Numsa’s New Year Message

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Message to NUMSA members in welcoming 2018

Welcome 2018!

The National Office Bearers of NUMSA wish all NUMSA members a fighting and revolutionary 2018, to advance and defend the interests of the working class and to struggle for Socialism. Even with the miserable wages we receive from the bosses, we hope all our members had some well-deserved rest and some fun, during the festive season.

2018 is upon us. It is time to go to work to defend our livelihoods and to advance the struggle for Socialism. We can do this if we defend and grow NUMSA, return the United Front to what we intended it to be, defend and grow SAFTU and urgently put all our revolutionary energies in creating and growing the Workers Party. These are our revolutionary tasks in 2018.

2017 was indeed a difficult year for workers and challenging for NUMSA, whose task at all times is to defend hard won gains of workers and wage relentless struggle to improve workers benefits and conditions. The socio-economic conditions of the working class have constantly worsened under the current political leadership of all political parties in South Africa.

This is a fact. StatsSA has the figures supporting this fact about the state of the working class and the poor conditions under which we toil. It is another institution under attack, with the recent unceremonious departure of its CEO, as it has the proof of the dismal performance of our government as a

result of poor policy choices by the ANC for the past 24 years. StatsSA puts unemployment figures at 27,7 percent but it does not count those unemployed workers that are considered discouraged because they have lost hope of finding a job. If we add include these discouraged workers, unemployment is over 36 per cent and a s a result over 30 million South Africans live in abject poverty with no food on their table.

Those in employment are often underpaid and unprotected. Some in South Africa are determined to peg the national minimum wage at R3 500, which is well below a living wage. If your employer does not believe that a worker deserves a living wage, then this is in fact a racist stance. Black economic empowerment begins with a living wage.

We know that it is tough for workers all over the world. Since the 2008 global economic meltdown; capitalism has been in crisis. The old international capitalist order of the industrialised world is being challenged by a new capitalist disorder with the rise of emerging nations. This, together with rising inequality and deindustrialisation in the developing world, is creating a new dialectic of capitalist privilege. We are part of a globalised world and our sectors and ultimately our jobs are affected by global capitalist sourcing and production which is constantly seeking higher profits, especially with regard to multinationals. We cannot just look at the situation in the country in isolation of the global dynamics of the sector and in the supply chain. We must keep up to date with and be vigilant of changes, so that we are not caught off guard and fight to protect workers, we must be both a shield and a spear.

In our country changes in capital accumulation strategies globally is destroying jobs. We are suffering the consequences for these changes in plant closures and disinvestments of companies such as General Motors, retrenchments and attacks on collective bargaining by hostile right wing employers who continue to pursue the old apartheid mentality which views

workers and their trade union with contempt.

The mess that we bring into 2018

Company closures are destabilising entire sections of our economy. We have seen this in components plants and suppliers that are linked to car manufacturers such Johnson Control. This deindustrialisation is now our reality. If we are going to recover from this, it will take decades to rebuild and those jobs are not coming back in our lifetime. And its not just our manufacturing sectors, the whole economy is down having slumped into a technical recession in 2017. Two of the three international rating agencies have downgraded the South African economy to junk status and a third has put the country on review pending a junk status downgrade early in 2018.

Why are we in this mess? The blame lies with the ANC government supported by COSATU and the SACP that arrogantly continues to implement these policies that are hemorrhaging jobs and destroying the economy. Now it is clear that the whole country was put on terms as we see that the white monopoly candidate Cyril Ramaphosa has been victorious at the ANC conference and immediately the confidence of the capitalists in South Africa improves, seen in the strengthening of the Rand.

Remember in 2013 NUMSA was ridiculed for calling on the ANC led Alliance to remove Jacob Zuma. Getting rid of Thabo Mbeki and putting in place Jacob Zuma did not result in a break in the neoliberal agenda. We are distracted from the shocking state of affairs in this country with no compassion for our people, who remain the working poor, exploited by the ruling class. Our distraction is the soap opera antics of the alliance-made politicians with Jacob Zuma cast in the leading role; he is an embarrassment, moving from one scandal to another.

The alliance partners, the SACP and COSATU, has stood by these

politicians. Worse still they have defended them, absolved them from wrong doing as they did with Zuma over the Nkandla debacle, been the bouncers when anyone within the alliance spoke out. We witnessed in 2017 an imploding of the ANC led Alliance; unable to contain the rot internally, infighting among themselves spilled into the public arena. We are vindicated when we witness the SACP, its cronies threatened from within the Alliance and compromised to such an extent that the party had no option but to scrape together its last vestiges of credibility by joining civil society marches that demanding 'ZUMA MUST GO'; the very same stand that the SACP publicly tore into NUMSA for taking.

NUMSA has been ridiculed for making radical economic demands in the interest of economical marginalized and dispossessed. The Alliance cast aside the Freedom Charter which could have been the blueprint to restructure the South African economy. Instead they have refused to address the land question, and the fundamental critical demand of ownership and control of the economy in the hands of the people. Instead they have allowed our economy to remain in the hands of white monopoly capital and have implemented backward, right wing, conservative, structural adjustment programs in the form of GEAR and the NDP. The NDP does not advance manufacturing or industrialization in order to create jobs. They want people to create their own employment as entreprenuers, opening window cleaning services or hair dressers. It does not touch the huge wealth of this country that is kept out of reach of the black majority. So the mineral energy and finance complex that makes up the South African economy as we know it has remained untransformed.

The ANC government dumped the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), a policy that affirmed the black majority in development carried by a democratic state. Had we remaining committed to transformation in a manner that change power relations, we could have uprooted racism in South Africa.

Instead the ANC-led alliance and government chose to listen to the terrible imperialist advice from the West despite knowing what this advice has done on the African continent. African countries are trapped in poverty and debt having listened to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organisation (WTO), they took instructions from multinational capitalist CEOs at the World Economic Forum. Their message is always the same, that government has no business in business. There actions go even further, undermining the autonomy of governments to determine their development path and creating an environment that makes it virtually impossible for democratic trade unions to exist.

The West served the interest of white monopoly capital, saying that the state's role is not to intervene in the economy, its role was merely to level the playing field and allow the private sector to drive development. By taking this inferior advice, government has destroyed state capacity. It is ironic the apartheid Nationalist Party, before its defeat in the liberation struggle, actually used the state for the Afrikaners – the apartheid state intervened in the economy by building critical institutions such as Eskom, Telkom, Transnet, Volskas Bank, Iscor. In other words the apartheid state was directly involved to create jobs for its Afrikaner folks. The racist regime served the Afrikaner well and because it was in the best interest of the Afrikaner, municipalities and provincial government during the nationalist party regime employed black workers in public works that had capacity to build gravel roads, tar roads, four room houses that were both owned and rented stock. All of this created jobs and the ANC leadership chose to be the best Man in the wedding of capitalist accumulation Umkhaphi Emtshatweni.

These jobs were destroyed by the ANC government's tendering system that has plunged us into a very deep crisis of cronyism and corruption. Billions have been lost from the national fiscus and this government cannot deliver basic services.

NUMSA has challenged this path of development, where the government champions outsourcing and casualisation and has stripped state assets. We warned the ANC that a social crisis would unfold unless they dumped these policies and address the land question, restructure the South African economy, nationalise all South Africa's minerals under worker control and ensure that they are beneficiated to champion a job led industrial strategy. Almost 60 percent of our population lives in poverty, a number that grows exponentially each year. Today South Africa is world leader in service delivery protests because there is a crisis in service delivery.

NUMSA was dismissed from COSATU for warning the ANC that continuing with these policies would frustrate South Africans and they would lose political power to the racist Democratic Alliance, the political axis of the exploitative class the party of big business, led by Maimane. As predicted all the metros were lost to the DA in the last election. Other rivals have risen from the inability for the ANC led Alliance to critically engage on the shortcomings of leadership. Julius Malema was a lapdog for Zuma but when he dared to question policy direction of the ANC, he was kicked out of the ANCYL and he monopolised on the discontent to create the Economic Freedom Fighters.

Indeed all revolutions that fail to address the property question, that fail to affirm its indigenous people to own and control land, The economy after colonisation and ravages of oppression and exploitation, always end up being victims of corruption and dictatorship that continue to serve and benefit imperialist powers.

This has been the fate of the ANC. ANC National Chairperson Gwede Mantashe admits that the biggest issue is corruption but fails to take responsibility for the policy environment that has allowed this to fester. Instead he says they will be able to defeat corruption because they now have a rich ANC President in Ramaphosa. Mantashe insults honest working class

men and women by insinuating that they cannot give good leadership, that only the rich can lead and exposes the ANC as having no revolutionary agenda to liberate the working class.Contrary to his excitement the most corrupt class is the capitalist class it has elicited billions out of this country both legal and illegal and Stenhof is the case in point.

In the build up towards the 2017 ANC Conference there was a big noise about 'Radical Economic Transformation'. Yet in 2012 NUMSA and the ANCYL won the nationalisation debate in the commissions leading to the Mangaung ANC Conference but the resolution was changed unilaterally by the ANC leadership to keep it off the table. At this point, we began to lose faith that democratic processes could take forward pro poor and working class agenda in the ANC.

Despite radical economic resolutions taken at the 2017 Conference, it is clear that the ANC will never pursue radical economic transformation and any NUMSA member who believes this "usenga inkunzi" (is busy milking the bull). The nationalisation of the Reserve Bank, expropriation of land is given lip service to rally popular support but this is immediately tempered by assurances to white monopoly capital that there is no commitment to actually carry out any of these resolutions.

There will be no radical economic transformation from the ANC because we were sold out by the ANC before 1994, in a deal with white monopoly capital that they will continue to own and control the economy and the land. This deal was negotiated by Ramaphosa and Rolf Meyer of the Nationalist Party regime. Are we supposed to be proud of a worker leader that was willing to leave behind his class? Since then Ramaphosa has been busy becoming rich, his personal riches and opulence made possible by the policy environment he helped to put in place. He has become a servant to maintain the dominance of white monopoly capital accumulation, a very rich one but a servant none the less.

There should be no confusion within NUMSA ranks that Ramaphosa represents the interest of the white monopoly capital. He is a blood billionaire whose business has tentacles in all sectors of the economy. He is a greedy capitalist, a South Africa Trump. We will not forget that Ramaphosa was a Director at Lonmin and his call for a strong action by the police resulted in the slaughter of workers exercising their constitutional right to strike in Marikana, a year later he let Lonmin workers and their families starve in the longest strike in South Africa's history simply for demanding a living wage.

Ramaphosa has been allowed into the ranks of the mining oligarchy and now champions the racist wage of super exploitation of black labour as an accumulation strategy for white monopoly capital in South Africa. Billionaire Ramaphosa and his sellout collaborators at NEDLAC insult workers with a national minimum wage of R20 an hour or R3500 a month. This is an insult to those workers who were brutally killed by the state at Marikana fighting for a wage of R12,500.

The excuses of the Alliance partners cannot be tolerated any longer. The National Democratic Revolution has not been delayed, it has been abandoned. An entire generation has been raised in the absence of a revolutionary agenda, the hoax of the 'born frees' enslaved to poverty. The SACP leadership flip flopping without a political vision for the future of workers and the working class. SACP party leaders decided to back capitalist billionaire Ramaphosa for President of the ANC and the country. This had nothing to do with working class interests, these leaders were booking their ticket on the next gravy train to parliament. Zuma dealt with this betrayal by removing these leaders from leadership positions in the NEC and the final blow was the removal of SACP leader Blade Nzimande from the cabinet. Their current bravado challenging Zuma is not motivated but a sudden interest in the working class, but a show for Ramaphosa of their availability to once again sell out the working class.

In fact, both factions in the ANC serve capitalist interests, a deal has been reached to made to maintain dominance of these capitalist forces. The real losers are the working class, we are on our own. The ANC will not improve the life of Africans who are economically marginalised and dispossessed, it just does not have such an agenda or interest.

Ramaphosa and ANC economic transformation committee led by Enoch Ngodongwana will never agree to implement the Freedom Charter; they will not nationalise the commanding heights of the economy, put all our minerals and mines under worker control and champion a job led industrial strategy. They will never repeal the property clause in the constitution and agree to expropriate land without compensation into state hands under worker control this does not mean there will be no NUMSA members or shopstewards of NUMSA who will support this forces correctly so that NUMSA as a union is not a political Party so freedom of association and political affiliation is protected and its an individual choice but we are upfront that truth is truth.

They will not dump the destructive policies of GEAR and the NDP. At the beginning of 2017 Ramaphosa accompanied by Pravin Gordon went to Davos to the World Economic Forum to promise global capitalist leaders that the ANC will maintain and champion austerity measures.

This is not new, GEAR has been all about putting in place austerity. They imposed belt tightening that closed nurses colleges, agricultural colleges, teachers training colleges. It closed irrigation schemes in poor villages and destroyed a state led agricultural sector. They clustered poor municipalities through a process of demarcation and reduced budget allocations so most working class communities have no meaningful local development plans, leaving those in ghost towns and rural villages condemned to a life of poverty.

They will not agree that all the boards of corrupt State Owned

Enterprises must be reconstituted and that labour must have representation on those boards. They will not agree to dump tenders, fill all vacant posts and create more jobs in the public sector to build once more the capacity of the state to provide services. They will not agree to nationalisation of the Reserve Bank change the Reserve Bank's inflation targeting policy which maintains high interest rates that destroy jobs for the sole interest of protecting the value of white wealth. They will not move away from serving the IMF, World Bank and the World Trade Organisation. They will not break with legacy of Mbeki that was supported by Trevor Manuel, Tito Mboweni, and Pravin Gordon, of austerity measures and privitisation.

Our demands

NUMSA calls on the Ramaphosa and the ANC to boldly endorse free and compulsory education for all children who pass matric as education is the key to liberate society. This is only possible if the South African government is prepared to tax the rich; instead corporate tax reduced in South Africa during Trevor Manuel's tenure as a Minister of Finance from 48 % to 28. If we nationalised the mines under worker control and used our minerals to diversify and industrialise then we would have money for free and compulsory education but Ramaphosa dare not touch the interests of his mining oligarchy.

NUMSA demands that the ANC government end reckless spending and abandon the Nuclear Deal. We have enough electricity capacity out of Medupi, Khusile, Ngula. Instead and as a matter of urgency the focus must be to fix the problems at Eskom so that the utility can deliver a competitive electricity tariff both to electrify communities and the economy. The whole Eskom board and all other boards of SOES should be fired and replaced with a competent board that has representation from government, business, labour and civil society.

Their first task must be to employ a competent, qualified and

skilled CEO. All Eskom coal mines that were ceded to mining companies must be taken back and others nationalized to supply Eskom with quality, cheap coal. Eskom should return to its original mandate of delivering cheap electricity to the economy and to electrify communities. This can only be done if Eskom moves away from commercialisation. NERSA must also be dealt with and restructured as many companies are going to be affected with negative impact on jobs because of the five percent.

NUMSA members and all workers in SAFTU must be prepared for national strikes and stay aways in 2018 to fight back against the attack on workers.

We must ban labour brokers once and for all. We must honour those massacred workers in Marikana who demanded R12500 by working against the R3 500 or R20 an hour minimum wage.

We remain resolute in our demand for a national minimum wage but it must break the backbone of the apartheid colonial wage not perpetuate the racist capitalist accumulation strategy achieved through the super exploitation of black and African labour. NUMSA demand that as a starting point, workers should receive a national minimum wage for now of R12500 and is should be compulsory for all employers to negotiate through centralised collective bargaining.

Ramaphosa is using his position politically and in business to champion an agenda at NEDLAC to tamper with the right to strike. He wants to bring back an apartheid practice that before workers can embark on a strike they must first ballot. We defeated it then and we will defeat it again. We must be prepared to take rolling mass action and we will also challenge it in court as an attack on our constitutional right. Such actions prove that Ramaphosa and the ANC leadership are anti worker, and anti-trade unions. defend your right to strike. We know the DA is fully behind this counter reactionary agenda which is why we will never understand how

our members can be confused and vote DA or why a political party that claims to be revolutionary like the EFF would cooperate with DA.

Building the Workers Party

We cannot accept the continued betrayal of the working class. NUMSA has led the way in the United Front, we have launched a new federation SAFTU which is both a spear and a shield for workers, and now we are forging ahead, resolved to form a Workers Party which is firm in demanding socialism in our life time to end economic exploitation, poverty, unemployment and inequality. NUMSA Central Committee of NUMSA in December 2017 appreciated the work we doing to put together structures and supports the launch of the Workers Party in 2018. This year we will not just register the Workers Party but we will let you know the following details:

a) The name of the Workers Party and the joining fee.

b) Its constitution will be revealed very soon.

c) Its national core will be introduced. Remember the Workers Party will be completely separate from NUMSA. NUMSA will remain an independent worker controlled union that supports the formation of the Workers Party.

d) We shall very soon announce how many members are needed form to a branch of the Workers Party.

e) We shall reveal its regalia in terms of T-shirts, and we shall be calling on our members to volunteer and make financial contributions to build the Workers Party. A Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party that is challenge the present exploitative system of capitalism will not be funded by the capitalist class.

This is not a gravy train Workers Party it’s a party to deal with working class miseries. The party will work for and

support NUMSA and SAFTU members and the working class in general. It must have clear policies when it is launched that deal with the miseries of the working class. To have a situation where one in three people are unemployment is completely unacceptable. Politician that stand by while companies close are not friends of the working class. Why must the working class vote into power political parties who champion policies that subject workers to poverty by destroying their jobs. These parties will refuse to take decisions that will protect jobs, yet workers continue to vote these butchers into power. We cannot expect exploiters and oppressors to hand us our freedom.

Many of us have comrades and family, who worked for a company that was closed. We are witnessing plant closures and massive retrenchments when every worker supports five people or more, so job losses put communities in distress, with many homes struggling to meet basic needs. As 2017 was coming to an end we called on all NUMSA nine regions to give us a list of companies that have retrenched and plant closures. The picture looks extremely bleak. This is a ticking bomb, pushing our people to despair and desperation. We have to defend our production capacity and jobs by championing industrial policy that meet the needs of our people.

Inequality is a national crisis, South Africa is the most unequal nation in the world. More than 40 million South Africans have no food. Members of NUMSA and SAFTU know that this is not just a number, these are our people, our children, our mothers and fathers that are caught up in the everyday struggle of what will they eat. Those of us that have jobs are the fortunate one but tomorrow it may be our turn to be retrenched. We can no longer trust the ANC with our members' lives. It's time to take a stand and fight for workers, for their right to work and to demand that the state must be the employer of last resort.

The Workers Party we talking about should go back to basic of

building organisation of peoples' power what we used to call M Plan. NUMSA, the United Front and the Workers Party should launch a campaign going door to door, street by street, collecting information about in each household. If each member of NUMSA and SAFTU did this on their street, we would have a detailed understanding of our communities and their needs. Workers Party activists will need to call general meetings in communities to hear from the people in a democratic fashion what do they suggest must be done to address their plight, to find solutions making sure people have somewhere to eat and something to eat. Street and area committees whose task and mission must be to bring to an end to crime and restore pride, dignity and hope in our communities. This form of community organising existed in the past when we were fighting Apartheid and the Nationalist Party and unionists volunteering in their communities as activists were vital to the success of these efforts not this todays opportunistic culture of renting the masses to fill stadiums and still render them to be victims of poverty until the next January 8th statement of the ANC.

The Workers Party is going to need honest leadership including young men and women. We have to take head on patriarchy, where women are oppressed, looked down upon at work, at home and in the community. The Workers Party as well as NUMSA and SAFTU must champion women as equal to men, promote women's active participation and inclusion in structures and in leadership positions.

Building NUMSA and SAFTU

NUMSA can only be strong and deliver on these noble aspirations for workers and the working class in general if it succeeds as a union to successfully represent workers against the bosses so quality service by organisers and by all of us in the leadership of NUMSA remains compulsory in 2018.

NUMSA is committed to improve turnaround time to resolve workers problems. We must not frustrate workers; when a

problem is reported, we must report on progress and discuss what is the way forward within a reasonable time period. Where employers are taking workers for a ride NUMSA must constantly take the side of workers and fight for them. We must continue to win hearts and minds of workers. We need the confidence of our members because NUMSA has many enemies and opportunists that are looking to prey on our members, wanting to snatch them away with promises they can't keep. NUMSA is loyal to its members and needs loyal members for us to go from strength to strength.

There is a political agenda to deal with NUMSA. Our members in many of the state owned enterprises are being tested by a deliberate attack on our union recognition rights. We are the majority union in PetroSA with full organisational rights, but this is the exception. We are facing resistance in a number of others such as Eskom, SAA and Denel. Transnet is refusing to deduct NUMSA members' dues. We call on our members in state owned enterprises to hold the ground we have won, we are committed to organising your workplaces as they are key to our industrial development and we will convene a national shopsteward council in 2018 to strategise on how we can fight back.

In 2017 we have had running battles with employers who consciously take cue from Cyril Ramaphosa national minimum wage. They want to vary down NUMSA members' benefits and conditions in the key collective bargaining sectors of motor and engineering to be paid at R3500 or to half their wages. We reached a wage agreement of 7 percent increase with the majority of employers within SEAFSA and we are expecting to gazette this agreement so that it is extended to all employers in the sector. NUMSA has negotiated at plant level with some companies, achieving even higher agreements, for example 9 percent at Scaw Metal and 9.5 percent at Nampak. In 2018 we are ready ourselves for battle with those employers that are hell-bent in making sure that the signed agreement in the

engineering sector is not extended to include plastic employers and those affiliated to NEASA.

In 2017 we had good cooperation with the Department of Trade and Industry and the Economic Development Department. We secured anti-dumping measures and an increase on tariffs for 8 products at Arcelor Mittal to protect jobs. Despite this Arcelor Mittal has served us with section 189 A notice and we closed the year defending our members. We did not back down and overcame this challenge with Arcelor Mittal withdrawing the notice and agreeing not to close the plant in Vereeniging and Newcastle.

We saved over 300 jobs at Scaw Metal by putting workers on a training lay off scheme. Transnet had ordered wheels from Italy instead of from Sacw, creating the threat to jobs. IDC that had a majority stake in Scaw, sold this to investors in the hope that the company can be turned around but the new investors want to break up the company. Numsa is challenging this, we believe that Scaw Metal can be saved intact and that the company has an important role to play in the future development of our country.

NUMSA has never accepted the closure of Evaraz Highveld steel we pleased to report that our consistent fight has results. There is the possibility for reopening Evraz, Mapochs mine and Venchem.

We campaigned against closures of five power stations in Mpumalanga. NUMSA is not against reduction of emissions but we call for just transition that must first guarantee jobs security for workers. In terms of renewables, there must be a social owned renewable sector. It is against this backdrop that NUMSA rejects the introduction of nuclear at the present moment as the country cannot afford it and it will destroy many jobs in the manufacturing sector as our electricity costs are already uncompetitive. Instead we should invest in gas as a strategic niche of Petroleum South AFRICA (PETROSA),

defending existing jobs of PETROSA workers and creating more jobs. There is a lot of gas in South Africa and Mozambique this can be mutually beneficial to both countries.

All car manufactures are not compliant with the BEE score card; these companies are MBSA, VWSA, BMWSA, NISSAN SA, FORD SA, TOYOTA SA and GMSA which is now ISUZU SA. Government revised BEE requirements and car manfacturers must ensure that 25 % of their core business is given to black individuals or black workers. Instead companies make a mockery of the BEE objectives by outsourcing. We are currently negotiating with MBSA to resolve the BEE score card issues but the final position on this matter can only be taken at a Workers Indaba so that NUMSA acts on the mandate given by members. So far we have succeeded in getting MBSA to withdraw plans to break up the plant into separate legal entities.

NUMSA has engaged employers and government through DTI to begin to plan the future of the Auto industry called Vision 2035. The plan forces car manufacturers to stop dumping and to champion localization in a way that will create jobs both in the car manufacturing and the component sector. Employers have turned against the plan, unwilling to give up on existing incentives that they are using to maximize profits.

NUMSA must address the needs of level five workers that want to break the ceiling on their career path. We are seeking a solution to this though negotiations with employers at the Industry Policy Forum. Another challenge we face is the gap in wages between auto workers in the assembly car plants and component supply and logistics workers. The NUMSA Central Committee calls on all members and shop stewards to recruit workers in companies where we work and we must include workers in service providers to our companies, including security services, material handling, logistics, canteen workers, component suppliers and cleaners. We must make sure that they are well represented and that NUMSA bargains for them. We cannot win gains for our members whilst there are other

workers in our workplaces that are exploited. It is our revolutionary duty of NUMSA members to ensure that these workers are represented by our union.

The union has employed an actuary to restructure and transform retirement funds so that workers money can be deployed strategically in a manner that benefits workers whilst they still work to address some of their needs such as housing and still be available to workers when they retire with good value. We are working with the NUMSA investment company on the formation of an industry medical aid. our aim is to pool our contributions, reduce cost and ensure that our members' have access to good quality health care. At the same time we need to demand a national health insurance scheme and quality healthcare facilities and services accessible to every South African.

The most important victory we secured in 2017 which NUMSA members in all sectors and all workers in the entire country must continue to celebrate and defend as the victory of NUMSA on behalf of its members and all workers a victory COSATU and all its affiliates failed to secured against labour brokers, is a victory NUMSA secured against one labour broker company called Assign services which set a precedent for all labour broker companies that after three months all workers who work in South African companies must and should be automatical made permanent employed.

Whilst we were still busy celebrating this victory this blood sucker employers decided to appeal this labour court ruling in the constitutional court we pulling all the stops we are taking to senior legal counsel lawyers to go and fight for NUMSA members and all workers in the country to defend this working class victory but we also call on our members to come to court on that they to demonstrate support for such a ruling and call on the constitutional court not to temper with the previous ruling that fairly makes workers permanent after three months. NUMSA members and all exploited workers must

under labour broking slavery must continue to celebrate this victory against scrupulous labour broker employers, ANC and DA leadership that refused to ban labour brokers.

What must be done

Our members must be honest and loyal to NUMSA by raising their concerns about their union inside their union, with the intention to better NUMSA. Building NUMSA means workers must be united to defend workers and improve their benefits and conditions. NUMSA at all levels starting with the President and the General Secretary must be committed to this task.

We need to recruit every unorganised worker in companies where we work under banner of NUMSA and take up the fight against exploitative and scrupulous bosses. An injury to one must be an injury to all, at plant level, at sector level and even at international level.

NUMSA members and shop stewards must organise and advance working class interests, in our churches, shebeens, burial societies, in our choirs, sports clubs, and hairdressers. We must advance a struggle to end economic exploitation by building our union.

We must also build the United Front to take up the struggle to say no to privatisation of municipal services and challenge poor service delivery in our communities, fighting back against crime, corruption and violence against women. This might necessitated that once more forming of street and area committees.

NUMSA members must remain critical of their union and its leadership and must continue to make every NUMSA shop steward accountable to members, every NUMSA leader accountable including the President and General Secretary. Our members must not be confused by yellow unions, our union is alive and well, we are a fighting union, a militant union but most of all we are a democratic worker controlled union. Numsa will

always uphold organisational renewal through worker democracy leadership. Members are free to contest leadership including that of the Numsa secretariat and the General Secretary through democratic process uphelp in our union constitution. The winners of these democratic processes will lead Numsa and the losers must respect elected leadership and continue to make valuable contribution to our union.

In 2013 as a result of being sold out by the ANC led Alliance, NUMSA resolved at the Special National Congress that it was time for the working class to organize itself as a class for itself by forming a and building a movement for socialism meaning it must lay building blocks to form a Worker's Party. This was resolved and further endorsed at the 2016 NUMSA National Congress. "We know as a matter of fact as our union announce its honest intention of correctly, sticking to its resolved to catalyse formation of the Workers Party which will continue to be both a shield and a spear for workers to raised working class revolutionary consciousness to take up the struggle against capitalism and all socials ills which it breeds such as crime, poverty, violence and abuse of children and women, inequalities and unemployment, economically marginalisation, land hunger for the majority which is black and African."

Be assured that our support for the formation of a workers Party is to ensure that there is political representation of working class interests. NUMSA is South Africa's biggest trade union, we are worker controlled and we intend to remain so. We have no intention of becoming a political party. There are those who will continue to attack this initiative because they fear what is to be born. Defend our union against attacks by government and the ANC led alliance; workers deserve political representation that has not compromised the working class. This workers Party when its final launched it will be completely separate from NUMSA will be in in the street with workers and the poor.

In 2018 we are building NUMSA and continuing to grow as a fighting giant to resist and reject any attack on workers. 2018 will be a year of action for gains in our workplaces. At the same time we shall continue to build and strengthen the United Front and we shall launch the Workers Party. All those who want to join a revolutionary Workers Party, whose mission and task is to overthrow capitalism and build a system that detest greed of capitalism which is socialism are free to do so. NUMSA is part of this initiative to build the Workers Party but membership is voluntary. NUMSA remains committed to recruit all workers, regardless of their political affiliation. We must be extremely be vigilant and jealously guard unity in NUMSA as a home for all workers regardless of their political affiliation and we should not allow opportunists to create confusion in our ranks and for those who have made their business to attack this revolutionary mission to succeed.

NUMSA President Andrew Chirwa in closing the NUMSA 10TH National Congress in December 2016 had this to say about this important but difficult journey to build an alternative Workers Party and the need for workers to pursue class struggle against capitalism for a socialist republic of South Africa.

“There is no alternative to organizing the working class for the revolutionary struggle for them to be their own liberators, their own masters. We have no choice but to take on this huge revolutionary task. The alternative is permanent misery, poverty, unemployment and suffering extreme inequalities. All this of course leads to brutal and painful short lives, for the majority of the working class. We must create the revolutionary mass vanguard political party to lead the struggle for socialism in South Africa. The alternative is the continued savagery and barbarism of capitalism, and civil wars.”

Let us be victorious in 2018. I leave you with a quote from

Lenin which better represent the NUMSA moment and the urgent need to turn the NUMSA moment into a working class revolutionary movement in the form of a Workers Party, “What Is To Be Done? Dogmatism And ‘Freedom of Criticism’” (1901).

“We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we have to advance almost constantly under their fire. We have combined, by a freely adopted decision, for the purpose of fighting the enemy, and not of retreating into the neighboring marsh, the inhabitants of which, from the very outset, have reproached us with having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and with having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation. And now some among us begin to cry out: Let us go into the marsh! And when we begin to shame them, they retort: What backward people you are! Are you not ashamed to deny us the liberty to invite you to take a better road! Oh, yes, gentlemen! You are free not only to invite us, but to go yourselves wherever you will, even into the marsh. In fact, we think that the marsh is your proper place, and we are prepared to render you every assistance to get there. Only let go of our hands, don’t clutch at us and don’t besmirch the grand word freedom, for we too are “free” to go where we please, free to fight not only against the marsh, but also against those who are turning towards the marsh”

Viva NUMSA Viva!

IRVIN JIM

NUMSA General Secretary

Workers Day Celebration, Durban 2017

WIRFI Message at Miroslav Vodslon’s funeral, Berlin, December 2018

Mirek was a comrade in the truest sense of the word; a fighter side by side with us for a socialist future for the human race.

He was a convinced and profoundly thoughtful Marxist. His theoretical stature towered above that of others because he was highly intelligent, very thorough and took Marxism very seriously indeed. He was never satisfied with superficial or half-baked formulations of it.

Mirek also possessed a wry, dry and self-deprecating sense of humour which showed deep appreciation of the contradictions that arise in life and which moreover enabled him to reveal defects in another person’s reasoning without massaging his own ego. This is something that we will especially miss.

Mirek came into contact with us UK Trotskyists as a militant of the Group of Opposition and Continuity of the Fourth International (GOCQI), in the late 1980s. Having just dealt with an abusive leadership in the Workers’ Revolutionary Party, we were looking for contacts with activists around the world who had gone through experiences parallel to ours and who had similar ideas to ours about the way ahead.

Comrades like Balazs Nagy, Miroslav, Radoslav Pavlovic and Janos Borovi had paid the price of resisting Stalinist rule in their home countries. They had been forced to leave behind families and comrades and go into exile or face death or imprisonment. Based on their own experiences and difficulties in the Trotskyist movement, they joined with the insurgent Workers Revolutionary Party members and contacts in Namibia, South Africa and Latin America to set up the Workers’

International to Rebuild the Fourth International in 1990.

The GOCQI, including Mirek, quickly showed their theoretical mettle, contributing powerfully to the theoretical publications which prepared for the new foundation.

But the development of the new international collided with the collapse of the workers' states in the USSR and Eastern Europe and the Thatcher-Regan onslaught on all the things workers had gained in the class struggle. This was also a development which sought – where it could – to drive back the movements against imperialist oppression around the world and to corrupt them where it could not.

The workers' movement in western Europe and North America was undermined by de-industrialisation and re-location of industries, automation and the introduction of new technologies and the political collapse of Communist and Socialist parties.

Significant numbers of our already small group left, in some cases abandoning the very idea of an organised Marxist International, in others abandoning political activity completely.

Mirek stood out against the quitters, but for a while was unable to contribute personally to the struggle of the Workers' International.

Nevertheless, physically isolated as he was from other comrades, Mirek instinctively sought out footholds in the revolutionary Marxist movement and in the struggles of industrial workers. He worked within these circles to encourage the study of fundamental questions of Marxism, in particular political economy, and he deliberately participated in the shop-floor organisation of Daimler-Benz trade unionists.

The international situation for Marxists became extremely

gloomy. The first big break in the clouds was the determined struggle of the platinum miners at Marikana in South Africa, followed by a widespread mass-movement of workers in a large number of industries and trades for a big increase in wages. Twenty years after the end of apartheid and the rise to power of the African National Congress in South Africa, the deliberate murder of 35 strikers at Marikana by the South African Police acting under the instructions of the mine-owners with the collusion of ANC ministers marked the outbreak of a political crisis which faced revolutionary Marxists with a serious challenge.

It also brought Mirek back into activity in the Workers International. Together, we fought for the understanding that the way forward after Marikana is work towards the establishment of a socialist party of the country's working class, and that this could not be achieved by isolated sectarian groups, however courageous and devoted. The decisions and resolutions of the December 2013 Special Congress of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) sketched the plans for the re-foundation of the country's working-class movement, and Workers International pledged its support for this process.

Meanwhile the leading comrades of the Workers' Revolutionary Party of Namibia, founded in 1989, had been working for years through the Workers Advice Centre in Windhoek providing legal advice and representation to individuals and groups suffering abuses at the hands of employers and government. They had placed themselves in an excellent position to take forward new (or newly-resumed) mass struggles, such as:

- the campaign of former TCL miners for their stolen pensions
- various ethnic groups defending their land
- the matter of wholesale miss-appropriation of the assets of the former TLC in the course of official bankruptcy of the company.

- the question of whether German compensation for imperialist oppression, land-theft and atrocities during the occupation of “South-West Africa” would go to the victims’ communities or be stolen by government ministers,
- the campaign for a real reckoning over the crimes of South West Africa Peoples’ Organisation (SWAPO) during the liberation struggle,
- against the theft of people’s homes through legal chicanery
- Stood in the 2014 election and won two Assembly seats
- new industrial struggles such as that of the fishery workers.
- This meant that by late 2015, the WRP of Namibia was able to convene a conference with over 100 delegates to re-launch the party

Mirek devoted himself to assisting the development of the WRP of Namibia, spending considerable time in the country and brimming with advice to assist its development, both practical and theoretical.

Mirek did all he could to bring a lifetime’s experience of political struggle to bear fruitfully in the training of a new generation of political leaders in the continent of Africa. In the process, he designed a series of lectures to try to explain Marxism and the Fourth International to members of a party which contained representatives of pretty well all the ethnic groupings in the country, from bushmen to descendants of German settlers, and certainly all the oppressed groups, rural or urban.

The precious outcome is a pamphlet: *Why we must rebuild the Fourth International*, which will undoubtedly play a major role in the political training of new generations. It is written in a very straightforward style, using everyday language in a way that makes complex questions easier to understand and does not set up the author as some sort of ivory-tower intellectual.

In a movement which has no lack of flamboyant, even abrasive, characters, Mirek was exceptional for his gentleness (not without firmness!) towards all and for the modesty and simplicity with which he wrote and spoke.

Back in Europe, Mirek keenly followed political event in online discussions. Topics included how Marxists should react to the discussion around mass migration and a sharp intervention on the outcome of the UK referendum on leaving the EU.

Mirek engaged in a lengthy online discussion earlier this year on the question of Catalonian independence.

He was keen to write-up his own experiences of the development of events in Czechoslovakia before and during the “Prague Spring” of 1968, and we were hoping to provide him with an opportunity to talk about this at an event in the UK on the fiftieth anniversary.

Sadly, things turned out otherwise. We were utterly shocked by news of Mirek’s death.

We pass on our condolences to Adrien and the rest of the family – Mirek was enormously proud of his son and his grandson – and also to Senta, who has been his companion and bedrock for so many years and whose companionship clearly meant so much to him.

We join with many rank-and-file IG Metall trade unionists, activists in the political movement in the Trotskyist left in Germany, the UK and elsewhere, and above all many Namibians in treasuring what he was worth and mourn his loss.

Why we must rebuild the Fourth International by Mirek Vodslon 14/09/15

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1. The question posed

The Namibian working class – all the active elements in it – is now creating its own party. This party will represent workers and other exploited people in the parliament and soon also in the local authorities. This is already an important step. It will make workers more confident to fight for their demands.

Several movements of working class resistance against

capitalist exploitation now converge under the banner of the Workers Revolutionary Party in order to fight together and achieve important partial improvements.

For instance, banks in cahoots with SWAPO officials have stolen the pensions of former press-ganged SWATF recruits and of miners who worked for the now bankrupt TCL corporation. The thieves must be forced to give back what they stole and be punished! The Southern Peoples have long been oppressed. Their legitimate demands which will enable a real development for them must be satisfied. These are just two examples, but there are many. In fact every oppressed section of society has legitimate demands and for each one there is only one party with which they can hope to achieve their satisfaction: the WRP.

However, a lasting improvement of the material situation of the working class requires a fundamental change in the whole society. All the groups and individuals who are now becoming part of the WRP have already understood that. And they expect the WRP as their party to arm itself with a programme that will allow them to achieve such a fundamental change.

All over the world we live under a regime, capitalism, where a tiny minority appropriates and accumulates the lion’s share of the wealth that the vast majority, the toiling classes, produce. But that is not all. The capitalists only allow the toilers to produce anything at all if the products can generate private profit for capitalists. This puts a straitjacket on production of wealth. That straitjacket is becoming ever tighter, as can be seen from the growing number of unemployed.

All these unemployed workers and young could be producing useful things for their own needs and those of others. But not under capitalism. Modern means of production could assure that the vital needs of everybody in the world are satisfied and his or her individual personality can develop freely and

fully. Instead, we live in a world where a tiny minority swims in abundance and the vast majority lives in ever-worsening poverty.

Capitalism has entered a phase of final decline, its death throes, where capitalists find it ever more difficult to serve their purpose in life, the core principle of capital: making profit in order to increase capital. And since production of useful things for the needs of working people is allowed only under the condition that such production serves to increase capital, those needs are ever less satisfied.

The systematic theft of public money and resources, the theft of pensions and other assets of the working class is not limited to Namibia, it is endemic in all of Africa and common also in other parts of the world. A feature of capitalism since its beginning is that its ruling class is composed of an increasing number of criminals who do not respect their own stated sacred principle of private property. In the death agony of their regime they are pushed ever more to open theft and fraud as their opportunities to make legal (according to their own laws) profit diminish.

So the real, historic task is not just to correct the worst abuses of capitalism, the corruption, the oppression of nations or races, the oppression of women. It is not just to stop the ever-worsening wars and the deterioration of the environment which threatens to destroy the conditions of life itself. It is not even just to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor.

All these can be achieved only if the working class is able to produce wealth directly both for its collective needs (like, for instance, railroads, hospitals and schools) and for its individual needs (like bread and medicine). Workers themselves must achieve that situation, nobody can do it in their place. They need to seize the private property of the capitalists, take over factories and other facilities, machines, and raw

materials. Workers need to become the collective owner of all these means of production. Then they need to use them to organise production for their own needs as a class and for the needs of all other working people. To accomplish that, the corrupt SWAPO state in this country, like all other capitalist states, must be replaced with a state that belongs to the working class and is fully under its command. Only a radically new state composed of organised workers themselves from bottom to top can be fully a workers' state.

Only such a workers' state can start cleaning up the material and moral mess created by capitalism and building a new society: socialism and communism.

We build the Workers Revolutionary Party under a red flag with an emblem that consists of a hammer, a sickle and the number four. All the elements of that symbol express the foundations of our programme.

Before I get to the main question – why the number four – I need to mention the meanings of the other elements of our flag. Each of them needs to be examined in greater depth than we will be able to do this time. In fact everything we will talk about in this short pamphlet needs deeper consideration. So I hope that there will be many more education initiatives and that every present or future member of the WRP will get a chance to deepen his or her understanding of all of our programme.

2. Productive forces and modes of production

Humans are very special beings. Other life forms just adapt to the conditions that nature offers for their life. Humans produce the conditions of their own life by working in cooperation. They possess productive forces: the tools and the collective knowledge needed to produce all they need, food, shelter, medicine and nowadays also roads, books, bibles, aeroplanes and computers. Workers themselves are of course the

main productive force. People beg the heavenly Father to give us this day our daily bread, but everybody knows that there would be no daily bread without the work and the cooperation of farmers, millers and bakers.

Humanity went through several stages of development of its productive forces. At the beginning, producers lived in small groups that owned their means of production and shared the products. This was the time when the community had just enough tools and knowledge to survive, but only if everybody worked for it all day. Such communities still live in some regions of Namibia. Anybody who wants to talk to such a community must bring enough food to feed everybody while they are talking, because during that time they can't be searching for food, as they would do normally.

But people invent ever better tools and eventually, starting with some areas of the world like the Middle East, they were able to produce more than they needed to survive. This is when the big separation became possible. Some could stop working and have leisure to think and rule. The others worked to maintain both themselves and the rulers. Society became divided into classes, and the first "class society" was born. Each class had a very different position in production than the other. Some classes ruled and organised production, others were the actual producers. Human society was turned around completely. The result of this first social revolution was that the original equality of all people was replaced by inequality. At the same time, the division of work between man and woman developed into a domination of woman by man.

Further developments brought several successive types of class society. For instance, the mode of production of the ancient Roman republic and later the Roman empire divided society fundamentally into slaves and slave owners. This was replaced with the feudal mode of production, where the ruling class were the feudal lords, the owners of land. With the land, they also owned the peasant population settled on that land. Each

type of society corresponded to a specific degree of development of the productive forces, each was based on a distinct mode of production, and each was brought about by a social revolution that had to destroy the previous society.

3. Capitalism and democracy

Finally, the development of industry and the democratic revolutions of the 17th and 18th century brought a type of society whose members are all traders, people who buy and sell goods for money. Those who have no money are not fully members of human society. The only way to cooperate in this society is by buying and selling privately produced goods. Where this type of society is fully realised, all its members are equal (as traders) and therefore also have equal rights in the eyes of the law. This equality in the eyes of the law is, as we know, a democratic ideal. Its highest expression is political democracy in which the people, by means of individual votes, choose their government. In most countries this ideal is not fully realised and in countries like Namibia it is mostly an empty pretence.

But for all its formal equality, even where it does exist, this society generates profound and increasing social, that is real, inequality. The reason is that it separates producers from their means of production. The baker, for instance, no longer owns his kneading trough. He or she works in a huge bread-producing factory that belongs to somebody else, the capitalist. While the worker works, he or she has no freedom at all. In exchange for a wage, every worker must surrender his or her freedom for the whole working day and must follow orders given by the capitalist or usually a lieutenant of the capitalist. In summary, the worker becomes a slave under the dictatorship of the capitalist for the duration of every working day.

The capitalist starts with some money. With that money he buys means of production and labour power. Having bought them, he

becomes the owner of both. The product of labour – bread in our example – therefore also belongs to the capitalist, although he did not make it – and this is what he sells. As a result, he gets more money than he had at start. The difference is called the profit. Then he uses most of the money he now has to buy more means of production and more labour power, in order to produce even more products and sell those, again with a profit. So the capitalist accumulates enormous wealth. This seemingly self-increasing wealth is called capital.

Of course it is the workers who produce capital, all of it. The capitalists only owns and therefore commands it. But he cannot do with it as he pleases. In fact, any capitalist who does not do his best to increase his capital, will be overtaken by other capitalists. So in fact it is the capital that commands the capitalist, telling him what to do in order to increase the capital. So, in effect, workers are being bossed around by the accumulated results of their own work!

Being owners of the whole product of the society, capitalists form the upper class. This type of society is therefore called capitalism. Capitalists are often called “bourgeois”. That is a word borrowed from the French. Originally, it meant simply inhabitant of a town. That is where the capitalists developed. Accordingly, the class of capitalists is often called the “bourgeoisie”.

Capitalism with rule of law equal for all and with democratic rights and freedoms is much better for the working class than capitalist rule without them. In a democracy, the working class can organise openly in trade unions and parties. Without it, working class organisations become illegal and have to go underground.

But among all its rights and freedoms, the only one which this regime enforces ruthlessly is the right of capitalists to own the means of production, that is the right to exploit the

working class. This right of the capitalists takes precedence over all other rights and freedoms. This democracy is therefore not just “democracy” for all people. It is limited, bourgeois democracy. Its essence is the dictatorship of the capitalists. So this democracy is only the best form of a bad thing: the dictatorship of the capitalists.

4. The red flag and the hammer

The hammer symbolises our class, the working class.

But what exactly is the working class? It is not all toilers. It is the class of those who need to buy their means of subsistence – food, shelter, education, health care – for money, in order to live and raise children, but own nothing that they could sell – except one thing: their own capacity to work, their labour power! This class is also called the proletariat and wage-workers are called proletarians. That word is very old and meant originally people whose only wealth consisted of their children.

Labour power (the capacity to work) is a very special commodity. The worker goes to the factory and surrenders eight hours or more of his daily life to the capitalist. The capitalist pays the value of that labour power as a daily wage to the worker. That value is determined by that of all the products needed to sustain workers’ life and reproduce their labour power, not only for the next day or month, but also to enable them to have children, the next generation of workers.

The capitalist consumes the worker’s labour power by employing him or her to do actual work – and there something strange happens: that work produces much more value than that of the worker’s wage. This is why the owner of the bakery can sell the bread produced by the bakers at a higher price than the sum of the prices of the flour needed to make the dough, the electricity needed to bake it, the amortisation of all the machines and buildings and the wages of the bakers. The profit

of the capitalist comes from this difference. This is the basis of capitalist exploitation. We owe this discovery to Karl Marx.

There is much more to learn about this. Marx lived in the 19th century at the time when capitalism developed. He lived mostly in the country that pioneered that development, England. Marx wrote several books about capital. The main one is called simply: Capital. I hope that we can have more discussions that make clear to every member of the WRP how exactly capitalist exploitation comes about in this organisation of society which is called the capitalist mode of production – the society we live in.

Wage workers form the principal lower class in society. That class has existed for over 180 years in Europe and for at least 100 years in every country of the world. The capitalist organisation of society constantly produces both classes, the capitalist and the working class. Formal equality of rights cannot hide this increasing social inequality.

As long as it has existed, the working class had to fight against the capitalist class for such conditions of exploitation as allow it to survive. The capitalist's interest is to increase its profit by paying ever-lower wages, making workers work ever longer hours and always speeding up the pace of work. So capitalists and workers have fundamentally opposed interests. Each class must fight the other. Therefore, never believe a capitalist who pretends that he and his workers "are in the same boat", as capitalists often say. On the contrary, workers must unite against their own employer and against all capitalists.

If workers don't unite, each worker remains just an individual trader who trades their labour power. All those worker-traders compete against each other and, even worse than that, they compete against an army of unemployed workers ready to take up any work in any conditions. Disunited workers undercut one

another on wages and other working conditions.

So workers must unite, form trade unions and fight collectively for their working conditions simply to prevent capitalists from starving them and from working them to premature death.

In the past and in some countries like Germany, where I live, workers' organisations were quite successful in this everyday struggle, so there are well-off workers who may possess a house or a car and have enough money to be able to send children to university to let them become skilled workers. But even a house, a car or university education are still only means of reproduction of labour power, be it at a much higher standard than the means available to the inhabitants of the shanties of Windhoek. Even a well-off German worker is therefore still just a wage-worker. He does not belong to the middle classes as some people pretend. He belongs to the same class as a super-exploited Namibian miner because he has the same fundamental interest in defending his working and living conditions against the capitalist class and in replacing the whole capitalist regime by a society without exploitation of human beings by other human beings. Being wage-workers is the solid foundation of workers' solidarity; regardless of important differences in living standard and even regardless of whether they actually have work at the moment. It does not matter where they live, what skin colour they have, whether they are men or women, which beliefs or faith they hold or which local customs they follow.

Moreover, the capitalist class all over the world has started a huge attack on the living standards, working conditions and rights of the working class with the objective of aligning them with the worst of existing conditions, those of super-exploited workers without rights in many countries of Asia and Africa.

Even in Germany, the past conquests of the working class are

threatened and a growing part of the working class sinks into the uncertain existence of contract labour and unemployment. Most unions traditionally unite only the fully employed in the fight for their wages and conditions. They are losing this battle everywhere because of the downward pressure of competition from the growing crowd of defenceless precarious and unemployed workers.

So unions must change in order to unite all layers of the working class. Some unions are becoming conscious of this necessity and as they try to realise it, they also start to realise that they cannot defend the working and living conditions of the working class with any prospect of a lasting success – and keep capitalism. So they must support the struggle to overcome capitalism itself. Workers must unite to defend themselves and fight off the multiform divisions constantly introduced by capitalists. But all experience shows that it is a losing fight unless the unity has the goal of uprooting the whole system of exploitation of humans by humans. This is a political goal which requires workers to form their own political party.

The workers' party cannot replace unions, which are vital for the everyday struggle. But neither can there be a tight barrier between trade unions and the workers party. The political struggle must be rooted in everyday struggles and many everyday struggles can only be won on the political level. For instance, capitalists more and more often break the resistance of their workforce to a worsening of its conditions by forcing large sections of that workforce out of the enterprise and into a new one, where they do the same work and produce the same things under much worse conditions. Unions have to fight against this so-called "outsourcing". In some cases they manage to fight off an "outsourcing" attack. But "outsourcing" is a right of capitalists, flowing from the fundamental right to private ownership of enterprises which is guaranteed by all capitalist constitutions. So without a

political change, any particular success against “outsourcing” is short-lived.

Since its origins, the most far-sighted elements of the working class have seen beyond the never- ending elementary struggle for survival. They have understood that a definitive liberation of their class was necessary and also possible by overthrowing the capitalist class and its state and making the modern, large-scale means of production the property of all those who work. They have also understood that the only way for workers to become owners of today’s means of production is to own them in common, as the working class. These workers have therefore called themselves “communists” and for a very long time they have organised in international communist associations and parties. Their only difference from the rest of the working class is the clear understanding of this overall aim and that the international unity of the whole working class must take precedence over national or particular interests. In all struggles of their class they have promoted these principles.

The red colour of our flag symbolises the workers’ blood which has been shed in all those struggles over many decades.

5. The sickle

As indicated before, besides the working class, there are other toilers. Some belong to intermediate layers. Some work for a wage but all they do is manage production on behalf of some capitalist. Top level managers have very large “wages” that are in reality parts of the capitalist profit, bribes. Moreover, they own large shares of capital, so they are capitalists. Others administer the top level of the capitalist state on behalf of the capitalist class as a whole in order to maintain the overall conditions for the capitalist regime to persist. All these belong to the capitalist class.

Still other toilers do produce commodities, or work in the

distribution of commodities, but not as wage workers. They work, but are different from wage workers in that they possess their means of production or of other work. They are craftsmen and small retailers in cities who still possess their workshops or shops.

Yet others, most important in a country like Namibia, are peasants in the countryside who possess their plot of land.

All these latter classes are often lumped together and called “petty-bourgeois”. That means simply that they may be owners of some means of production or just wish to become owners of some means of production, but those means are so small that they do not constitute capital.

Most of these classes are being squeezed out by large capitalist production. The peasants especially, all over Africa, are being starved, forced off their land and obliged to look for a living in the cities, usually as the lowest layer of the working class.

New urban layers that are intermediary between the capitalist and the working class are still created. Many are self-employed but their social condition differs from that of the working class only in their imagination, where they deem themselves superior to the working class.

The peasantry still exists. Like the working class, the peasantry too must struggle for its living and working conditions.

Some peasants’ land doesn’t provide enough for them to live, or they may have no land any more. They have to work for a wage for richer farmers or in factories. In fact they are already part of the working class. They have the same demands as we have, such as higher wages and better working conditions. Of course we support these demands.

Poor peasants usually want to get enough land to sustain

themselves and their families. The working class supports the demand for the expropriation of landlords possessing large amounts of land – and sometimes not even exploiting it. Such land must be distributed especially to landless peasants. They themselves should decide if they want to use these lands collectively as a cooperative or individually.

The life of the poorest layers of peasantry mostly lacks even the one relative freedom which capitalism affords to the urban worker, that of choosing his or her master. Instead, a poor peasant often depends on a powerful, irremovable master, a landlord, a capitalist or, mostly, both. That master appears irremovable because he is supported by a corrupt, autocratic state. This is true even in countries like Namibia, which is formally a republic and a democracy, but its state is not a normal capitalist state. It is a corrupt autocracy like the old kingdoms were, except that the role of the autocrat at the top is taken by anonymous, foreign representatives of imperialist powers, like the bureaucrats of the International Monetary Fund. It is they who make sure that peasants and other poor classes at the bottom of society are forever imprisoned in rotten dependency relations. The whole SWAPO state, including its "parliament", its president and its "Father of the Nation", are the local executive apparatus of imperialist (international capitalist) powers that loot the country.

Capitalists exploit peasants by forcing them to sell their products too cheap and by selling the necessary machines and tools to the peasants at too high a price. Banks deny them the necessary credit. This can change only if the "commanding heights" of the economy – big industry and all credit institutions – belong to the working class.

But to the peasantry the question often appears as that of gaining a true democracy, of removing their immediate masters and becoming full citizens equal to others. This is not limited to the peasantry. The working class, especially its

lowest layers, are also deprived of their elementary democratic rights by a regime like that of SWAPO in Namibia.

Imperialism foisted a capitalist constitution on Namibia. It made sure that it guarantees the irremovable principle of private ownership of the means of production. This made the constitution undemocratic as it creates a barrier to making land available to those who work on it or need it to live on it and so it maintains peasants and poor people in towns and cities in dependency. By instituting the principle of a "unitarian state" it violates the democratic right of peoples of Namibia, such as, Caprivians, Herreros, Basters and Namas, to self-determination. For example, Caprivians who tried to practice that right have been in prison for 15 years. A real unity can be only voluntary but the peoples concerned were not asked. The whole constitution was concocted by capitalists using a ready-made template elaborated by imperialist powers, acting behind the backs of the people of Namibia. Therefore the immediate demands in any revolution must include that of a Constituent Assembly to install a democracy in a truly independent Namibia.

Since peasants live in small communities disseminated over large distances, it is very difficult for them to organise as a class on their own. Sometimes they do succeed in that. They form a party or an army to push their demands. But very soon they find out that they cannot formulate a programme for the whole of society. So they have to ally themselves with one of the two main urban classes, either with the working class if the working class is able to organise itself and become strong, or with the bourgeoisie.

The latter alliance was the only possibility in the epoch of the great bourgeois revolutions in England and France in the 17th and 18th centuries, when the modern working class had not yet been developed by capitalism. During the French revolution of 1789, activists of the bourgeoisie visited peasants in their villages and helped to write up their demands for

independence from aristocratic and ecclesiastic landlords, for equality before the law and for a Constituent Assembly to realise those demands. The bourgeoisie of that epoch had genuinely common interests with the peasantry.

This is nowhere the case today, and has not been for a long time. The bourgeoisie cannot be a genuine ally of the peasantry and where it lures the peasantry into such an alliance, it will betray them. Only the working class can help the peasantry to realise its social and political demands. Only the working class, if it takes power, will be able to offer peasants acceptable conditions for the sale of their products, and credit for the purchase of their tools and machinery. Only the working class can help realise full democracy but the only way to do so is not to stop at formal, limited, bourgeois democracy, which leaves the capitalists in control of society and still running things in their own interests. The working class must carry on to expropriate the capitalists and install a workers' state. So the Constituent Assembly of all classes in society will necessarily and rapidly give way to the rule of councils of workers and poor peasants.

The hammer and sickle in our emblem symbolises the alliance of the working class with the peasantry in struggle against the capitalist class and against the remnants of old oppressive relations that flourished before capitalism.

But alliance does not mean fusion! We build a party of one class, the working class. This does not mean only that we aim for a party composed mainly of workers. It means above all that its programme is the programme of the working class and any person, worker, peasant or intellectual, who wants to become member, has to accept all of that programme. Moreover this programme stipulates which of the two classes must lead the alliance. That leading class is the working class.

6. The number four: the International

This number stands for the international character of our party. It may seem strange at first that the International can be symbolised by a particular number. There is a powerful reason for it but it can be understood only in connection with the history of all the efforts to build the International. So I am forced to make yet another long detour.

The working class has, since its origins, understood that it is fundamentally an international class. Its fight starts on a national level but can be won only if it becomes international.

It is impossible to achieve socialism in one country. Especially in a small (by population), entirely dependent country, like Namibia. Greece in Europe is another obvious example. But it is in the long run impossible even for a large country or a group of countries. The experience of the USSR shows it.

Because socialism and communism are possible only on the world scale, the social revolution of the working class must be a world revolution. This does not mean that the revolution can happen at the same time everywhere. But the working class itself is international; therefore so must be its party.

What we call the International is not a corrupt club that exists only to concoct or cover hideous plots against the working class and oppressed peoples, like the so called Socialist International to which SWAPO and ANC belong. Neither is it a federation of national groups which pursue their own independent, often conflicting policies and meet only to proclaim a token unity from time to time. There are many of these but often they hide their true nature quite well.

The International the working class needs is one international party. Of course it must have national sections able to decide how to tackle quickly national and local issues as they arise.

As the Communist Manifesto puts it: “Though not in substance,

yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.”

The International must have an international life involving all members directly, a unified internal discussion process on the most important issues of strategy and tactics, both on international and on national issues.

7. The Manifesto

The efforts of the international working class to organise as such, that is as an international party, have a long history full of rich lessons. The first thing to understand about it is that it was determined by the development of capitalism itself. Capitalism, as I said, produces the working class. During the nineteenth century the capitalist mode of production went from strength to strength and it produced a mighty working class, above all in Europe.

This working class was from the start a danger for the capitalists. In 1848 several revolutions shook Europe. They were all democratic revolutions led by the bourgeoisie. Through them, the bourgeoisie wished to exert political power in the name of the people, instead of leaving it in the hands of emperors, kings and lords. But in the most important country of that time, France, the revolution was, at its highest point, already a workers’ revolution. In all countries of Europe, the working class existed already and threatened not only the kings and aristocrats but also the bourgeoisie. Therefore the bourgeoisie preferred to stop and betray all these revolutions, and renounce political power, rather than risk that this power be contested from below by the working class.

Just before that revolution, in 1847, German workers who had emigrated from the oppressive regimes of that country formed

an international association, the League of the Communists. Two young German intellectuals, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, were members of the League and were charged with writing its Manifesto. It was published in February 1848, just before the revolution started.

It was not the first programme of the working class. Previous programmes had already established the goal: a society without exploitation, a society where the means of production are common property of the workers. But these programmes were not scientific. They were projects based on the clever ideas of some inventor who thought out in his head a proposal how society might be organised better. Then he usually submitted his project to influential people of the ruling class, appealing to their supposed benevolence. Such projects go by the Greek name “Utopia”, meaning an imagined organisation of society that exists in “no place”.

Marx’s and Engels’ Manifesto of the Communist Party was the first programme with a scientific underpinning. It made clear that this new form of society, communism, was the necessary next step for humanity not because it was a better idea than the existing society, but because it was a step required by the material productive forces developed by capitalism itself. It made also clear that capitalism was creating a whole class of people, the working class, who had to lead a new social revolution in order to make communism happen. Capitalism itself started a process which would enable this class, through its own movement and education, to rise to this historic task. So everybody should read the Manifesto, it is still our programme! There is no better, more forceful or more beautiful explanation of our overall aims. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/

But of course capitalism has developed further. The situation has changed a lot in the 167 years since the publication of the Manifesto. Our programme has had to be adapted and

specified further. Our programme is a living thing that has to evolve.

The League of Communists was only a precursor of the International. The working class itself was not yet fully developed and accordingly the League consisted not of industrial workers as we know them but mostly of skilled craftsmen.

8. The first and the second Internationals

8.1. First International

In 1864, the first real international party of the working class was constituted in London: the International Workingmen's Association. The police of every state kept them under close surveillance and estimated that they had five million members. But the International itself counted eight million. Many of them were already industrial workers in big factories.

This International played a leading role in the most important revolution of the 19th century, the Paris Commune of 1871 which for the first time in history brought the working class to power, although only in one city. The Commune was defeated and the International did not survive that defeat for long. It split, became weak, and in 1876 it dissolved itself.

But the First International left a legacy on which we build today. Marx and Engels were part of it and they were able to persuade the majority of the other member of their programme and of the scientific foundations of it. It was not easy, they had to have many discussions especially with the anarchists who at the outset had had the majority in the International. Anarchists were communists who thought that it was possible to install communism immediately, without having to build it first. This is because their idea of communism was in fact a return to some long forgotten age of small communes that would function in completely autonomous ways, without the need for

any centralisation. This backward-orientated idea ignored the centralised nature of modern industry. Consequently, they saw no problem in replacing the capitalist state immediately by a regime of no government at all. Such a regime is known by the Greek name “anarchy” and that is why this current in the working class are called “anarchists”.

But we know that the working class will have to do the opposite of anarchist notions. It will have to redirect existing industry towards production for human needs and develop it further. That means, among other goals, that the working class will have to establish democratically a plan of development and correct it frequently and democratically according to an honest evaluation of its results. Only through this path of development can real, modern Communism be achieved, an organisation of society where everybody is entitled to the satisfaction of his or her needs and everybody contributes to production according to his or her ability. This presupposes that the productive forces of humanity are so developed that lack of basic means of subsistence will be replaced by their abundance. Only then will the need for the state as the guardian over scarce means of subsistence gradually disappear. The final result will be that there will be no rule of humans over other humans. In this final goal, Marxists and anarchists agree.

Marxism prevailed but anarchism persisted, especially in Italy and in Spain. Much later, during the workers revolution in Spain, in 1936-1937, it got an opportunity to make political proposals to the working class in order to defeat fascism and overthrow capitalism. Anarchists saw that their conceptions were not workable, and they had then no better idea than to become part of a government of the capitalists in Barcelona in 1937 and so to help protect the capitalist state against the insurrection of the workers, whom they helped to disarm and demobilise. This final lesson about anarchism can and should be studied in the works of Leon Trotsky and other Marxists who

participated in that revolution.

Through its participation in the Paris Commune of 1871 the International gained a very important insight: the revolution of the working class cannot use the old state of the capitalists and just fill its parliament, its government and other organs with workers. To that extent, the International agreed with the anarchists. But the International under Marx's guidance drew a positive lesson completely opposite to the notions of the anarchists. Namely, the working class must install an entirely new, workers' state in order to start building communism.

Dutifully, Marx and Engels acknowledged this lesson. They did not change the Communist Manifesto which by that time had become a historic document, but all subsequent programmes of the working class had to include that lesson.

This example of Marx and Engels teaches us another important lesson. Their teaching cannot be considered as finished. We must develop it on the basis of experiences of the working class. We must acknowledge inaccuracies and errors, in order to be able to correct them, like Marx and Engels did in their lifetimes.

8.2. Second International

In 1889 the Second International was founded. This was an immense advance because it was based on mass revolutionary workers parties in Germany, in France, the Austrian empire and in many other countries. They were called socialist or social-democratic parties. But they were revolutionary parties, quite unlike most of the parties that use the same names today.

These parties were linked to trade unions. In most cases the parties promoted or founded the unions, like in Germany and France. In Great Britain, it was the unions who came, a bit later, to the conclusion that they needed a political wing and so they founded a Labour Party. The Second International led

great, victorious struggles, for instance for the eight hour working day or for the universal right to vote. It gave its support to the struggle of working class women for equal rights with men and so contributed mightily to the first advances in that field. Among other conquests, it established the First of May as the international day of struggle of the working class.

These material conquests of millions of workers in the developed countries could never have been achieved if the working class had limited itself to purely “economic”, day-to-day struggle.

What made them possible was that the Second International allowed them to understand and adopt the programme of scientific socialism and communism.

In other words it was a Marxist International which educated millions of workers as Marxists.

But there were flaws.

Its leading members tended to forget the most important lesson from the experience of the First International – the one about the state! The Marxism of the majority of the leaders of the Second International was not quite the original teaching of Marx and Engels. It was distorted in that its revolutionary consequences seemed far away and abstract.

8.3. Imperialism and its impact on the Second International

During this period of rise of capitalism in Europe and also in the United States of America, the whole world was increasingly subjected to capitalist conditions of exploitation. Capitalist exploitation was introduced into huge countries, like Russia, India and China and to whole continents like Africa, through colonisation.

Most people in the Second International saw the enormous

exploitation of the colonies by their colonial masters and protested against it. But they also expected progress to come out of it. Many thought that colonies and other latecomers to capitalism would soon follow a similar path of glorious capitalist development as Great Britain, France, Germany, the USA and Japan had done.

In fact world capitalism entered a new stage: imperialism. This is the highest stage of capitalist development. In it, a new entity emerged: finance capital. This results from the merger of financial institutions (such as banks and other money lenders and money makers) and industrial capital under the leadership of the money lenders. Finance capital dominates over all smaller capitals, limits them or squeezes them out. Imperialist countries export goods and capital and exploit natural resources, including cheap labour, from the rest of the world. This is called the imperialist relationship. For instance, Great Britain had an imperialist relationship with India and later also with South Africa, among others. Germany was able to establish an imperialist relationship with South-West Africa. Around the beginning of the twentieth century it became apparent that the imperialist relationship in general did not allow the dependent countries to develop. This is still the case, even though most colonies liberated themselves politically. The imperialist relationship persists. Under it, Africa's natural resources are being plundered as savagely as in previous periods. Its masses are descending into horrible poverty, and are subjected to barbaric dictatorships and barbaric wars. Capitalism itself has become an absolute barrier to the development of humanity, which means to the development of its productive forces. Therefore the imperialist stage is the last stage of capitalism.

All humanity is faced with the choice between passing to a new, socialist and communist mode of production, or a long descent into ever more barbaric conditions of life. This alternative was already formulated by Friedrich Engels in 1878

and then again in the middle of the first world war by the Polish comrade Rosa Luxemburg who wrote: “Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to Socialism or regression into Barbarism”. All subsequent history has confirmed this prediction. Both world wars and fascism represented huge outbreaks of barbarism.

After the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991, which (especially in its beginning) had represented the hope for a socialist future, we are already experiencing an acceleration of the worldwide descent into ever-deeper barbarism. For over a hundred years the working class has been trying to make the transition to socialism. In the present period of a new rise of the working class we have perhaps the last opportunity to do it. But already some revolutions in the Middle-East, and in northern Africa have been defeated. This has favoured yet another big slide into barbarism not just there, but also, in Central Africa for example. Europe is also sliding rapidly into mass poverty, authoritarian rule and wars. So we do not have much time. The working class must now learn quickly and act, or perish.

In the late 19th century, capitalism was still in its ascending phase. A thin layer of relatively well off workers developed at that time in the leading capitalist countries of Europe and a little later also in the USA. They had won relatively high wages and good working conditions. The capitalists of these countries were able to afford these conditions to some of “their” workers due to the extra profits they were making by exploiting the rest of the world, especially colonies. This thin layer is called the “labour aristocracy”. The labour aristocracy had an enormous influence on the parties of the Second International. A bureaucracy expressing the contentedness of the labour aristocracy developed inside these parties and in the unions. This was (and still is) a layer of leaders who did not object to others talking about the social revolution in some far future.

Sometimes they themselves made such Sunday speeches. The socialist revolution was the so called “maximum” programme of social-democracy. Words are cheap. But in everyday life they were content with what they had and wanted to keep capitalism, with some improvements. Such improvements, like the eight-hour working day, were called “reforms” and they were the contents of the so called “minimum” programme. The people who limited the movement to the minimum programme were (and still are) called reformists.

But there was a strong left wing in the Second International around such people as Rosa Luxemburg in Germany and the Russian Vladimir Ulyanov. Ulyanov had to hide from the police of his country and therefore adopted another name: Nikolai Lenin. Later he became known as Vladimir Lenin.

Unfortunately, the left wing was not well organised. That was a big mistake because the reformists held the leadership of most of the parties of the International. Only in one country did the left wing organise strongly. That was Russia. The left there called themselves “Bolsheviks”. Bolsheviks organised themselves into a faction and shortly before the world war that faction became in fact a party independent of the reformists who were called “Mensheviks”. I omit the explanation of those strange names because the origin of the names is rather accidental. The origin of the Russian factions themselves is not accidental. I’ll come back to it.

9. The failure of the Second International

In 1914 the first world war started. The world as prey of imperialist powers had become too small for their expansion. The main imperialist powers of that time: Great Britain, France, Japan, Russia and the United States allied themselves on one side, Germany, Austria and the Ottoman empire (Turkey) on the other side. Each alliance tried to win a greater share of colonies as markets for its goods, sources for its raw materials and targets for profitable investment.

During the war, in 1916, Lenin published a pamphlet to explain to workers what imperialism is and why it is the highest and last stage of capitalism. The title of the pamphlet declares this insight. It is called: “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism”. Members of the WRP should study this pamphlet, too, it is still valid. https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/

Millions of workers killed each other in this war in the interests of “their” capitalists. The international working class could have prevented this. That would have required defying the marching orders, calling a general strike and taking power in every country. Before the war, congresses of the Second International had decided to call a general strike in the event of a war. But its reformist leadership had not prepared it at all for such an eventuality. When it came to doing it, they did the contrary: each national party took the side of its own capitalists. The Second International collapsed. Its leaders went over to the capitalist enemy.

The left had to do under terrible war conditions what it had failed to do in peacetime: organise. It started to propagate the idea of a new, Third International.

10. Russian Revolution and Bolshevism

Then, after three years of terrible suffering during the war, the Russian working class overthrew the old rotten imperial state of the Tsar in February 1917. Unfortunately, the Russian bourgeoisie was able to take power. In only a few months it completely revealed its reactionary character by refusing to stop the war or to distribute land to the peasant masses. In October, the working class led the masses to get rid of the bourgeoisie and install a completely new, workers’ state. It was based on workers’ councils in the cities and on councils of poor peasants in the countryside. These councils decided everything in Russia. One of the first thing they did was to stop the war unilaterally, nationalise all the land, hand it

to poor peasants for long-term use, and expropriate the whole capitalist class. Because the Russian word for “council” is “soviet”, the new state was called the “soviet state”. The Soviets immediately held a congress, and appointed a new government. Lenin became the head of the new state, and another well-known revolutionary, Leon Trotsky, was charged with forming a completely new army, the Red Army. The capitalist governments of 14 countries sent armies to destroy the republic of workers’ councils in Russia and reintroduce a dictatorship of the capitalists. They fomented a civil war. But all these enemies were defeated by the new revolutionary army.

We speak of the Russian revolution but in fact it was victorious in a much larger area than Russia. It included most of the countries of the old Empire of the Tsars; for instance, Ukraine, several large countries of central Asia and smaller countries in the Caucasus region. All these countries soon federated to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the USSR. When it was founded, this Union was not strong because of coercion exerted by its largest member, Soviet Russia on the other republics, but precisely because it was a free Union. The Bolshevik Party and the Third International under Lenin’s leadership made the right of self-determination of all peoples, up to and including their right to separation, into a principle.

For the first time in history, the working class of a whole country, and a very large one at that, was able to get rid of the rule of the capitalists, install its own state and start with the practical realisation of the socialist programme. The imperialist war, the intervention of the 14 states and the civil war left the country exhausted. Almost all industry, railways and other infrastructure were destroyed. As in other countries, it was the working class – who else? – which had to rebuild the country. But in Russia it could do it on a completely different basis. It no longer worked for capitalist

profit. It worked for its own needs. That was the main achievement of the revolution in Russia. This conquest brought social advances, like a free health service, free access to education and many others. Superficially, these social conquests resemble some partial conquests later achieved by the working class of some capitalist countries, like Great Britain. But in reality they were socialist conquests because they set the whole working class of a huge country on the path to build socialism. That path could not be followed to its end without an international revolution. There can be no socialism in one country. But the international working class was encouraged to follow the Russian example. Rightly, the international working class considered the Russian revolution and its socialist conquests as its own and the Russian working class considered its state as just the first success of the world revolution.

In 1991, after 74 years, the October Revolution was finally defeated. The USSR collapsed under the pressure of imperialism, because of its isolation. That was due to an enormous delay in the world revolution, itself due to a series of defeats and betrayals over many years. Capitalists, their politicians, their press, their historians and other ideologists heap slanders on the achievements of the October Revolution. But these achievements will never be forgotten. The working class will always learn from them.

Many books have been written about the October revolution. Leon Trotsky himself wrote one, “The History of the Russian Revolution”. Everybody should read that book and we should discuss all the rich lessons of the Russian revolution as part of the building of the WRP and formation of its members. https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/hrr/

Here just a few of the main points about the Russian Revolution.

The victory of the Russian October revolution was only

possible because there was a well organised party of dedicated and well educated workers who understood what Capitalism-Imperialism is, the concrete situation of the masses in Russia and were able to act in unity to propose the socialist revolution to the masses as the way out of their plight. In other words, the Bolshevik party was a genuine Marxist workers party.

Here is where I have to come back to its origin in 1903, because such a party is the necessary condition for the working class to be able to take power even today. So we must look carefully at the only example of such a party in history.

The Russian social-democratic party really formed only at its second congress which had to be held outside Russia in Brussels, then in London, because of police repression. At the congress, suddenly there appeared a difference about the conditions of membership. Mensheviks thought that party members should be those who accepted the party programme and supported it by regular personal assistance under the direction of one of the party's organisations. Bolsheviks, with Lenin, demanded that members "recognise the Party Programme and support it by material means and by personal participation in one of the party's organisations". So Lenin and his followers in the party required a much more serious engagement of party members than the others, but was that so important? Everybody, including Lenin, was surprised that the two factions could not unite because of such a seemingly small detail. After all, both factions were followers of Marx's school of scientific socialism/communism. But later history proved that the difference was indeed fundamental. In fact, the laxness of the Mensheviks in this question was just the beginning of the influence of petty-bourgeois ideas. Later, this became apparent, as the Mensheviks became a particular kind of reformist. In 1917 the socialist revolution became an immediate task and the Mensheviks refused to accomplish it.

We are against petty-bourgeois laxness. The conditions of

membership in the Workers International and in its Namibian section, the Workers Revolutionary party, are those written down by Lenin: “recognise the Party Programme and support it by material means and by personal participation in one of the party’s organisations”. We want to build a fighting organisation with a clear shape, not a soft cloud. There is much more to be learnt from the history of the Bolshevik party and members of the WRP should study that history.

Another point: the October Revolution was only the first victory of the international, world revolution. The Bolsheviks understood that, the masses in Russia understood that; and what is more, very soon the majority of the working class of the world understood that! Old parties of the Second International began to break up because workers, their members, wanted to imitate Russia. Outright revolutions broke out in Germany and Hungary. In several other countries, there were revolutionary movements.

During most of the war, the Third International was the proclaimed aim of a small minority of courageous opponents to that war. After the October Revolution, in 1919, the Third International was actually founded. In several important countries, big chunks of the old social democratic parties demanded to be part of the new International. In Germany, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia it was even the majority in those parties!

11. Third International

The Third International had a huge task on its hands. In the epoch of imperialism, the world revolution has become the immediate task. But the leaders of the working class were not up to that task. Even the leadership of those parties who were sincerely in favour of the revolution were not up to it.

Some of them continued to preach socialism in Sunday speeches but in everyday life they remained reformists. They remained

prisoners of the distorted version of Marx's teachings that was current in the Second International. Already in 1917, Lenin published a pamphlet to correct that, above all to refresh and develop the lesson drawn by Marx from the Paris Commune, that the working class cannot take over the bourgeois state but must sweep it away and install a new, workers' state. The title of the pamphlet is "The State and Revolution". It should be read and understood by every member of the WRP. https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/

In order to make clear how different it was from its predecessor, the Second International (which called itself socialist), the Third returned to the old name used in Marx's and Engels' time: "communist". It called itself the Communist International. Russians at that time liked abbreviations a lot and called it simply the "Comintern".

Other factions of the Comintern ignored the fact that the socialist revolution must be an act of the whole working class. They were so impatient that they started minority actions all of which ended in disaster. They called themselves "left-wing communists". They wrote up whole theories that communists need not bother to go into bourgeois parliaments or work with workers in trade unions because of their rotten leadership.

In fact, both factions operated with the old notions of a minimum programme and a maximum programme. For both there was no connection, no bridge between the two programmes and so some stuck to the minimum programme and ignored the maximum programme, while others did the opposite.

The true task of the communists is to raise the level of comprehension of the whole of the working class until that class becomes capable of taking power into its hands. That requires a programme that combines both the minimum (reforms) and the maximum (revolution). It must contain intermediate,

transitional demands that lead from reform to revolution and in the process help the masses to acquire experiences with struggle and draw the right lessons from them.

In 1920, Comrade Lenin published a whole book to explain that and to criticise the “left-wing communists”. It is called ‘“Left-Wing” Communism: an Infantile Disorder’, and is yet another very important book that every member should read. https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/lwc/

So the situation was that the new, imperialist epoch required a completely new approach to struggle. But none of the new communist parties was prepared for it. Despite their best intentions, all were still fraught with conceptions and habits acquired in the calmer previous epoch of rising capitalism. All parties except one: the Russian party of the Bolsheviks. That party, because of the peculiar conditions of Russia, had understood what was required for a revolution to succeed. Indeed, it was the party that had led the October Revolution to victory. But it is important to know that even that party had followed a line of supporting its own bourgeoisie at the beginning of the year 1917. Fortunately it had a very good leader, Lenin. Lenin had formed the party and the party had formed him and many other thoughtful revolutionaries. The party listened to Lenin and so was able to rearm itself to become the leading party of the revolutionary process that was already taking place.

In effect, the whole Third International needed to start a political formation of millions of socialists (who now called themselves communists) to rearm them theoretically and politically. Only in this way could they become really fit for the period of imperialism and of world revolution. They could not simply learn what to do by reading books and taking classes, they had to learn by doing. During the process many mistakes were made which had to be theoretically understood and practically corrected.

The necessity of a transitional programme was one major difference between the Second and the Third International. The other was a concrete understanding of the world revolution as a living process. The majority of the Second International had assumed that socialist revolution would be victorious first in one of the countries where the working class was most numerous and powerful because their capitalism was most mature: Great Britain, France or Germany. But the Russian Revolution proved them all wrong. It was victorious in a backward country which had not attained full capitalist development, whose immense majority of toilers were peasants and whose working class was a tiny minority. A country which had not even arrived at the stage of a bourgeois democracy. In the history of Europe, the class "normally" responsible for leading the democratic revolution to overthrow kings and other tyrants, was the bourgeoisie. Yet in Russia the bourgeoisie proved completely incapable of accomplishing that task. The working class had to take power in order to achieve bourgeois democratic rights and freedoms. Then it would not and could not stop at this. It went directly on to expropriate the capitalists and advance towards socialism.

The imperialist relationship between advanced capitalist countries and dependent, backward countries produces this situation where the capitalist class proves incapable of realising its task of installing democracy. So the working class has to take up both the democratic and socialist tasks in one and the same revolution. Leon Trotsky recognised this necessity well before the October Revolution of 1917. For this process of advancing from democratic to socialist revolution in one movement he used the term "permanent revolution" which had already been used by Marx.

Permanent revolution characterises the whole process of the world revolution in our epoch of imperialist relationships. At the time of the growth and enthusiasm of the Third International, Trotsky's theory was known as such, under this

name, only to a minority. But the International was aware of the fact of permanent revolution, if not of the term. It turned towards the dependent, oppressed countries which had been almost completely neglected by the Second International. Communist parties were set up in backward countries such as China.

Unfortunately, all the promising developments of the Third International were stopped after the Comintern's Fourth Congress in November 1922. Our comrade Balázs Nagy of the Workers International wrote an article which shows the limits of the work of both of the Third International and the Fourth International and how we, Workers International, must take up these unavoidable tasks. The article's title is "Some Problems of the Fourth International – and the tasks involved in rebuilding it". I suggest that we read and discuss it in one or more training sessions dedicated to these problems. http://workersinternational.info/2014/08/some-problems-of-the-fourth-international-and-the-tasks-involved-in-rebuilding-it/

The reason the Third International's work could not be completed is that the Russian revolution remained isolated. The process of German revolution of 1918-1923 ended in a defeat. That happened because the leadership of the German communist party felt uncertain, became indecisive, hesitated and that hesitation of the leadership weakened the whole party of a million members. After that, Capitalism was able to stabilise for several years. It had been shaken by the war and the revolutionary uprisings after the war. But since none of these uprisings had led to the working class taking power in one of the advanced countries, the capitalists prevailed globally.

12. Stalinist bureaucracy

The Russian working class, though victorious, was exhausted by years of war, revolution and civil war. Its international isolation led to the development of an uncontrolled caste of

parasites that came to rule the country in the name of the working class. It first appeared through an alliance between the party apparatus of the Bolshevik party and the well-off peasants and other smaller capitalists that the Bolsheviks had to allow because of the international isolation of the revolution. Then the caste consolidated into a real monster that ruled not only in the name of the working class but more and more over the working class and against the working class.

The foundations of the workers' state installed by the October Revolution still persisted. There was still no capitalist ruling class. Workers still produced for human needs instead of producing for profit, as they must in capitalist countries. But the ruling caste controlled both production and distribution and directed both to satisfy above all its own needs. The whole apparatus of the state no longer consisted of councils (soviets) of workers. Its organs were still called soviets, but they were entirely in the hands of the ruling caste. So it was still a workers' state but a deeply damaged, degenerated workers' state.

This ruling caste is known as the Kremlin bureaucracy after the old imperial palace in Moscow from where its leaders ruled the whole country. More frequently, it is called the Stalinist bureaucracy because its leader was an old Bolshevik named Stalin. He was not a remarkable man except that he was an outstanding schemer and able to rule with an iron fist. But the new caste needed no great leader and educator of the working class like Lenin had been (he died in 1924). It needed an unscrupulous dictator and Stalin exactly fitted the job description.

Soon, after 1933, this caste became great friends with the bourgeoisie of France and Great Britain. Then with that of Hitler's Germany. Then again with that of France, Great Britain and the USA. Stalin and his caste became sworn enemies of the working class of the world. They did not allow the working class of any country to take power. After the 2nd

world war, the working classes of Yugoslavia and of China were able accomplish social revolutions in their countries only against the will of the Kremlin.

But at the same time, though this reactionary bureaucracy wanted to be friends with the capitalists abroad, the capitalist were never friends of the workers state, the USSR. Soon after the war, the British and American capitalist "friends" of the Kremlin put so much pressure on the USSR that the Stalinist bureaucracy felt it had to allow the communist parties to carry out social revolutions in several countries of central and eastern Europe. Because of this, some people started to think that this bureaucracy could not be entirely reactionary. They were completely wrong.

In fact, it was the beginning of a period of systematic worldwide collaboration between the Kremlin and the leading imperialist power, the USA. This collaboration had two names, "peaceful coexistence" and "cold war", but both are wrong. The coexistence was not peaceful, nor was the war always "cold". The aim was to maintain the rule of imperialism globally. Therefore, all movements of the working class, of other oppressed classes and of oppressed peoples against imperialism had to be terminated and their leaders either corrupted or killed. The real, comprehensive history of this horrible collaboration has yet to be written.

It is of great importance also for southern Africa. It was Henry Kissinger, an envoy of the USA-Imperialism, who orchestrated the reining in of all the bourgeois liberation movements, such as those led by the ANC, SWAPO, MPLA and FRELIMO in the 1970s. This entailed the massacre of leaders and militants whose democratic and socialist goals were incompatible with the continued rule of imperialism in this region. But Kissinger was able to do his bloody work only with the collaboration of the Kremlin bureaucracy. It was all part of the functioning "peaceful coexistence" or "cold war".

At the time it formed, in the 1920s, the Stalinist bureaucracy took advantage of the great prestige of the USSR among the workers of the world to take over the leadership of the Third International. From 1929 onward, all leaders of the communist parties were hand-picked by Stalin for their obedience to all his directives, sudden turns and whims. Neither Stalin nor these local lieutenants of his were able or willing to get on with the great historic task of the Third International. Instead, they used it as an instrument of pressure in the service of their diplomacy. In 1943 they dissolved it but by then it had been dead for ten years as a workers' organisation.

With some exceptions, Stalinist parties remained workers' parties. Apparently, these parties remained "communist", continued to propagate Marxism as the scientific theory of the working class and above all, defended the heritage of the October Revolution. So millions of workers remained their enthusiastic members because they thought these parties still represented the interests of the working class. But this appearance of Stalinist parties did not agree with their true nature at all. This "Marxism" of the Stalinist bureaucracy propagated "socialism in one country" (the USSR). That was in complete contradiction to the real scientific insights of Marx and Lenin. It was however very suitable for the purposes of the Stalinist bureaucracy whose very existence was based on the isolation of the USSR. But critique and discussion was not allowed in any of these parties and so the real nature of Stalinism has remained undiscovered for the majority of members of the Stalinist parties to this day.

13. Left opposition and Fourth International

The decisive point of no return in this negative development of the Third International was the year 1933. Hitler came to power in Germany. The Stalinist party in Germany had helped to divide the working class and prevent its resistance to Hitler's fascism. Even after the defeat, the Stalinist

Communist International drew no lessons from it. This International, completely dominated by the Stalinist bureaucracy and its international apparatus, was dead for the purposes of the working class.

So the Third International degenerated, was later even formally dissolved and left behind a reactionary international apparatus with its centre in the Kremlin. But this did not happen without resistance. Almost immediately after the Stalinist bureaucracy began its rise in 1923, a Left Opposition arose against this bureaucracy, first in Russia, then internationally, in most parties of the Communist International. Lenin himself gave the first impulse to resist Stalin's takeover of the Bolshevik party. After his death, it was the other most prominent leader of the October revolution who led the Left Opposition: Leon Trotsky.

The Left Opposition recognised after 1933 that it had to build a new International, the Fourth International. It was proclaimed in 1938 in France on the eve of the second world war. It inherited all the positive experiences and insights of the Third International before its capture and destruction by the Stalinist bureaucracy. These experiences and insights are gathered in the Programme of the Fourth international. https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/

It was written by Leon Trotsky after many discussions with other members of the Fourth International. Trotsky conceived it consciously as the programme of the imminent revolution which he predicted to come after the second world war. Its main idea is that capitalism-imperialism attacks the very existence of the working class – the only class in this society capable of opening a positive outcome to the crisis of the whole humanity. But to do so, this class needs a programme of demands leading to this revolution, a programme of transition.

For instance, ever-growing unemployment throws whole layers of

the working class, especially the youth, out of the production process, with no hope of ever becoming part of it again. This divides the working class and puts pressure on all working conditions, both wages and working hours, of those who still have work. So on the one side, there are those who are not allowed to work at all, on the other side those who work must work ever longer hours and ever more quickly.

The Programme of the Fourth International seeks the unity of both parts of the working class by demanding the distribution of all available work among all capable hands without loss of wages. On the one hand, this demand must be satisfied in order to stop the destruction of the working class. On the other hand it runs dead against the need of capitalists to make a profit. So it is both indispensable and not realisable under capitalism. It is in fact a demand to overthrow capitalism and start building socialism, but it makes this theoretical necessity accessible as a result of the experience of millions of workers in their practical struggles for their very existence. The programme of transition is a whole system of such demands both economic and political, leading up to the socialist revolution. Those demands cannot be just thought up by a clever person at his or her desk. They originate from the deeply felt needs of the masses, and often are formulated by the masses themselves.

This is the programme of the Workers International adopted at its founding conference in Budapest, 1990. Its full title is “Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International. The Mobilisation of the Masses around Transitional Demands to Prepare the Conquest of Power.”

Every member of the WRP must read and understand our programme.

So this is how the number four in our emblem represents the International. It does not represent an abstract appeal or desire for an International but the engagement to rebuild the

Fourth International.

Now the question arises: where is this Fourth International, 77 years after its foundation? Why must it be rebuilt?

14. The fate of the Fourth International

The Fourth International was proclaimed and founded on the eve of the Second World War out of a historic necessity. The Fourth International predicted that this world war would be even more terrible than the first one and that it would be followed by mighty revolutions. The task the International set itself was to build the parties that would lead these workers revolutions to victory over capitalism. These revolutions did take place but it turned out that the International was not ready to lead them.

Sections of the International were part of the resistance against fascism in occupied Europe and promoted the internationalist line in it against the dominant nationalism propagated by all Stalinist parties. But the International ceased to function as a world party. The Stalinists and Fascists assassinated many of its leaders during the war.

The most experienced section of the Fourth International was the soviet section. All of its members knew and used Marx’s scientific method and many had learnt how to apply it in practice in the Russian October Revolution of 1917. So it was mainly this section and its leader, Leon Trotsky, that could teach the other sections all the theoretical and practical knowledge acquired by the Russian communists before and during the October revolution of 1917.

Unfortunately, in the the 30s almost all members of this party were incarcerated in Stalin’s prisons and concentration camps. They organised clandestinely inside the camps, but around 1940 Stalin ordered their physical liquidation and that of Leon Trotsky himself, who lived in exile, in Mexico. Only a few survived and were not liberated until 1953. By this action and

by lies and slander, physical violence and murder, Stalin's international apparatus deliberately isolated the Fourth International from the workers' movement. This damage inflicted by Stalinism on the Fourth international led to an unhealthy isolation and lack of growth and ultimately led to the emergence of sects acting in the name of the Fourth International but unable to learn the lessons of Leon Trotsky.

So it came about that after the war, the International did not understand its task – which was to lead the revolution. Its leaders had not understood the main lesson of Marxism: that there can be no revolution without the leadership of a revolutionary party. Instead they observed how the revolutionary movements that took place in Italy and in France at the end of the war were led to their defeat by completely counter-revolutionary Stalinist parties. After that, a majority of these leaders declared that the prediction of revolutions was proven wrong and turned their backs completely on the task of building revolutionary parties. They themselves fell under the influence of Stalinism.

However, as a result, there have also been continual efforts by the most conscious elements of the class to resist Stalinism's dead end diversions of the march towards socialism. That resistance organised itself in 1953 to rebuild the Fourth International. But even inside this resistance the influence of Stalinism was strong and all the stronger for not being conscious. As a result, the movement is now in a state of dispersion with a myriad of sects all claiming the "tradition" of the Fourth International for themselves and all pretending to grow at the expense of other such sects and, most importantly, at the expense of the living movement of the working class, whom they all consider as just building material for their own sect, just like the Stalinist parties did. Most of them have undemocratic internal regimes and this is another aspect of the unconscious influence of Stalinism on them. Marx, Engels, Lenin or Trotsky never favoured such

attitudes and behaviour which do not belong in the working class movement.Our organisation, Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, was founded in 1990 as the continuation of the ongoing organised effort to overcome these problems. Some of us have been part of it for decades.

To learn more about the crisis of the Fourth International, comrades should study Balázs Nagy's book "Marxist considerations on the crisis" and his already mentioned article "Some problems…" http://workersinternational.info/2014/08/some-problems-of-the-fourth-international-and-the-tasks-involved-in-rebuilding-it/

15. The defeat of 1989-1991

In 1991, the Stalinist bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union. In each of its constituent republics, the national branches of the Stalinist bureaucracy stole most of the state's assets, in fact anything that could be transformed into capital. The current capitalist classes in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and the other republics formed on the ruins of the USSR originate from this theft. The state founded by Lenin, Trotsky and by millions of revolutionary workers and peasants in 1917 was lost. So were the workers' states in Central and Eastern Europe, with the same methods (theft) and results. The worst aspect of this bare-faced theft was that the working class was unable to oppose it, because it no longer recognised that these states belonged to the working class. Generations lived under the oppression of the Stalinist bureaucracy in a degenerated workers' state in the USSR. Similar states in Central and Eastern Europe even came into existence with that oppression and with the deformation of the state. The social revolutions that installed them in 1948-49 were themselves deformed by their Stalinist leadership. In the end, the workers' nature of these states became unrecognisable even to their rightful owners – the working class. But when these states disappeared, all the other, more palpable socialist conquests also disappeared! Suddenly, state enterprises went

bankrupt and stopped paying workers. Unemployment and humiliating poverty appeared, access to health care and education became difficult and so on. Workers fought against some of these consequence but they lacked a party that would unify all these struggles in a mass resistance to the cause – the restoration of capitalism.

This defeat was not only that of the working class of the USSR. The working class of the whole world suffered a historic defeat. Everywhere the capitalist classes were encouraged to deepen their so called neo-liberal "reforms" whose meaning is to increase exploitation in order to save their profits. At the same time, they were able to restrict the rights of the working class to resist through its unions and politically through its parties. Social democratic and Stalinist parties were thrown into disarray and most responded by becoming bourgeois parties and striving to resemble other bourgeois parties as closely as possible, officially renouncing their working class origin. So the working class of most countries was deprived of its own political expression: representation on the political arena and leadership in political struggles.

Imperialism felt triumphant. Its leaders proclaimed socialism dead and the leader of these leaders, George Bush senior, the president of the USA, even proclaimed a capitalist "new world order". But it became apparent very quickly that capitalism-imperialism had reached a degree of decomposition where the only "order" it had to offer was in fact chaos and increasing barbarism.

In South Africa this negative turn was represented by the transformation of the South African Communist Party into an openly bourgeois party, although recent events there show that sincere communists will resist these reactionary developments.

16. Turn to new workers' parties

Some of these sincere communists have now recognised the

nature of the SACP and were initiators of the turn of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) in December 2013 to start exploring ways to build a new socialist party of the working class and to constitute its true programme. NUMSA is the largest union of South Africa and perhaps of the whole continent. It sets an example to be followed by the working class in the whole world. There is now a new uprising of the working class of the world. There were revolutions in North Africa and the Middle-East, led by inexperienced and unorganised youth. They stalled or were defeated. But the working class in several countries now tries to rebuild its unions and re-found its political parties. NUMSA's turn in this direction is not isolated, it is only the most decisive part of a worldwide turn.

In Namibia, the working class must participate in NUMSA's turn but the situation here is different in two ways: there has never been a workers' party in Namibia and the Namibian working class is now seizing the opportunity to build the Workers Revolutionary Party, section of Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, as that much needed and overdue workers' party.

So the working class of Namibia can make an original contribution to the world turn towards new socialist parties of the working class initiated by NUMSA. The main contribution is that these parties must be built as revolutionary parties in the process of rebuilding a world party, the Fourth International. This is a very important contribution not only for Africa, but also for countries at the other end of the imperialist relationship. Especially in Europe, where several of the new parties of the working class that have formed during the last decade are now arriving at a crossroads. Recent events in Ukraine and the Balkans tested their reformist conceptions and proved them wrong. A large international debate has started as working class activists are looking for alternatives.

17. The International that must be built

The defeat of 1991 created a very new situation for the international working class. Its oldest and most experienced section, the European working class, has lost its leading role. It was weakened by deindustrialisation in the old imperialist countries of Great Britain, France and Italy. Its long domination by Stalinist and reformist ideas produced a limited and unsuccessful resistance to the capitalists when they moved industries and diverted investments to countries providing cheap labour on other continents.

Everywhere in the world, the working class became divided into the unemployed, precarious contract workers and the dwindling section still in permanent employment. These sections have been pitted against each other and against workers of foreign origin. Workers became less conscious of their immediate interests as unions (with a few exceptions like Unite in the UK) failed in their task to unite all these parts of the working class. The political consciousness of being one international class with the historical mission to overthrow capitalism and replace it with socialism declined even more.

So, to a large extent, the educational work of the four Internationals (First, Second, Third and Fourth) was undone and has to be recommenced. To some extent, we are back in 1864 when the First International was formed. As then, the working class now needs to form an International with all genuinely working class currents, and Marxists have to do as Marx did: patiently argue for the scientific method and programme.

Some people draw from this the conclusion that we must really build a new edition of the long defunct First International, as if the history of the working class of the last 151 years had not taken place.

Others express the same desire to erase history by wishing to build a Fifth International without even bothering to draw a

serious balance-sheet of the so far unsuccessful efforts to build the Fourth International. A prominent representative of these was the late President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, who even called an international conference to debate this idea a few years ago.

Still others go as far as proclaiming that the working class has to build an International without a number. By saying that numbers and labels do not matter, they express the most radical negation not just of the necessity to learn from history, but even of the fact that the working class has a living history. We know that there is no other way than to continue that history by learning its lessons so we can overcome our weaknesses. The number 4 in our emblem symbolises the responsibility we take towards our own history as the working class!

Concretely, all those who reject this approach have in common that they propose some "International" that will – permanently or for the time being – ignore the main theoretical achievements of the Third and Fourth Internationals: the theory of permanent revolution, the need for a programme of transitional demands and the knowledge of the nature of imperialism as the latest stage of capitalism which is the theoretical basis of the first two. By running away from history such people immediately fall into the traps of reformism and Stalinism. They prove the truth of the saying: those who have no past, have no future.

The number 4 in our emblem stands concretely for all these theoretical achievements. These achievements are precisely the main subjects of the great and very positive discussion about the way forward which is now taking place among worker activists in this country, in South Africa, in the USA, in Greece and in many other countries. We would be great fools to drop these achievements by dropping our goal to rebuild the Fourth International.

Even more profoundly, without the political and theoretical achievements of the Third and Fourth Internationals, there would be no material conquests of the working class. All these conquests were, in the last analysis, only won as products or by-products of the struggle for the proletarian revolution. If many of these material conquests have now been destroyed, this has been possible only because the theoretical achievements have been forgotten or falsified by organisations of the working class in a retrograde movement on both fronts, theoretical and practical. But the working class now defends itself. We are part of this resistance. Our task is to inform it with Marx's, Lenin's and Trotsky's school of thought and of workers' politics.

In conclusion: To fully understand all the symbols of the flag, we have to understand our programme. The programme is not just a collection of demands plus an overall aim. That would just reproduce the old division between a maximum and a minimum programme. Our programme is the summary of what the working class is and how it fights. It summarises the aim of our class, the conclusions it has drawn from its dearly bought experiences, its disappointments in the past and its hopes for the future. This is why the programme cannot be declared finished once and for all. The conditions of working class struggle have changed a lot since 1990 and we need a programme taking into account all those changes. It will be based on the old programme of 1938 but at the same time it will be a new programme. The programme that the WRP of Namibia will elaborate in preparation for and during its special congress will be an important contribution to this new international programme of the Fourth International.

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An analysis of the crises of Southern Africa

> *A situation characterised by increasing burden of parasitism on the working people*

Southern Africa is in the throes of economic and political crises in **South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola**.

In South Africa there’s a louder and louder clamour even from the ranks of the ANC itself for President Zuma’s removal on the misleading conception of so-called State capture. Zuma’s relationship with the Guptas is put forward as ‘State Capture’.

(The fact is that the ANC State was always a comprador State for the ruling classes of South Africa. In this sense the State was ‘captured’ long before the Guptas. Police Chief Jackie Selebi’s undignified relationships with organised gangsters uncovered in 2010 and the Marikana Massacre of miners in 2012 amongst general caretaking were adequate proof of the aforesaid.)

Nevertheless, the South African State is all but bankrupt and the mismanagement of central institutions such as ESKOM (the power utility), which is now under investigation for ‘State Capture’, and the State’s endangering and intrinsic inability to develop adequate infrastructure for capitalism are undoubtedly major issues behind the demand instigated by the ruling classes.

In the midst of the South African crisis, the Zimbabwean Army for all intents and purposes deposed Robert Mugabe due to internal squabbles in the ZANU-PF seemingly on the question of succession. However, the real reason (like in the rest of the sub-region) is clearly dwindling or depleted resources and a frenzy to be close to the last remaining State finances and to serve international capitalism under austerity, which insists on as few servants as possible.

(Unemployment is estimated in the bourgeois press at 95%. But since the ‘estimate’ is coupled with ‘underemployment’, it is actually impossible to ‘estimate’. This ‘statistic’ was probably dreamed up in order to further revile Mugabe. What probably is true is that in one fell swoop working people have been rapidly turned into mostly temporary and seasonal contract workers. But this trend is anyway happening in the rest of the sub-region.)

Likewise, in Angola the new president Joao Lourenco, who took over from Eduardo Dos Santos in August this year, is reported to have dismissed Isabel dos Santos as chair of the state oil company Sonangol on Wednesday, 15 November. She is said to be

$3,5 billion ‘strong’ from oil income. Given that oil is said to comprise 90% of exports and the bulk of production, that payment is in dollars, but that there is a perennial shortage of FOREX (dollars), it will probably never be known how much she and others are truly ‘worth’, as the dollars seem to disappear before reaching Angola. (Exports in 2015 were estimated at $37,3 billion and imports at about $22 billion. There should have been no problem with foreign valuta.)

President Lourenço had reportedly already dismissed the heads of several other state companies, including the three state-owned media companies.Bottom of Form Sonangol is reported to be a partner with some of the biggest international oil companies, including Exxon Mobil, Chevron and BP.

When MPLA (People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola) took over in 1975, they ‘nationalised’ all corner shops and retail outlets, replaced them with severely under-stocked ‘Peoples Shops’ and set up ‘black markets’, without price control, which allowed government ministers and officials to make profits many times over the purchase price of the items. These so-called black markets had hundreds of metres of shelves loaded with every conceivable item and openly operated with consumables and imported goods.

The same frenzy to loot as in the other countries of Southern Africa saw the MPLA ignore the many high-rise buildings under construction when the Portuguese had to leave in 1975. Until very recently they were left with their cranes still standing and the deteriorating infrastructure. Not even drainage was considered, let alone aesthetics.

If one considers the reports that from 2001 to 2008 Angola was one of the fastest growing economies in the world, with an estimated average of 11% growth, of which increased oil production constituted 17% of growth per year, it indicated a seriously sick situation in which the rest of the economy, especially agriculture, actually contracted by 6% per year:

negative growth of 6% growth in essential economy sector. Agriculture is said to remain by-and-large subsistent.

Officially Angola has 26% unemployment, but some Angolans put it much higher, even 70%. There is no way to determine the true figure.

No doubt stirring popular anger had a say in these newest developments just as in Zimbabwe.

However, if there is any change, it will be to strengthen the grip of the IMF, World Bank, the European Union and the United States. But, given the nature of oil companies, the looting will undoubtedly continue in Angola, leading to a much harsher situation for the more than 50% of impoverished Angolans and the rest who are employed.

Namibia has seen the State go into bankruptcy due to uncontrolled looting since 1990. By 1996 they had figured out how to loot Pension Funds, in cahoots with mining companies such as Rio Tinto Zinc and the Goldfields South Africa. They further discovered how to loot State Finances through sham building and construction projects with costs inflated by multiples.

Buildings and construction projects at absurdly inflated costs litter the entire country and the capital city, Windhoek. The most notable of these was firstly the State House. The original cost estimate was a few hundred million rand, but it was finished at the astronomical price of 19 billion rand. Besides being the residence of the President, it was designed to house cabinet offices and conference halls. These offices are now standing unoccupied.

The second most cynical project was the Neckartal Dam, which was contrived before 2011 as an irrigation scheme in the far south of the country. The Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment (SAIEA) had submitted a report that the project was not viable as the dam would require highly

specialised skills and largescale capital investments to produce high value produce for the overseas market, which was the purported object. It was further pointed out that the nearby Naute Dam's capacity was not utilised to the full. The project continued irrespective. It was initially costed at R3,02 billion, but it escalated to R5,7 billion in 2017, when the uncompleted construction ground to a halt due to State bankruptcy.

The particularly ludicrous procedures for contrived building and construction were as follows: Cabinet would decide on the project and determine the price; the consultants and quantity surveyors would work out the bill of quantities to correspond thereto; the fees of engineers, consultants and contractors would rise proportionally with the multiply-inflated initial price. The feasibility study would be made last. Members of the Cabinet and State officials would collect relatively small kickbacks. State assets worth billions would be sold for kickbacks of a few million. (The resultant bankruptcy ['illiquidity'] is thus not temporary, but permanent, as future assets such as for example State land were depleted.)

For the past year major projects like highways from Windhoek and construction generally have ground to a halt, but it is clear that the IMF, World Bank and the European Union have moved in for direct 'State Capture', albeit clandestinely in order to shield the Comprador State from a public perception of not only its uselessness and debilitating ineptitude, but encumbrance to true freedom.

The form and national peculiarities of each Southern African State may differ, even remarkably in some instances. For example, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique waged relatively effective guerrilla struggles, driving the colonial rulers to the negotiating tables, but nevertheless ended up as bourgeois (pseudo Stalinist) States. African National Congress (ANC) and South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) were foisted on South Africa and Namibia directly as Comprador States with

parodies of armed struggles. The similarities are nevertheless much more essential than the differences. These situations could only be reached by a brutal and ruthless eradication of any local opposition: In 1977, MPLA obliterated 5000 youth in Luanda; Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) eradicated opposition by assassinating for Herbert Chitepo and working-class youth in exile, and thereafter an estimated 30-60,000 and perhaps many more civilians in Ndebele in Southern Zimbabwe. It made many disappear, and massacred farm workers during its 'land-grab'. ANC waged a war within South Africa against the working class and its leadership, and, SWAPO and ANC waged terror against youth in exile.

But the content of the crises remains essentially similar: that is, bankrupt States seeking to be bailed out by 'white monopoly capitalism'.

The cash-strapped South African electricity utility ESKOM and South African Airways (SAA) now openly seek private partners ('white monopoly capital') to overcome inefficiency and to piggy-back on what is presumed to be an effective and competent private sector and the self-regulation of the market. The absurdity is still argued that making State enterprise attractive for private investors makes it profitable. Which begs the question: if a State enterprise is profitable, why sell it off?

Nevertheless, TELKOM's 46,000 employees are already targeted for reduction, although not the astronomical management incomes and lavish international lifestyles and obscene expenditures. A third of the employees are to be reduced.

In Namibia, the SWAPO government is appealing to the World Bank for help in getting private partners for the State Owned Enterprises.

Privatisation is demanded despite two major publications on the effects of privatisation in Eastern Europe, Africa and

South America in the 1990s. UN researchers show that nowhere in the world has privatization yielded the vaunted results. Instead it has created mass unemployment, social destabilization and hardships.

The signs are clear that international financial instances have already moved into place and already demand 'austerity'. In Katima Mulilo, the CEO of the Municipality stated that 'urban land' is not for 'poor people' and bulldozed settlements in order to save money on services. In Okahandja letters have been issued to settlements giving notice of bulldozing.

In general, the comprador States are clearly putting on their nicest clothes to woo imperialism back to take over their State functions as there is little to loot anymore. But, this has set off intense proliferation of factions in the States and squabbles amongst them. (This explains the nice and friendly *coup d'état* in Zimbabwe)

Given the desperation of the working people in the deteriorating economic situation and their falling living standards, within the context of a crisis of leadership they cling to each hope generated by demagoguery of the compradors to bring change. And yet, there are many sceptical observers amongst them.

In Zimbabwe, many notice that it is the same old edifice which proclaims new salvation.

Likewise, in South Africa and Angola, working people are observing the situation with caution.

CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

Working people find it hard to respond to the looming threat. Whilst no doubt their largely amorphous stirrings are the main pressure for the compradors to feign a hope for real change, they are also in crisis, a crisis of leadership.

This crisis is historic in context.

Especially in South Africa and Namibia, the working classes have generated their own leadership in the union struggles which started in 1971/2 in Namibia and lit the veld fire of workers' struggles in South Africa since 1973.

Whilst these struggles led to real union rights by the 80's, the ANC and SWAPO have led physical attacks against the working class and its leaders since 1976. By 1984 they had succeeded in disbanding or killing the union and workers' leadership and corralling workers' organisations behind the nationalists through the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW). In 1990 in Namibia and 1994 in South Africa, this union leadership abandoned the workers for an alliance with what they now call 'white monopoly capitalism'.

Since 1992 when The Labour Act which contained significant rights for workers was promulgated in 1992. Since then the SWAPO regime, together with corporate lawyers, started dismantling labour rights, first through endemic corruption in the law courts, then using the introduction of illegal practices such as contract labour, and then by rewriting the Labour Act in 2007 to put it in line with neo-liberal requirements of a total onslaught on labour rights.

This same process was followed in South Africa with the Labour Relations Act of 1995 and its later amendments and conventions introduced illegally such as contract labour.

These developments suggest that the working people must generate a new and independent leadership both at union and political levels.

They need a union leadership which leads them in the struggle against the erosion of rights gained through three decades of bloody struggle. They still have union rights to organise and strike. But, they need a conscious and alert struggle against

the facilitation of the comprador class to enable capitalist corporations to erode workplace rights by slave conventions.

There is no point living with your head in the political clouds while working people need to understand their historic tasks through fighting for concrete rights.

The meaning of fighting for political power on a mass scale can only come from the fight for the protection of past gains and rights against slave labour conditions, which the IMF, the World Bank, the EU and the US are set to further entrench through the compradors of Southern Africa.

Hewat Beukes
19 November 2017

Notes:

The bourgeoisie of Southern Africa was a comprador class for imperialism before and after 1994. (Compradors are traders in a colony or semi-colony who facilitate their county's pillage by imperialism.)

The Apartheid State was able to build a pseudo welfare state on the backs of the working people, who with their families comprised 90% of the South African nation.

The entrance of black governments heaped a further burden on the working people. Not allowed to dig into corporate capital and assets, they took hold of working peoples' assets and life savings.

The entrance now of direct control by the imperialists heaps the ultimate burden on the working masses of Southern Africa.

They will not be able to bear any further burdens.

Editor's Note: this is an edited version of a document that is already circulating on social media.

News from Namibia

We are pleased to publish the combined newsletter of TCL miners and United Fishermen.

United Fishers and Tsumeb Workers news

Sloganeering and coat-tails – A response to some South African activists

John Appolis, Ahmed Jooma and Shaheen Khan have kindly passed on texts they have produced dealing with the current political situation in South Africa, as well as a contribution to discussion by Oupa Lehulere.

I must apologise for the delay in responding to these texts. It is not easy to orientate oneself from a great distance away.

I have to confess I am still at a loss to understand why the various authors continue to place their hopes for the future in an alliance with this or that faction of the "official" liberation movement, the ANC, when the country has seen major irruptions of the working class into public affairs. The events around the miners' struggle and Marikana unleashed a huge wave of industrial action. All this was reflected in the December 2013 Special Conference decisions of Numsa and the progress made since then in consolidating a combative new trade union federation.

The fact is I find the arguments presented in these texts unconvincing and misleading.

Ahmed and Shaheen compare the current situation in South Africa with that in Germany in 1932, on the eve of the Nazi seizure of power. On this basis, they recommend that workers and young people in South Africa should fall in line behind the Democratic Alliance, the South African Communist Party, the various anti-Zuma factions of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) of Malema in the "Zuma Must Go!" bandwagon. To ward off the danger of being overwhelmed by all of that, they append a wordy "socialist" programme and cross their fingers behind their back.

Revolutionary tactics cannot be deduced from a cook-book. Empiricists identify any phenomenon abstractly (that is, they reduce it to a name, a suitable label, leaving out all its complexity, internal and external contradictions, motion, indeed its very life) and place this definition confidently in the appropriate pigeonhole. When another phenomenon arises with superficial similarities to the first, they say: "Ahah!", sort through their files, triumphantly fish out the label and the attached recipe and tie it to the new situation.

They forget the warning traditionally drummed into medical students: "Therapy is easy; diagnosis is difficult". Patients who present with apparently similar symptoms may be suffering from very different diseases, and require quite different treatment

Without writing a full-on history of Germany between the World Wars, it is useful to recall some essential details about the situation in which revolutionary Marxists called for a United Front of working-class parties to stop Hitler from coming to power.

For all her problems, Germany under the Weimar Republic was a highly-developed modern, industrial, imperialist state. There was a very numerous and politically-conscious working class which had built not only its own mass, nominally Marxist, Social-Democratic Party (SPD) but also a the most significant revolutionary Communist Party (KPD) outside of the Soviet Union.

This working class had made enormous experiences of struggle in the course of World War I and the following 14 years. At one point a short

lived-socialist republic had been proclaimed. Workers had organised strike waves, military and naval insurrections, a general strike to defeat a right-wing coup attempt, workers' and soldiers' councils in many cities and actual Red Armies in some industrial regions. In 1923, the year of the great inflation, there had been serious moves to prepare, equip and carry out a workers' revolution.

The large German Communist Party was inspired and materially supported by the successful revolution in Russia and the workers' state established there.

The Nazi regime was a reckless, foolhardy (and of course profoundly criminal and barbaric) option forced upon the German bourgeoisie by the rival imperialist powers who prevailed in World War I. It was underpinned by a (fairly) worked-out ideology of blood, soil, violence and conquest. This involved extreme nationalism, racism (towards all allegedly "non-Aryan" races and most immediately affecting the millions of Jews living in Europe), a leadership cult based on utter subjection of the mass, hero-worship, militarism and a simplistic concept of the survival of the fittest. Another aspect of this ideology was utter hatred of all kinds of Marxism and a determination to stamp out Communism in the USSR and everywhere.

We do criticise the policies and actions of the Soviet-led Communist International (CI), and consequently of the German KPD, during the period of "bonapartist" rule by Heinrich Brüning, Franz von Papen and Kurt von Schleicher between 1929 and 1933. First of all, these alleged Marxists did not see the real depth of the coming catastrophe. They had a mechanical view of the effects of the economic meltdown of 1929.

The CI of the day saw the Social Democrats (the reformist socialist party) and the Nazi Party as "not antipodes but twins". After all, a Social-Democratic government inflicted welfare cuts and austerity measures on the working class and sent armed police to shoot workers demonstrating on May Day. A Social-Democratic minister had said in 1919 "someone has to play the bloodhound" and unleashed vicious right-wing paramilitaries on revolutionary workers. Could the Nazis be any worse?

But of course, they were!

The second mistake the CI made, as a consequence, was that they did not anticipate what damage Hitler would inflict on the workers' and socialist movement, which was comprehensively crushed with the use of extreme violence and intimidation once Hitler was elected German Chancellor. The CI and KPD leaders thought that Hitler's accession to power would generate enough mass resistance among workers to lead to a Communist counter-stroke: "After Hitler, us!" they said.

The third mistake the CI and the KPD made was to believe that they could win over Social Democratic workers by propaganda alone, just by brow-beating them with arguments. They offered a "United Front from below" to SPD supporters against their own leaders. In effect, they were saying: "if you agree with us, join our United Front on our terms" instead of "let's see how we can get your leaders to work with ours to stop Hitler". This attitude let the leaders of the SPD and the trade unions "off the hook", because it was clearly not a serious attempt to overcome the division in the working class. If they had been sincere about a united front, the KPD leaders would have negotiated jointly-acceptable terms on which to organise one with the Social-Democratic party and trade union leaders. In the face of the Nazi threat, such a workers' united front could have made sense.

It is worth quoting what Trotsky wrote in 1932 in Germany, *What Next?,* not in order to appeal to some Holy Writ, but to get to grips with how the dynamics of class relations are approached:

"Without hiding or mitigating our opinion of the Social Democratic leaders in the slightest, we may and we must say to the Social Democratic workers, 'Since, on the one hand, you are willing to fight together with us; and since, on the other, you are still unwilling to break with your leaders, here is what we suggest: force your leaders to join us in a common struggle for such and such practical aims, in such and such a manner; as for us, we Communists are ready.' Can anything be more plain, more palpable, more convincing?

In precisely this sense I wrote – with the conscious intention of

arousing the sincere horror of blockheads and the fake indignation of charlatans – that in the war against fascism we were ready to conclude practical military alliances with the devil and his grandmother, even with Noske and Zörgiebel."

But there was another side to the question of the United Front, a tactic which the Communist International under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky had adopted: applied incorrectly, it could also become a cover for passivity and inaction. Further on in the same text, Trotsky wrote:

"In the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy, the policy of the united front became a hue and cry after allies at the cost of sacrificing the independence of the party. Backed by Moscow and deeming themselves omnipotent, the functionaries of the Comintern seriously esteemed themselves to be capable of laying down the law to the classes and of prescribing their itinerary; of checking the agrarian and strike movements in China; of buying an alliance with Chiang Kai-Shek at the cost of sacrificing the independent policies of the Comintern; of re-educating the trade union bureaucracy, the chief bulwark of British imperialism through educational courses at banquet tables in London, or in Caucasian resorts; of transforming Croatian bourgeois of Radich's type into Communists, etc., etc. All this was undertaken, of course, with the best of intentions, in order to hasten developments by accomplishing for the masses what the masses weren't mature enough to do for themselves."

The mistake the CI leaders then made after they had digested the depth of the disaster that Hitler's take-over represented, was to believe that there was a way to prevent the spread of fascism by forming an alliance with "democratic", anti-fascist capitalists in which the interests of the working class were clearly and officially subordinated to the leadership of the bourgeoisie. This policy of a so-called "Popular Front" also enters our story, because it is the entire foundation and backbone of the policy of the CI's successors (although the body itself was wound up during World War II) towards the colonial liberation movement in general and the African National Congress in particular. They dressed this tribal and bourgeois formation up as the main revolutionary force in South Africa and systematically over many years did everything they could to subordinate the South African working class to it.

But it was the black working class which drove the struggle against apartheid forward. Nevertheless in 1990-1994, the ANC, supported by the SACP and in close dependence upon imperialist governments, the mining monopolies and the parties of the white minority, carried out its own form of “state capture”. Subsequent history (as many can explain) has exposed what this “state capture” actually meant.

Is Zuma Hitler?

No, Zuma is Zuma.

Since the end of apartheid rule, governments of the ANC in alliance with the SACP and Cosatu have all provided a democratic screen, engaging the support of as many local forces as possible while serving the interests of international capital. Apartheid was ended and majority rule installed by arrangement with the international mining companies, major banks and imperialists governments.

The Triple Alliance was cobbled together from individuals in exile all over the world parachuted into positions of authority in the major institutions, including the trade union movement. “Sections” of the South African bourgeoisie black and white were appeased to various extents to make the Triple Alliance workable, while the commercial headquarters of the big mining companies were prudently moved abroad to major imperialist centres such as London. It is the imperialists’ requirements which have predominated ever since under a veneer of national independence and self-government.

But the Triple Alliance was fragile and it is breaking up, above all under the pressure of the masses, first and foremost the working class.

Now candidates for power in South Africa must demonstrate to the satisfaction of their international imperialist masters that they can directly confront and subjugate that pressure. Zuma is up for the job, equipped with the necessary qualities and eager to enjoy the fruits of such work.

Such regimes practice a level of self-enrichment at the expense of their own peoples which is not merely tolerated but actually encouraged by

their international patrons. These regimes were conceived in corruption and live by it. They steal state property with impunity, rob the public treasury and have been known to “nationalise” and then take over (or sell to cronies) traditionally-owned tribal land, etc.

They will play every vile trick to protect their access to wealth, including crushing democratic protests, imprisoning and murdering opponents and fanning ethnic differences into open conflict.

To retain local control over their populations they rely on tribal elites bought with a fraction of the loot often alongside the straightforward rule of gangsters.

Such are the shared characteristics of African “independence” regimes. And for that reason, they are instable regimes of crisis. But although they share some features with fascist regimes (for example, suspension of the “rule of law”, crimes against the people, even outright genocide in some cases) they are not as such fascist regimes.

Labelling them “fascist” can be quite misleading. Tony Blair and George W. Bush branded Saddam Hussain a “fascist” in order to justify the second Gulf war. They went to war against the “fascist” Hussain, but it was the Iraqi people they were aiming at and actually hit. You could say the same about their treatment of Libya under Ghaddafi and Syria under Assad, all in different ways.

Confusing Popular Front and United Front

“The Popular Front”, Ahmed Jooma and Shaheen Khan correctly say “is the main strategic weapon of the bourgeoisie to tie the hands of the working class to the interests of the bosses”. However, they soon go on to urge NUMSA and its allies to plunge straight into – a sort of Popular Front!

They spend five sentences enumerating the forces predominating in the “anti-State Capture Movement” which make it very clear that this is a mass popular movement around a “single issue” (i.e “Zuma Must Fall!”). They then write: “The class character of these movements is not as important to ordinary people as the fact that they are ready to take up the fight practically and immediately”.

Yes, it is good for the masses to get involved in political action. But it is the job of revolutionary movements to point out the things which are really important to ordinary people above and beyond what the bourgeoisie presents as important.

Ahmed Jooma and Shaheen Khan think that the presence of a working-class force inside the movement armed with "its own programme and banner" will magically convert the Popular Front into a United Front. It is worth quoting what they say in full:

"20: The task of the proletariat and its leadership is to join the general movement. However, in doing so it enters the fray under its own programme and banner. It applies the policy of the united front which is 'unity in action'. March separately. Strike together".

However, they have just spent more than a few lines describing the class character of the "general movement" in considerable detail, which makes it clear that this movement is NOT a workers' united front but a cross-class popular front irrespective of whatever programme and banner we Marxists "enter the fray" under.

Comrade Appolis ("Critical Comments on the article: *Platform of the Left Bloc in the Zuma Must Go Campaign* by Comrades Ahmed Jooma and Shaheen Khan") notes the discrepancy here (which is to his credit). He also sees the need to build a core of politically-conscious leading activists with a breadth of vision which extends beyond the parochial. However, he both turns his back on the main force able to bring about such a cadre (which is NUMSA and the new trade union federation) and proposes a different version of the same popular front which Ahmed and Shaheen put foward:

"The working class and its forces should enter this conflict with its own vision, strategy and demands. It should enter it against the big bourgeoisie and its system of accumulation by calling for Zuma to go. And this call is in line with the sentiments and mood of the masses".

Further on he notes: "the working-class movement exhibits numerous weaknesses – organisationally, politically and ideologically. It is marked by fragmentation, low levels of mass implantation and has a very disperse advance guard who are caught up in the immediacy of its issues."

He is impatient of the developments among organised workers:

“The trade unions are only now in the beginning phase of shaking off the effects of years of false politics, bureaucracy and inertia. Legalism and an excessive emphasis on an industrial relations’ approach to class struggle seems to still frame its politics and methodologies. Its social base is not as yet at the cutting edge of anchoring a mass movement. NUMSA/SAFTU have so far express some correct sentiments but have a way to go.”

It is true that trade unions cannot solve all the political problems of the working class. The characteristics which John Appolis lists reflect one side of the conditions under which trade unions operate: they deal with the day-to-day problems of their entire membership containing a wide range of men and women with a variety of outlooks; they deal with bread-and-butter issues; they deal with employers; they stand up for their members’ rights day by day within with the legal and political framework of class relations and understandably both work within it and work to improve it using established channels.

Trade unions have to have an administrative machine and responsible leaders. If they are doing their job properly they have to spend a lot of effort on organisational matters. This is their strength as class organisations but at the same time it makes them susceptible to the influence of the employers’ class.

What was overwhelmingly striking, following Marikana and the resulting wave of mass industrial working-class action, was that the leaders of NUMSA decided to use their union’s resources in order to lay the basis for a political development by their class. The quantity of experiences mounting up of 20 years of majority rule under the Triple Alliance turned into a new quality, the determination to work for a new political organisation which would fight for the interests of the working class, the fulfilment of the promises of the liberation struggle.

The trade union movement is not just some undifferentiated mass. There is a mass movement and there are leaders at various levels. Some leaders were not equipped to draw political lessons from the struggles that broke

out. Others were loath to escape their intellectual vassalage to the Triple Alliance. It is enormously to the credit of NUMSA's leadership that the union has taken forward its special conference decisions of 2013 into re-building the strongest possible unity in a new union confederation around new positions in the movement.

Unlike them, Comrade Appolis is looking for a short-cut to overcoming the movement's "numerous difficulties". He says:

"What the demand for Zuma to go offers is an opportunity to unite these struggles, give them a national expression and a connection to a common national cause. The present conjuncture requires this qualitative shift in the struggles of the working class. And the Zuma must go provides the basis to effect such a qualitative shift.

"The unification of these struggles on a national basis will not amount to an artificial manoeuvre. Rather it will organically weave together the thousands of different struggles of the masses into a national stream. This will place the working class in a position to articulate an alternative ideological and political explanation of the political economy of corruption, of the class character of the ANC and its factions, of the nature of the South African social formation and the position of white monopoly capital therein".

On this basis, he asserts: "This coalescing and cohering of a nation-wide cadre of militants with their thousands of connections with the concrete struggles of the masses is the key task of the moment".

To achieve this, he proposes:

"The starting point is to convene a National Assembly of Representatives of the Struggling Formations of the Working Class, especially those at the cutting edge of the anti-corruption struggles, for instance Outsourcing Must Fall movement, Abahlali Freedom Park, Housing Assembly, Tembelihle Crisis Committee, SECC, Black Sash, R2K and many others. It is these formations that must anchor the movement against the Zuma Bloc and white monopoly capital. The coalescing of these formations on a national scale with clarified class perspectives on the political economy of corruption and crystalizing around a common set of demands shall enable

the working class to make its presence and imprint felt on the national anti-corruption movement. NUMSA and SAFTU are to be engaged to be part of this initiative. At some point overtures should also be made towards COSATU to come on board."

However, he proposes all this under conditions where the movement is dominated by the demagogy of various self-seeking sectors and above all of the Economic Freedom Fighters of Julius Malema.

"White Monopoly Capital" and demagogy of every kind

Oupa Lehulere is even more pessimistic about the role that organised labour can play than is John Appolis. But this only becomes clear at the end of a long and rather confusing article, *Cronin and Company harness Marxism to the service of White Monopoly Capital (The SACP and the Cronification of Marxism)*, which foregrounds the significance of "white monopoly capital".

At the heart of Lehulere's emphasis on "white monopoly capital" is the idea that the future of the mass movement must involve an alliance with one or another "sector" of South Africa's black bourgeoisie as a stepping-stone into the political arena; that such an alliance is essential and possible against the common enemy, "white monopoly capital".

To put it briefly: The whole basis for the "Zuma Must Fall" agitation is that in robbing the state finances alongside his Gupta associates, Zuma is seeking to (or obliged to) "capture" the South African state, turning it from a democracy of some sort into his own personal fiefdom.

The existence of black capitalists in South Africa is noted and they are classified into two main sectors. The "credit" bourgeoisie are said to be those who were bought off by the big international corporations with credits which enabled them to become shareholders and then branch out into businesses of their own. (One thinks of the former miners' union leader Cyril Ramaphosa).

The "tenderpreneurs" on the other hand, are those who exploit any kind of relationship with the ruling alliance in order to win contracts to carry

out public or government works. Jacob Zuma and his Gupta associates are meant to be placed in this category.

It is made into an article of faith that these are two separate groups who constitute the South African black bourgeoisie. Essentially, all those who call for the South African workers' movement to advance by joining the "Zuma Must Fall" campaign are arguing for the workers and the masses to support the "credit" sector of capitalists.

Zuma carried out a cabinet reshuffle in March this year, removing Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan and replacing him with the supposedly more malleable Malusi Gigaba. Gigaba appointed as an advisor a well-regarded left-leaning associate professor at Wits University, Chris Malikane.

Malusi Gigiba may have had good reason to believe that Malikane was a Zuma loyalist, but he apparently had not gone into detail about how he (Malikane) rationalised that position. That became clearer when people got around to reading what Malikane actually wrote. Take *How to break monopoly white capital* for example (http://www.iol.co.za/news/opinion/how-to-break-monopoly-white-capital-8779291).

Malikane starts dramatically by saying: "The class structure under colonialism or apartheid remains intact. The African is at the bottom of the food chain. The darkest skin performs the toughest job at the lowest wage."

He goes on: "Even within the capitalist class, the darkest skin is the lowest in the hierarchy. It should also be mentioned that, within the African capitalist class, the upper stratum which is credit-based is found inside, and accumulates directly through, established white monopoly capitalist structures."

And: "White monopoly ownership and control of state power is even more secured if the government in place is democratic, since the masses believe 'this is our government, we voted for it'. Yet, what cannot be explained is why 'our government' is failing to resolve our centuries-old problem of white monopoly of social power.

“The battle over the removal of the finance minister is the battle waged by white monopoly capital in alliance with the credit-based black capitalist, against the rise of the tender-based black capitalist class, which also has links with the leadership of political parties.”

He explains further: “South Africa has now entered a phase of intense rivalry between capitalist groupings. In this phase, it is not possible to advocate political abstention, especially of masses of the oppressed and super-exploited African working class.

“The fight against white monopoly capital and its black/African allies, is an integral part of the struggle to consummate the national democratic revolution.”

(The reference to “consummating the national democratic revolution’ rings rather hollow in the mouth of a man who asserts that “white monopoly ownership and control of state power is even more secure if the government in place is democratic”, etc.)

“The tender-based black capitalist class”, he continues, “is not likely to win without the support of the mass of the black and African working class. Unlike its white counterpart, the tender-based black capitalist class has no coherent historical international backing. Its relationship with the organised working class, which is the only force that is capable of disrupting white monopoly capitalist power at production, is very weak if non-existent.

“**Nevertheless, from the standpoint of the objective analysis of the class forces, in so far as the tender-based capitalist class has begun the war against the dominant white monopoly capitalist class, it has to be encouraged.”** (my emphasis – B.A.)

And in order to “encourage” that “tender-based black capitalist class”, Malikane took a government job under Zuma!

Apart from that one little detail, his proposals are the mirror image of those of Ahmed, Shaheen, Appolis and Lehulere. They all say that the South African working class is in no state to lead the struggle; its only hope to get into the game is on the coat-tails of this or that “sector”

of the bourgeoisie; either sector. Toss a coin …

Lehulere is so enamoured of the phrase “white monopoly capital” that he uses it nearly sixty times in his article. It is a conception he profoundly shares with Malikane (and many on the radical left in South Africa). It is a phrase which seems to evoke the condition of the black masses, and it does capture one side of the imperialist oppression of the people of South Africa. However, it leaves out so much about imperialism that is easily abused by demagogues.

If it is thought mainly to be the whiteness of the foreign monopolies (which are indeed in the main run by rich white men) which enables them to exploit and oppress the people of South Africa, then the suggestion is left open that black capitalism is a less daunting prospect.

What is startling is that Malikane’s proposals are also barely different from the proposals of Julius Malema and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), proposals which “radical lefts” such as Rehad Desai now laud to the skies in the TV documentary *Julius vs the ANC*! “White monopoly capital” continues to rule South Africa, is the cry. Resources and industries must be taken away from the control of “white monopoly capital” and nationalised.

The fact that Chris Malikane’s attitude is simply as it were a photographic negative or reversed mirror image of the attitude of the EFF etc. places Lehulere in a certain difficulty. While he understandably defends Chris Malikane against the cynical sophistry of the South African Communist Party’s Cronin, his own adherence to the theory of “white monopoly capitalism” is uncomfortable. Mouthing the catch-phrase “white monopoly capital”, one could support Zuma against his opponents, or just as easily support Malema, the SACP, the Democratic Alliance et al against Zuma. It is a formula tailor-made for demagogues.

To put some distance between himself and Malikane, Lehulere drags in a disagreement over the question of the state.

It would of course have been quite enough to say that Malikane’s decision to accept a job as an advisor to a minister hand-picked as a crony by Zuma was either misguided or unprincipled. He (Malikane) may have

imagined that the job would enable him to advance the nationalisation of the country's resources and their mobilisation to fulfil the needs of the population.

But if Lehulere had merely expressed that simple truth, it would have left open to view how threadbare is the illusion that any "sector" of the South African bourgeoisie is interested in furthering the interests of the working class in any way.

So Lehulere raised his understandable disagreement with Malikane's career choice to the level of a principled disagreement over the nature of the state. Lenin is dragged into the discussion, not to mention Gramsci. We are told to concern ourselves not with "inside the state" or "outside the sate" but in a different state. It is wrong not merely to sell yourself for a job on the Zuma payroll, but to direct any demands on the state.

Now whatever Lenin thought about the state (and his works are available for all to study), he never thought the working class (and the broader masses) could ignore it. He encouraged workers to place demand upon the state, to raise their political demands at the level of the government, the state and the legal system, to try to place their own representatives in institutions at that level.

The task facing the South African masses has little to do with individual lefts taking government jobs. What is needed is what NUMSA has put forward: a united front throughout the masses alongside a movement for socialism, enriched by a study of the examples of struggles for socialism around the world and leading to the formation of a genuine workers' party.

There are no short cuts to this. The organised working class in the unions in the new federation needs to be a backbone of iron sustaining this movement. The work has to go forward systematically and soberly. It can only succeed if, alongside a growing mass of conscious support, a cadre is steeled in the course of the struggle. The movement must train itself not to be stampeded or derailed by demagogues of any stripe. The stakes are too high.

Bob Archer, 23 June 2017

May Day Message from the WRP Namibia

The WRP Political Committee greets the workers of Namibia, Southern Africa, Africa and the world on this 1st day of May, Workers' Day, which symbolizes the bloody struggle for workers' rights over many, many decades. These rights included the right to organize and belong to unions, the 45 hour week, the right to withhold labour etc.

For Namibians this struggle culminated in the labour rights contained in the 1992 Labour Act.

Since 1992 however, these rights were rapidly eroded in rogue courts, new legislation drafted by corporate business and passed by the new regime, parading as the great liberator.

The Marikana Massacre on 16 August 2012 exploded the Southern African myths of the 'liberation movements' defending and furthering the rights of the working people.

NUMSA, the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa, formalized the concrete fact that the regimes like SWAPO and the ANC were agents of the capitalists against the working class. They stated, **"that unless the working class organises itself as a class for itself it will remain unrepresented and forever toil behind the bourgeoisie".**

Now that these regimes have devoured the crumbs thrown to them by finance capital, mining, and commerce to pose as states, the SADC States have declared that they are on high alert after self-manufactured evidence surfaced of imperialist

tendencies to destabilize them by regime change. Their trigger fingers are itching for a few more Marikanas to earn bale-outs from their masters.

But, the peace and stability which they claim is being threatened, is threatened by the unrelenting attacks on employment, labour and union rights, which these regimes are spearheading on behalf of the capitalists.

Their paranoid and neurotic threats underline in red the NUMSA declarations and should put the regional working class on high alert.

The Namibian regime is totally bankrupt as can be seen from the abandoned construction projects one month into the new financial year; from the piecemeal payment of teachers at the end of April, etcetera, etcetera.

They wish to make their crisis, the crisis of the working class. Oh!, how they wished they could have made it a tribal conflict of the working class!

The WRP's message is, dedicate this May of the year of the Great Workers' Revolution, 1917, to the Unity of the Working Class and to stay alert to build their independent fighting organs to defend itself and the Working People from the Ruin the capitalist ruling classes wish to bring upon the people.

March forward to working class unity in the Southern African Region, Africa and the World.

It is the only way forward to redemption!

Paul Thomas
Secretary of Publicity.

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY TO REBUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL
P.O. Box 24064 Windhoek Tel: 061-260647 namab737@gmail.com

Solidarity Statement with The Socialist Party of Zambia and Comrade Fred M’membe

We have heard from our comrades in NUMSA that a warrant of arrest has been issued for Comrade Fred M’membe of the Socialist Party of Zambia and that his wife and several workers connected to The Zambian Post Newspaper have been arrested in a violent raid on his house by scores of armed police.

This is the result of the Lungu government’s determination to shut down an independent voice of opposition criticizing President Edgar Lungu, his Patriotic Front party and their followers.

It is an attack on freedom of the press, which is the cornerstone of any democratic society.

We agree completely with NUMSA, that as a working class party, “We have a responsibility to defend and advance democracy, human rights and full human freedom. We have a duty to defend and advance the interests of justice”.

We wholeheartedly support the NUMSA call for workers internationally to show solidarity with workers fighting against tyranny and for democracy throughout Africa, and to boycott trade with Zambia.

Like NUMSA, we pledge our solidarity with all the working class and socialist forces in Zambia in general, and to the Socialist Party of Zambia in particular and to comrade Fred and The Post newspaper.

We support NUMSA in demanding the following from President Lungu of Zambia:

1. Stop, forthwith, the harassment of Comrade Fred, his wife and workers of The Post.

2. Fred M’membe’s wife and all those detained must be released, immediately and unconditionally.

3. The warrant of arrest for Fred M’membe must be withdrawn immediately.

4. Ensure that Zambian tax authorities comply with the order to have The Post opened and operating normally, and to allow for the normal resolutions of the tax matters between the two parties.

5. The Mast must operate normally, without hindrance or harassment.

Bob Archer

Secretary WIRFI

20 February

Issue 6 of Die Werker out now.

Out now! The latest issue of Namibia’s Proletarian Newsletter.
In this edition:
Land
NUMSA & United Front

International Inquiry
Editorial
Former Judge

What Numsa decided in December 2013

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The Numsa Congress declaration explained: "The African National Congress (ANC) has adopted a strategic programme – the National Development Plan (NDP). The fault of the NDP is not that it is technically flawed, or in need of adjustment and editing … **Its fault is that it is the programme of our class enemy. It is a programme to continue to feed profit at the expense of the working class and poor**."(My emphasis – RA)

It goes on to state: "The ANC leadership has clarified that it will not tolerate any challenge" and "Cosatu (the Confederation of South African Trade Unions) has experienced a vicious and sustained attack on its militancy and independence … Cosatu has become consumed by internal battles by forces which continue to support the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) with its neo-liberal agenda and those who are fighting for an independent militant federation which stands for the interests of the working class before any other".

Referring to the 2012 massacre of miners at Marikana, the declaration says: "**the state attacked and killed workers on behalf of capital**". It goes on to outline a campaign to support the victims of the massacre and punish those responsible, situating the massacre in the context of

imperialist exploitation: “Marikana was a deliberate defence of mining profits and mining capitalists!”.

The declaration notes: “The treatment of labour as a junior partner within the Alliance is not uniquely a South African phenomenon. In many post-colonial and post-revolutionary situations, liberation and revolutionary movements have turned on labour movements that fought alongside them, suppressed them, marginalised them, split them, robbed them of their independence or denied them any meaningful role in politics and policy making.”

The declaration summarises a political way forward: “There is no chance of winning back the Alliance or the SACP”; “The working class needs a political organisation”; “Call on COSATU to break with the Alliance!”; “Establish a new United Front”; “Explore establishment of a Movement for Socialism” (“NUMSA will conduct a thoroughgoing discussion on previous attempts to build socialism as well as current experiments to build socialism. We will commission an international study on the historical formation of working class parties, including exploring different types of parties – from mass workers’ parties to vanguard parties. We will look to countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia and Greece … This entire process will lead to the union convening a Conference on Socialism”

The declaration says Numsa will “set a deadline for this process” and “look for electoral opportunities”. It lays down a number of steps cutting ties with the ANC and the SACP.

It goes on to propose a campaign over the rampant corruption of Jacob Zuma’s presidency, pointing out that this corruption goes hand in hand with “the continuation of neo-liberalism”.

A sizeable section of the declaration deals with the crisis within the union confederation Cosatu, outlining the questions of principle involved.

The declaration also re-positions Numsa as a trade union as

“shield and spear of workers”, pointing to the need to confront the fragmentation of the workforce through outsourcing and seeking to organise all workers in given workplaces and along supply chains.

A final section outlines a practical campaign, including taking forward the “Section 77” campaign to reverse neo-liberal policies and “address the plight of the working class and poor”. Cosatu had adopted this campaign but failed to pursue it energetically. Numsa pledged to act against the Employment Tax Incentive Act, and organise a “rolling mass action” with a detailed list of concrete demands, for example: beneficiation of all strategic minerals, a ban on the export of scrap metals and the rebuilding of foundries, an increase on import tariffs on certain goods, nationalisation of the Reserve Bank, exchange controls and other demands culminating in the nationalisation of the mining industry.

(For the texts of the congress resolution and declaration plus material to place them in a historical context, see the Workers International pamphlet *Movement for Socialism: South Africa’s NUMSA points the way*, ISBN 978-0-9564319-4-3).