacked by a new exploiting class, of whatever colour;

that the immediate interests of the working people are fully safeguarded in the post-apartheid state and;

that we are not prevented from asserting our democratic right to win the majority of the people for a socialist future;

we, the working people, adopt this charter (as an elaboration of the Freedom Charter) and pledge ourselves to strive together, using our organised strength, to guarantee its implementation.

Ownership and control of the economy

The commanding heights of the economy shall be placed under the ownership and overall control of the state acting on behalf of the people. Such control shall not be exercised in an over-centralised or commandist way and must ensure active participation in the planning and running of the enterprises by workers at the point of production and through their trade unions.

Economic policy shall aim to generate the resources needed to correct the economic imbalances imposed by race domination and bring about wealth redistribution for the benefit of the people as a whole. More particularly, steps shall be taken to do away with the white monopoly of ownership and managerial control.

Participation in the state sector by domestic or foreign private capital, where judged necessary, shall not give such capital a controlling share and all enterprises, whether state-owned or private, shall be compelled to safeguard the interests of the workers and the nation as a whole. The continued operation of market forces in the functioning of the economy shall not prevent state intervention in areas relating to the people's basic needs.

In the period after the defeat of the race tyranny, the fundamental perspective of working class political and trade union organisations shall be to work for the creation of economic and social conditions making possible a steady advance towards a democratic socialist society.

The right and duty to work and to a living wage

Every adult person has a right and duty to work and to receive remuneration according to his or her contribution. The new state shall, as a matter of priority, work to create economic conditions in which jobs are available to all. Until this is achieved the state shall ensure that social support is provided for the unemployed and members of their families.

All managerial and administrative posts and other jobs shall be open to every qualified citizen irrespective of race, colour, sex or religion. The equal right of access to jobs, managerial and administrative posts shall be subject to positive measures necessary to correct the imbalances inherited from the era of race discrimination. Public and private institutions shall have a duty to provide facilities for training and opportunities to apply the acquired skills.

The State, in consultation with the trade unions, shall adopt and enforce a national minimum wage.

Child labour and all forms of forced and semi-forced labour shall be prohibited. Special attention shall be paid to redressing the

oppressive situation of workers involved in farm-work, domestic service and those trapped in the so-called homelands.

The right to organisation and struggle

There shall be no restrictions on the rights of workers to

organise themselves into political parties or trade unions. Trade union organisation shall be based on the principles of “one industry – one union” and “one country – one federation”.

Trade unions and their federation shall be completely independent and answerable only to the decisions of their members or affiliates, democratically arrived at. No political party, state organ or enterprise, whether public, private or mixed, shall directly or indirectly interfere with such independence.

The state shall ensure that the trade unions, as the key mass social organisation of the organised working class, are given the opportunity to participate at all levels of economic planning and implementation.

All workers, in every sector of the economy, shall have the right, through their trade unions, to engage freely in collective bargaining and to use the strike weapon.

All legislation dealing with procedures for collective bargaining, including any limitations on the right to strike in exceptional cases, shall require the consent of a majority in the trade union movement.

In the case of all other labour legislation there shall be prior consultation with the trade union movement whose views on such proposed legislation should be timeously tabled in parliament.

The right to media access

Steps shall be taken to break the existing media monopoly by big business and the State and to ensure effective workers' access to all sections of the media.

The right to family life and social facilities

All legislation and labour practices which prevent or

interfere with the right of families to live together shall be outlawed. Migrant labour shall be phased out or, in cases where it is unavoidable, provision shall be made for family accommodation during any period of service exceeding three months.

The state shall aim to make adequate accommodation and children's schools available to all workers and their families, close to their places of work. All enterprises shall help to create local or regional recreational facilities for the work-force as well as creches and primary health care facilities.

No parent, male or female, shall be disadvantaged or disabled from any form of employment by virtue of his or her duty to help rear children and, where necessary, this should be ensured by the creation of special facilities including provision for paid maternity and paternity leave.

The right to health and safety

Conditions of work shall not threaten the health, safety and well-being of the work-force or of the community at large, or create serious ecological risks.

All workers shall have the right to paid annual leave and paid sick leave.

Those injured at work shall receive proper compensation for themselves and their families. Provision shall be made for the rehabilitation of all disabled workers including, where necessary, the provision of alternative employment.

The right to security in old age

All workers shall be entitled to an adequate pension or retirement, provided either by the state or the relevant enterprise.

The rights of women workers

The state shall aim to integrate all women workers as full and equal participants in the economy. Any form of discrimination against women workers in regard to job allocation, wages, working conditions, training, benefits, etc., shall be prohibited.

Positive steps shall be taken to help correct the discrimination suffered by women both in the work-place and the home.

Opportunities shall be created to enable women to acquire skills for employment outside the home.

It shall be the duty of the state, trade unions, workers, political parties and all other mass and social organisations to ensure effective

women's participation at leadership, management and other levels and to take measures, including educational campaigns, to combat all forms of male chauvinism both in the home and outside.

We declare that the above immediate and long-term objectives are in the best interests of all the working people and of society as a whole. As individuals and as part of the organised working class, we pledge to struggle, side by side, for their full implementation.