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Vavi wades into the discussion

[threecolumns]Zwelinzima Vavi, the General Secretary of COSATU and himself an SACP member, got into a public argument with SACP Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Cronin last November over contentious issues in the Alliance that rules South Africa.

This bare fact alone shows how utterly fundamental the political crisis in South Africa is.

A lengthy reply by Vavi to Cronin dated December 17, 2014 is available online at:

<http://www.numsa.org.za/article/response-comrade-jeremy-cronin-open-letter-leaders-members-south-african-communist-party-sacp-zwelinzima-vavi-general-secretary-congress-south-african-trade/>.

The basic division in the political crisis is between the working class and wider layers of working people on the one hand and the bourgeoisie and its representatives in the Alliance on the other. That was made very clear when armed police opened fire on striking rock-drillers at Marikana on 16 August 2012 and in the way political forces have lined up subsequently. It is therefore very hard to understand why in his reply Vavi makes no reference of any kind at all to the events at Marikana. The silence on this issue robs his remarks of meaning in a certain sense. It belies the very reality he attempts to portray at considerable length in the letter.

The crisis in South Africa involves the unravelling of the National Democratic Revolution's meretricious promises. It is a crisis which involves workers driven to mobilise against the Alliance government in order to defend their class interests, but also one which works right through every element in the alliance, COSATU, SACP and ANC.

It is a crisis in which the developing leadership of the working class lies in the hands of the NUMSA officeholders, who correctly take the fight through all parts of the Alliance, while at the same time building their movement in a very open way in the United Front and among their international contacts. Their insistence upon their right to belong to COSATU and fight within the federation testifies to their understanding of their responsibilities towards their class and the masses in general. Big, indeed historical, political issues are at stake. They cannot be resolved by walking away from this fight or displacing it elsewhere.

Vavi comes across from this letter as a man of a somewhat different kidney from the NUMSA leaders. He describes very

tellingly the abusive nature of the working class's relationship (through the COSATU federation) with the SACP and the government, but also he is looking to restore a relationship that is damaged, appealing to common sense and goodwill to overcome a rocky patch in a fundamentally sound, if occasionally violent, marriage.

For all its diplomatic language, however, this long letter makes it absolutely clear that it is the government which is smashing up the ANC-SACP alliance along class lines on behalf of bourgeois interests, and that many leading figures in the SACP are up to their necks in collaboration with this government. It stands out that, to say the very least, the SACP fails to provide leadership for the working class, deceives and betrays the interests of that class, uses prevarication and double-talk while class interests are attacked and that, having stood back while neo-liberal "reforms" are inflicted, belatedly adapts to pressure from workers' organisations via bombastic rhetoric not backed by actions. The leaders of the SACP are the splitters. Vavi is not just any member of the SACP: he is the elected secretary of the trade union confederation Cosatu.

Vavi is aware that the stakes are high: "'Labelling, rumour-mongering and character assassination become the order of the day", he warns, bringing the threat of "the unthinkable – physical conflict between the members and leaders of the working class".

He calls for: "necessary debates about the state of the National Democratic Revolution and whether the current trajectory can even herald a seamless movement towards socialism."

Vavi goes through a long list of issues which have been contentious. His treatment of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution plan (GEAR) provides a good example of the problems he is describing. Vavi recalls that the SACP

statement of 14 June 1996 welcomed and “fully backed” GEAR, insisted it “situates itself as a framework for the National Democratic Revolution”, asserted that it “resists” “free market dogmatism” and “envisages a key economic role for the public sector” and “reaffirms and reinforces the bilateral (between government and unions) National Framework Agreement process.” The SACP statement went on that it “envisages the extension of a regulated market and it introduces an innovative approach to flexibility. It rejects laissez-faire market-driven flexibility and instead calls for negotiated regional and sectoral flexibility.”

“The opposite of the truth ...”

Vavi’s comment now should be written in letters of fire:

“History will record that, on this critical issue of GEAR, which was to divide the movement for many years to come, virtually every line of this statement proved to be incorrect and problematic, and the SACP itself subsequently came to realise this fact. This is important because it raises the question as to how such a fundamental error of judgement could be made on such a vital question for the working class”. How indeed!

Recalling that the SACP rushed this statement out without consulting its members, Vavi continues: “The SACP statement on every key topic makes assertions which would later be exposed as the opposite of the truth”.

“It is now history that GEAR sought to replace and overturn the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme)”, Vavi continues. “GEAR espoused market fundamentalism, and sought to slash the public sector ...” He adds: “It aimed to remove key rights of workers in the labour market”. Vavi describes GEAR as “a comprehensive neo-liberal macroeconomic strategy, which the Party was later to denounce as the 1996 Class Project”.

“This is still relevant”, he continues, “because it was seen by the working class as a major betrayal of trust in the SACP’s responsibility as a leadership rooted in its attempt to retain its proximity to power. Others on the left of the SACP argue that this was not a misjudgement but a political choice and have from that time written off the SACP. It didn’t help that a leader of the SACP, Cde Alec Erwin, was a prominent driver of the GEAR strategy.”

On this, as on other matters, Vavi recalls that the SACP made purely “rhetorical” adjustments. It had been the same previously with the 1995 “6-pack” and privatisation plans. The SACP claimed: (*Umsebenzi* February 1996): “Contrary to many press reports, the GNU (government) position actually calls for the basic retention of Telkom, Transnet, SAA etc. in public hands, while allowing some minority strategic partnerships with private companies ... We see in it a rejection of mindless privatisation”. The Party also welcomed “comrade Mbeki’s very clear statement that the positions were a point of departure for negotiations, in particular with labour”, as an implied promise that the privatisation measures would not be pushed through roughshod (Mbeki was at the time President of the country).

Although COSATU was able “to exercise power by the Federation’s membership, which, in the end partially halted the privatisation drive in its tracks”, Vavi comments: “Today workers at Telkom and other SOEs (State Owned Enterprises) are still paying a heavy price of private equity partnerships and commercialisation and therefore neoliberalism”.

Vavi praises the SACP’s policies on the banks and the land, but points out: “But deeper analysis suggests that it has studiously avoided anything which could be construed as taking on the state ... where it has raised criticisms they have tended to be muted, or so ‘nuanced’ as to be ineffective or simply sending out confusing messages”.

With the “launch of the NDP (National Development Plan) in August 2012 “there was silence from the Party about the ideological and class problems within it”, says Vavi (himself no stranger to “muted” language and “nuances”), pointing out that top Party leaders were members of the cabinet which had endorsed it. While SACP Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Cronin engaged in double-talk about fighting “for our macro-economic policies to be better aligned to those important micro-economic interventions”, Vavi notes: “The NDP ... proposes both macro- and micro-economic policies which are at odds with the progressive elements of the NGP (New Growth Path) and IPAP (Industrial Policy Action Plan)”.

In other words, while the unions solemnly negotiate socially progressive measures through the NGP and IPAP processes, the government is pressing ahead with neoliberal reforms and deregulation measures which, along with the general pressures of imperialism on wages and working conditions, completely undermine such agreements.

Vavi’s explanation is that the Party is “seemingly blinded by not just its close relationship with government but the presence of top leaders in government ... If the Party was the vanguard, why was it constantly taking up a position at the rear?” This remark arises in relation to the 2013 Alliance summit (held at the end of August, immediately after the Marikana Massacre which Vavi fails to mention). Discussing how the NDP was simply imposed, Vavi says:

“The price paid by the working class in this process is immeasurable. A pro-business economic strategy will now run till 2030 unless a major pro-left political rupture takes place within the ANC and the Alliance. Frankly I see no possibility of this happening inside the government or even the ANC in the near future. COSATU has found itself completely isolated, as many government leaders, in particular the President, have repeatedly told the world that there is sufficient consensus to implement the NDP. **But this ‘national**

consensus' excludes the working class."

According to Vavi, the SACP neglects macro-economic policy and believes "we must rather focus on micro-economic policy, industrial policy, etc. In this respect the Party has shared common ground with many conservatives inside and outside the state..." But he explains that this is a problem because "macro-economic policy is the state's major lever to drive development". He goes on: "Our progressive IPAP policy has failed to stem deindustrialisation ... because the incorrect macro-economic policies are in place".

In his own "muted" and "nuanced" way, Vavi is depicting how the National Democratic Revolution has crashed into the buffers.

He again (politely) accuses the SACP leaders of lying to the masses over budgets. For example, this is how the SACP responded to the 2013 "austerity" budget: " ... the budget's stance has rejected the path of austerity disastrously followed by many countries in Europe". The Party claims that "many of the major pillars of expenditure including infrastructure, education and health-care are maintained". The trade union federation COSATU was forced to reply: "We are following European/IMF austerity policies, which have only plunged Europe deeper into crisis".

Vavi points out the key role of "certain economic ministries and state institutions (including the Reserve Bank, strategic SOEs etc.) ... with the Presidency as the coordinating centre. But the institutional engine for monopoly capital in the state is the National Treasury", which "uses its control of the purse strings ... to attempt to shape, drive and often frustrate the policy agenda in the state".

When COSATU called for the scrapping of motorway e-tolls and a boycott of ebills, the SACP accused them of allying itself with the Democratic Alliance.

Vavi deals directly with the crisis in relations between the Alliance government and the metal-worker's union NUMSA:

"The question we must ask is: why, in its Special National Congress, did NUMSA move from being the defender of the ANC to its biggest critic? ... The intensity of NUMSA's critique, particularly since 2013, and the NUMSA Special National Congress resolutions of December 2013, reflect the crisis in COSATU, in the Alliance and in the working class as a whole.

"This is what the Party should have been responding to, not their irritation with NUMSA positions which they regard as extreme. Rather they should be responding to the extremity of the moment, in which the working class find itself in deepening crisis.

"Secondly, we need to ask, why is the SACP so threatened by NUMSA's critique of 'neoliberalism' in South Africa?

"It may be that NUMSA's critique has sometimes been overly crude in not recognising areas of progress, contradiction and contestation in the state. But equally the SACP has been in denial about the reality that neo-liberalism is a significant feature of strategic aspects of government economic policy, and that this needs to be contested. If the economic proposals of the NDP are clearly neoliberal, what else should we call them?"

Vavi points out that the SACP is: "... very cautious – many would say too cautious and hyper-diplomatic" in its approach to "managing its differences with the ANC, even in the face of attacks from the movement".

"However it has chosen to adopt the opposite standpoint in handling its differences with NUMSA. The Party seems to have decided on a course of total confrontation, engaging in running battles with NUMSA, hyping up the war talk, and pushing for the purging of NUMSA from the movement."

Complaining about a “confrontational posture ... reflected in the extreme language continuously used by the Party”, Vavi adds:

“Party statements thinly disguise the fact that it was celebrating the expulsion of NUMSA. This creates the clear impression amongst workers that the Party was indeed behind this, despite its denials.

“The SACP can’t say that we want worker controlled unions and a democratic federation, but we also want to purge particular unions we disagree with, or change the democratically determined mandate of their federation.”

These are words which must be weighed seriously by trade unionists and political activists around the world who are accustomed, without reflecting too much, to respecting the Alliance as the leadership of the South African people’s struggle for liberation.

More broadly, Vavi raises the general question:

“Many workers will be astonished, and also perplexed, at how a party calling itself Communist and with a long history of revolutionary struggle, could have ended up supporting right-wing, pro-capitalist economic policies and becoming the main defenders of a democratic yet capitalist government, while waging a campaign to emasculate, weaken and ultimately destroy the independent mass workers’ union movement, COSATU.”

This is of course the central question. Vavi thinks: “The best answer to this question is to be found in a famous pamphlet by ... Comrade Joe Slovo: *Has Socialism failed*, written in 1989”.

Discussing the source of the degeneration and collapse of the USSR and the international Communist movement, Slovo said: “ ... the party leadership was transformed into a command post with overbearing centralism and very little democracy ... the gap between socialism and democracy widened ... the commandist and

bureaucratic approaches which took root during Stalin's time affected communist parties throughout the world".

Now Vavi takes this matter somewhat further. He comments that the Party members should have addressed the problems of bureaucracy and personality cult much earlier, and points to some of the consequences:

"The fear of any democratic opposition from within each country spread to other parts of the world. In Spain in the mid-1930s the Communist Party uncritically supported the Republican government which, although a left-wing coalition, was still essentially a capitalist government, and it declared war on workers who were then struggling for a socialist Spain. The anarchists, Trotskyists and independent workers, not the capitalists and fascists, became the CP's main enemy.

"They were attacked with exactly the same sort of insults and absurd conspiracy theories we hear today in South Africa, in which NUMSA and COSATU leaders, NGOs and progressive civil society groups are charged with 'anti-majoritarianism' and conspiring with international counter-revolutionaries to destabilise 'our' ANC government."

Yes, this is an SACP member and the elected General Secretary of one of the world's most respected trade union confederations speaking!

We Trotskyists in the Workers International have more – much more! – to say about the origins and character of the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union and the Communist International. We have a scientific analysis of these things which places "personal" failings and "commandist and bureaucratic approaches" in a proper context.

A useful introduction to our analysis, and the issues raised, is contained in the articles *Stalinism and Bolshevism* which Trotsky wrote in 1937. It is easily available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/08/stalinism.htm>

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Vavi concludes his long letter with an expression of hope that:

“It is not too late for the Party to change direction, and recapture its historical role, so that together we can transform our skewed internal development and place society onto a new growth and development path”.

Whether or not this is too optimistic, the issues he raises must be fought out to the very end at all political levels in the movement. They are clearly under discussion in every nook and cranny of the movement in South Africa. We at Workers International stand shoulder to shoulder with all those who wish to take the theory and practice of the masses forward.

Bob Archer, January 2015 [/threecolumns]

Stalinist witch-hunt paves the way for violent repression

[threecolumns]Commemorating the 20th anniversary of the death of Joe Slovo, South African Communist Party General Secretary Blade Nzimande evoked Slovo’s memory (“... a living embodiment of our Alliance!”) on January 6th this year as a stick to beat political opponents in the working class movement, whom he accused of wanting “to become media heroes through unprincipled attacks on the ANC”.

“The good example set by Slovo epitomises the importance of

unity in the struggle for liberation, the unity of our Alliance; the unity of our broad movement; the unity of the working class; the broad unity of our people!"

(To what extent this Alliance is really "united" is described in detail in other articles in this dossier.)

Nzimande quoted from Slovo's "seminal work" *The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution*:

"The classes and strata which come together in a front of struggle usually have different long-term interests and, often, even contradictory expectations from the immediate phase. The search for agreement usually leads to a minimum platform which excludes some of the positions of the participating classes or strata."

(We also look in detail in another article at the way the leaders of the "Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917" saw the active and leading role of the working class in revolutions in which other oppressed labouring classes were involved, and indeed how their views on this really developed alongside their growing understanding of what was then the early decades of imperialism.)

Nzimande carefully skirted around the fact that the "classes and strata" with whom the SACP/ANC leaders made a common front at the beginning of the 1990s included the big international mining corporations and people like the billionaire participants in the Bilderberg conference. He glibly asserted: "As Slovo states ... the working class did not simply melt into the Alliance once it was created. The working class did NOT 'abandon its independent class objectives or independent class organisation'."

And it is true that the working class has not "abandoned its independent class objectives", but it has had to turn to its militant trade unions to fight for them, since the SACP is not an "independent class organisation". The SACP certainly does

not fight for real “independent class objectives”, as the reply of COSATU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi to SACP Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Cronin (also discussed in another article), for all its very diplomatic language, makes abundantly clear.

Nzimande continued: “Worker participation in the ANC is one of the important ways in which our working class plays its role in the democratic revolution. But above all, the tripartite alliance, moulded in the revolutionary underground, between the ANC, the South African Congress of Trade unions (SACTU [now Cosatu]), and our SACP, represents a framework which expresses the political interests of our working class in the broad front of struggle”.

His problem is that 20 years on from the end of the apartheid regime, and following the police killing of 34 platinum miners at Marikana, this assertion has become threadbare. No wonder many of the more thoughtful workers, even if they still think the “National Democratic Revolution” was a valid way forward, have now reached the conclusion that to say the least “the Alliance has been captured and taken over by right-wing forces”.

So where does this leave Nzimande and the SACP leadership? They can only respond as every Stalinist leadership has responded, with slander and libels, preparing the way for attempts at physical repression.

Nziomande’s speech repeats Slovo’s slander of “workerism” against the many workers, who actually built the mass trade union movement in the decades leading up to 1990, and who believed that “inter-class alliances lead to an abandonment of socialist perspectives and to a surrender of working-class leadership”.

But “the abandonment of socialist perspectives and ... a surrender of working class leadership” by the SACP leadership

is precisely what Zwelinzima Vavi describes at length in his letter (discussed elsewhere in this magazine).

And since the SACP is clearly (in deeds if not in words) completely untroubled by any “socialist perspectives” of any sort, but in practice supports an ANC government which pursues capitalist policies in alliance with major imperialist interests, the struggle between them and the workers in NUMSA is the form the class struggle in South Africa takes.

Talking to Young Communist League members on 12 December, Nzimande made an amalgam of NUMSA with a “wave of demagoguery”, an “anti-majoritarian, often racist, liberal offensive whose object is regime change to dislodge the liberation movement from power”.

He linked the NUMSA leadership with the “neo-fascist, demagogic and populist” Economic Freedom Fighters, “a party which only brought hooliganism to Parliament”, and the “deeply divided” *Democratic Alliance (DA)* with a “white brat-pack”, and “our own factory faults”, i.e former members who have abandoned the SACP. At other times the leaders of NUMSA have been accused of wanting “regime change”.

The amalgam is one of the fundamental methods of Stalinist terror. Political opponents (and sometimes loyal servants who happen to be expendable) have ever since the 1930s been systematically slandered by association before being subjected to show-trials, attacked, detained or murdered.

A recent article in the *Mail and Guardian* newspaper made disturbing reading(*Mystery document alleges Numsa is bent on regime change*, by Sarah Evans, 1 December 2014).

“As the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) prepares to launch its United Front,” the article starts, “a document accusing the union and individuals associated with it of plotting against the South African government to secure regime change has surfaced.

"The document, titled *Exposed: Secret regime change plot to destabilise South Africa*, has apparently been circulating since November 20. It is supposedly written by 'concerned members within NUMSA' who disagree with the broader union leadership's plans to form a United Front.

"The alleged plot" (alleged by shadowy government supporters claiming to be members of NUMSA) "is led and facilitated by key leaders within various political organisations, institutes of higher learning, international companies and civic groups, both locally and abroad.

"Some of the people named in the document as 'plotters' include former intelligence minister Ronnie Kasrils, Professor Chris Malekane, Professor Peter Jordi and Moeletsi Mbeki, brother of former president Thabo Mbeki. Various international "plotters" are also named, from countries including Germany, Venezuela and the Philippines.

"At least two individuals named in the document, Professor Patrick Bond of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Azwell Banda, a former Zambian trade unionist, have been the victims of crime recently, in what appears to be attempts to intimidate them.

"Banda's car was broken into last week and Bond's office was ransacked and his hard drive was stolen last Sunday. It appears as if a second break-in was attempted, but this time only the lock to his office was damaged."

Fears on the part of NUMSA supporters are not fantasies or idle threats. Nzimande told the rally at Slovo's graveside:

"The strategy to divide Cosatu, including attempts to separate it from the Alliance" (it is the SACP which sent its supporters into Cosatu to expel NUMSA, as Vavi complains!) "represents a classic imperialist strategy to defeat revolutionary movements ... The initiative led by the Numsa leadership fits perfectly into the same imperialist strategy

to try and dislodge the ANC-led Alliance from power. It is therefore important that we understand the idea of a 'united front' and 'workers' party' from this political angle."

It will soon become urgent to build international capacity to defend NUMSA, its leaders and members and the United Front it is establishing from a state-inspired Stalinist witch hunt. Fortunately the United Front provides an excellent framework for explaining and mobilising such support and discussing the way forward. Real unity between those who struggle in a principled way for the interests of the oppressed (and not unity with the imperialist exploiters) can and must contain and accommodate real diversity as activists and organisations establish a clear understanding of their past, present and future while struggling together for that future.

Millions of trade unionists and socialists in the UK, the United States and elsewhere supported the resistance to the apartheid regime and support the aim of a socialist South Africa. It will become essential once more to inspire a great and powerful international movement in working class organisations around the world in defence of the South African working class. We in the UK have a central responsibility in this as subjects of the former colonial power.

At the same time it is essential to mobilise all possible support for the work that NUMSA is promoting, and the United Front that is developing in South Africa itself.

Beyond that it is vital to extend this work beyond the borders of South Africa, initially into neighbouring countries in Southern Africa and subsequently across the whole continent.

Bob Archer, January 2015[/threecolumns]

Reinstate NUMSA in its rightful place in the leadership of COSATU

Statement by Workers International

[threecolumns]On 8 November, 33 out of 57 office bearers of the South African trade union federation COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) voted to expel the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) from their federation.

NUMSA is the biggest, among the most militant, and certainly the most socialist-minded of the South African trade unions. It was a founder union of COSATU.

The decision to expel was taken by a bare 58% of the federation office bearers, because those who had determined to get rid of NUMSA could not be sure that they would win the expulsion vote at a national Congress of all COSATU members.

NUMSA's expulsion was the latest act in a long saga of a developing and increasingly stark division in the South African trade union leaderships, which has now resulted in this very visible split.

The breaking point was 12 August 2012, when the South African police force shot down 34 striking miners at Marikana. Their crime was to refuse to sell their labour for less than a living wage.

At that point the metalworkers' union declared that South African politics could not carry on in the same way. They said, when a government collaborates with super-exploitative foreign-owned mining companies to keep wages at poverty levels by shooting down striking workers, that government can no longer be deemed a democratic government.

The split in the South African trade union movement is a fundamental split – between the class collaborationist pro-African National Congress union leaders, and the union leaders (and members) who know that class collaborationist politics have achieved almost nothing since 1994 for the working class and the impoverished masses.

NUMSA and its predecessor union, the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) has fought since it was formed against class collaboration politics, and for the working class to take the leadership of the South African revolution.

This split between the South African trade union leaders is also the material manifestation of an old argument – the opposition between the Stalinist theory of the two stage revolution, and the Marxist understanding of permanent revolution.

The two stage theory says that in colonial and semi-colonial countries exploited by foreign capital in increasingly brutal ways, the path to socialist revolution and common ownership of the means of production must obey certain rules of development, and pass through two stages.

First must come a bourgeois democratic revolution. The class that must lead and take power is the national bourgeoisie, which will introduce democratic reforms – the right to self-rule, democratic elections, and equal rights for all sections of society (before the law, in education, in employment) and so on. This notion is modeled on the formal premise that every colonial and semi-colonial country in the world must pass through the same stages as the developed countries did in the 17th (England) 18th (France, America) and 19th (Italy, Germany) centuries.

According to the two stages theory, many, many years later, the democratic rights introduced by this first stage will gradually result in a socialist transformation of the economy

and society. The huge hole in the theory is that it cannot explain how the exercise of these democratic rights will gradually and peacefully persuade a brutal exploiting class to hand over the means of production. It is in reality a cover for the permanent handing over of power to that class. The “second” stage is a sop to the workers and oppressed masses of those countries – to persuade them to support their own bourgeoisie into government.

This ideology, proselytised by the South African Communist Party (SACP) into the ranks of the African National Congress (ANC), and the trade union movement, resulted in an understanding of the 1994 elections in South Africa as the “National Democratic Revolution” rightfully led by the ANC, and the first stage in the journey towards socialism.

The democratic elections were brought about through a “negotiated settlement” with the bankers, mine-owners and land-owners made by the ANC leadership with the ideological backing of the SACP. That settlement was made between a national bourgeoisie and its international counterpart.

The deal was that democratic elections would be allowed in exchange for the right of the international bourgeoisie to maintain its super-exploitation of black workers, and appropriation of South Africa’s wealth at the expense of the masses of South Africa.

The deal was made only because the foreign exploiters of the country feared they faced the seizure of all their property, the mines, the banks, the land and the major industries by a mass resistance led by the working class.

In the early 90s, the huge self-sacrificing struggle of the oppressed masses of South Africa (led by a powerful and socialist-minded trade union movement) had reached the point where it constituted a challenge to the control foreign capital had over the South African economy. But those trades

unionists and impoverished masses were exactly the people who were to be excluded from the deal. Those who were to benefit were the foreign exploiters and those black South Africans with close ties to the ANC.

The Marxist theory of Permanent Revolution maintains that in the colonial and semi-colonial countries the class which must lead any democratic revolution is the working class, and that it must lead an alliance with the poor peasants in a struggle to realise democratic demands. In order to thoroughly achieve those democratic demands (making them available to the working class and poor peasantry) it must carry over the democratic revolution to socialism. This means starting the overthrow of property relations through the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy under workers' control – at the same time as achieving these democratic demands. The theory of Permanent Revolution is also clear that socialism cannot be sustained in a single country, and can only survive if it is carried out on an international scale. This is a key aspect for a working class party in South Africa, which must reach out beyond its borders as it seeks to establish a socialist society.

Crucial for the development of Permanent Revolution is that the working class must be in the leadership of both the struggle for democracy, and for socialism, and the dual processes cannot be separated. The class must have an understanding that it is not challenging one manifestation of capital (like apartheid) but challenging capitalism itself – and this means that the working class must have its own socialist party to fight for the development of that class consciousness. NUMSA (while remaining a trade union) is currently carrying forward the patient and solid investigation necessary for the building of that party.

NUMSA's document on the Freedom Charter's demands (pages 3 & 4 of the Workers' International journal October 2014) shows how the democratic demands of the South African National

Democratic revolution can't be fully realised for the masses in the context of the continuing poverty, unemployment and inequality resulting from the maintenance of the capitalist economic system.

An example not used in that article is that of South African women. Despite having their equal rights enshrined in the South African constitution, South African women cannot equally participate in society because of the horrifying rate of gender-based violence in South Africa. This flows from the existence of a lumpen layer abandoned with no stake in society through mass unemployment. The lower a South African woman's income, the more she will suffer from sexual harassment, violence and rape.

The most powerful demonstration of all is the fact that striking mineworkers could not exercise their democratic right (enshrined in the South African constitution) to go on strike for a living wage because they were shot down by the "democratic" state.

We should remember that the difference between permanent revolution and the two stage theory – and which class should be in the leadership – had already been fought out in the 1980s through the development of the Workers Charter in the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU), the forerunner of NUMSA. This precious clarification was suppressed in the formation of COSATU when the National Union of Mineworkers under Cyril Ramaphosa used its weight in the movement to sideline the discussion.

That disagreement – over whether the trade unions should have the Workers Charter or the Freedom Charter as their programme – was the fundamental disagreement over which class should lead the South African revolution.

Our Workers International comrade, Bongani Mkungho, fought for those conceptions his whole life long, but that period of

South African working class history has now been airbrushed out. It appears only in hostile formulations on the National Union of Mineworkers' website to what they call "workerists".

It is almost impossible to find the Workers Charter on the internet – one of the few places is on our website here:

<http://workersinternational.info//?s=workers+charter>.

NUMSA General Secretary Irwin Jim's generation arrived after that fight had taken place – and has had to rediscover the class nature of the ANC government at the cost of 34 striking miners' lives. These leaders still speak as if the two stages of the democratic and socialist transformations can be looked at as two separate processes and are putting the ANC's Freedom Charter forward as their programme. NUMSA (and the six other unions allied to them) are demanding to implement the socialist second stage immediately – locked in struggle with those who (under the guise of saying that 20 years is not long enough to change things) are determined that the second stage will never appear. In order to make sure of that, they must ensure above all that the working class does not take leadership and take power.

The pro-ANC office bearers of COSATU undemocratically threw NUMSA out of their federation because they want to expel a force which fights ceaselessly for the rights of South African workers, and which is clarifying for millions of workers what the split in their movement really means.

They and particularly the South African Communist party (of which many if not all of them will be members) are the "splitters" of the movement – and they have split the movement in order to benefit the exploiting class.

Thus, when Gwede Mantashe, Secretary of the African National Congress (and ex-NUM General Secretary, like Cyril Ramaphosa) says that he is saddened by the split in the unions and talks about unity – but then asks NUMSA to look at their actions –

he speaks with a forked tongue.

COSATU must organise the Special National Congress that NUMSA and other COSATU unions have demanded for the past year – so NUMSA can put its case to the COSATU membership against expulsion, and for advancing the policies on nationalisation agreed at its 2012 conference.

The international working class must take sides in this split – between class collaborationist “sweetheart” trade union leaderships and those that clearly and unequivocally are fighting for the interests and the independent socialist programme of the working class.

We are not a group of outside observers but have participated actively in our trade unions and political groups over decades to support the long struggle against apartheid – only to find the government our efforts helped put in power shooting down striking workers.

Just as we took sides against the apartheid regime, we need to take sides in NUMSA’s struggle – so the whole of the international trade union movement can be clarified. Socialism will never be achieved through collaboration with the exploiting class, and waiting for the day that never comes when they hand over power.

In Britain we are not yet at the stage of the most politically advanced trade unions in South Africa.

We are still working our way through the class collaborationist outlook instilled by social democracy and Stalinism over many decades, which manifests itself in uncritical support for an array of national liberation movements which are not led by the working class.

We still look to Stalinism’s most successful international popular front organisation the Anti-Apartheid Movement (now known as Action on Southern Africa) to advise us on solidarity

with South Africa. We are still going through the process of fighting for the Labour party to stand up for crucial democratic rights, like the right to strike unhampered by repressive laws, and the right to the Welfare State.

The issues and the choices are starker in South African because (as a new working class) they have not spent so long under the domination of a trade union bureaucracy saturated in social democratic and Stalinist conceptions, like Stalin's doctrine of "peaceful co-existence" between socialism and capitalism. The very best and most class conscious of the British trade union movement (among which is the leadership of Unite) sees itself still as fighting austerity and not capital.

That is why it is so important that take sides with NUMSA in this split – because they can help clarify us through their hard-won conviction that "the interests of capital and the working class are irreconcilably antagonistic".

Workers International 25.10.2014[/threecolumns]

Statement on the decisions of the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa by the Workers International to

Rebuild the Fourth International Conference 29-30 March 2014

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

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

The leadership concluded that the decisions of the unions 9th Congress were no longer enough to guide [them]. The situation had changed to a point where [they] needed a new mandate from the membership, and their Special Congress decided to break with the ANC and SACP and call upon the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) to re-establish its independent campaigning role, for there is no priority more important than safeguarding the capacity of the working class to act in its own interests.

In so doing NUMSA is raising matters of vital importance for workers everywhere engulfed by the crisis of capitalism which manifests itself in mass unemployment, deepening poverty and widening inequalities. To end the rule of capital, workers are faced with the task of breaking with fake socialist and

communist parties acting on behalf of the capitalist class and failing to act as the vanguard of the working class.

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

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

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

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

We support and will act on NUMSAs decision to build a Movement for Socialism;

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

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

by Balazs Nagy, April 2014

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

These glaring contradictions clearly reveal what these media are really like and what they are there for. All working people, especially the politically active among them, should ponder this. It exposes the highfaluting idea that the media are there to provide reliable information as a gross, outrageous fiction. The deception they are currently trying on exposes even more clearly exactly what this vast brainwashing mechanism is for: to stop workers becoming conscious of the situation they are in and what they really need to do by mutilating, obscuring, and in this instance deliberately camouflaging, the great, irresistible strength that lies in

workers international unity. This colossal strength, whose development is as uneven as that of capitalism itself, is still deeply divided and fractured along national and regional lines. It is split and stunted even more by the crying lack of political organisation, a genuine, powerful International, on the part of this working class.

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

South Africas biggest trade union takes some amazing decisions

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

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

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

To reject the tripartite alliance between the governing party,

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

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

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

The Congress then took a vitally important step. As Irvin Jim emphasised in the speech quoted above, there was in the SNC a profound understanding that unless the working class organises itself as a class for itself it will remain unrepresented and forever toil behind the bourgeoisie. For this reason the SNC decided to study, research and investigate various forms of independent working-class parties and to serve as a catalyst to form a party. Deputy General Secretary Karl Cloete was obliged to add in his speech that, as a trade union, NUMSA could not commit itself to setting up such a party, but it should explore the means and methods leading to it. So he recalled the exact words chosen by the SNC, according to which NUMSA should organise a Conference on Socialism as a stage in

organising a Movement for Socialism to now be initiated by the trade union. In preparation for this conference, the whole union should look at experiences of building socialism, now and in the past. At the same time: We must conduct an international study on working class parties.

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

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

It voted to call on the leadership of the trade union confederation Cosatu to convene a Special Congress and to break the alliance (with the ANC and the SACP) which, according to General Secretary Jim, failed to use the political power it secured in 1994 to take ownership and control of the national wealth of our country and replace the white racist colonial economy.

Going straight from words to deeds, the congress decided to launch a campaign of rolling mass action initiated by the NUMSA structures to demand fundamental change in the direction of the South African economy and society. For a start, NUMSA

launched a powerful call for a General Strike and mass and community actions for 26 February. As Irvin Jim emphasised towards the end of his speech: We are starting to build the irresistible force that will take back our nation and build it in the interests of the majority.

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

To complete its resolutions, which profoundly alter class relations within the country, NUMSA decided to organise Marxist-Leninist Schools for trade union delegates to explain, discuss and assimilate the unions socialist orientation and to explain what it means and how to do it. The first of these week-long schools took place in early February 2014.

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

It would be impossible to squeeze into one short article

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

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

Such a clarification would allow us to take the South African road, and so cleanse from top to bottom the theoretical source that illuminates workers struggle for emancipation, by opting for creative Marxism, as the African workers did, the only theoretical guide for such a struggle. Of course such a choice goes hand in hand with a complete rejection of the jumble of

all sorts of left-over ideologies and conceptions the bourgeoisie uses to keep working people chained to them. It is urgently necessary to get rid of the mish-mash of the most widely-held-but all bankrupt-fragments of conceptions about class-collaboration, from the insipid hotchpotch of stale Keynesianism to Stalinisms various-catatonic but still clinging on-popular fronts.

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

By its very nature, said Trotsky, imperialism in its death agony provokes violent and repeated aggression on the part of the bourgeoisie which mean that must urgently fulfil a political role in relation to the fundamental choices the working class as a whole faces. Now the trade union leaderships have done and still do everything they can to divide up trade union activity and restrict it-at best-to the absolute minimum of defending their members immediate interests. They have erected this separation, which in reality is the same actual break already advocated by the syndicalism of old, into a rigorous, strict dogma in union work, which the

majority of organisations, even ones claiming some attachment to Lenin and Trotsky, cheerfully adopt, promote and ruthlessly apply. Now NUMSA flatly repudiates this whole trade union swamp in a way whose ultimate ramifications are still difficult to foresee.

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

As against this renewal, our Journal has already denounced, in particular in a recent article, the class collaboration on the part of many unions, their consequent refusal to take on a political role for the working class and their insistence on confining themselves to an obsolete, ossified, narrow and sterile trade union practice which has led a great mass of workers to turn their backs on them and reject them as blunt and rusty tools. Even a weapon as powerful and deadly (and double-edged!) as the general strike, which the Greek, Portuguese and Spanish working class have boldly and repeatedly wielded in the course of recent years, showing remarkable courage and spirit of self-sacrifice, has ended up each time in a bitter setback. All that these repeated general strikes have actually achieved has been to exhaust the working class and undermine its morale, since their leaders have

refused to open their only way out, i.e. the political assertion of the working class taking over the economic and political leadership of the country. As for the half-hearted mobilisations in partial strikes and demonstrations, whose pathetic results merely emphasise the contradiction between what the situation demands and a trade union movement embalmed in routine, the less said the better.

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

Fortunately, pretty well all over Europe workers will not accept being thrown on the scrap heap in this contemptible, humiliating way, like worn-out rubbish. Spontaneously, but at the initiative of local former leaders and cadres, they have gathered in various other structures at the margins of or outside the official unions. In the UK, the Liverpool dockers, after a long and difficult two-year dispute sustained and encouraged by port workers around the world, which was the stuff of legend, were nevertheless deprived of their jobs and the historical Liverpool docks wiped out. But they never said die. Inspired by local leaders and cadres such as Jimmy Nolan, Terry Teague and others, they organised, in this ravaged working-class city, around their Casa with its intense political, social and cultural life to maintain their class as a living, active force. And in the North East of the country, in Tyneside and Durham, former miners whose mines have all been completely closed and the miners left to rot, like one of

our former comrades, Dave Temple, have woven back together the broken threads of the union and kept alive the collective activity of the miners. They even revived their disused links with the Spanish Asturian miners when they came under attack.

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

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

NUMSAs SNC has opened the floodgates to a development of profound importance in the trade union movement, comparable to the general shift from craft unionism to industrial unionism which started in the first half of the twentieth century. Whereas the trade union bureaucracys practices, ossified into a dogma by reformists and Stalinists, stop at the gates of the workplace, the NUMSA SNC resolved to smash through this barrier. It decided to extend the activity of the union to the struggles waged in the communities (townships, suburbs, settlements, towns and villages) for workers and unemployed peoples basic demands for water, electricity, housing etc.,—struggles which are intense in South Africa. Consequently the union has taken the initiative to take on and directly organise these struggles and the activists involved. These struggles already have a long history stretching back to the 1990-1994 period, and even then NUMSA wanted to link them

up with what it was doing. Its then leader, Moses Mayakiso, worked out a whole political and organisational plan to that effect, to which NUMSA now refers. But the union abandoned these plans when its revolutionary line buckled under the right-wing influence of the overall ANC-SACP-Cosatu alliance. And it was precisely then that these community struggles really took off as the way in which the impoverished masses defended themselves against the violent destruction of their living conditions by the governments class-collaboration policies.

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

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

Over the last two years, these comrades have broadened out this activity to include the defence of miners and teachers robbed of their pensions by the mining trusts and state organs, and of the rights of various ethnic groups of farmers and agricultural workers. To organise and centralise them, they and their supporters and associates have established the Workers Advice Centre, whose activities and influence have become quite extensive. Rapid and brutal reaction from the

Namibian bourgeoisie, its old colonial master South Africa, and its own repressive legal organs was not long in coming, especially once our comrades resolved to prepare to set up the Namibian workers party in the very near future. A raft of administrative hassles, legal threats and arbitrary measures, fines and charges and police summonses and harassment, cutting off of water and electricity supplies, warnings, intimidation and arbitrary accusations paralyse their work and disorganise and even put in question the very existence of the Workers Advice Centre. Certainly they will not be put off doing what they do, and especially not their big project. But active and effective solidarity on the part of working people across the whole world provides precious support which, even in modest forms, helps the Namibian comrades efforts and forges and cements international unity of the working class and all working people.

For a South African turn everywhere!

The immense scope of this initiative by South African workers in NUMSA arises in an international atmosphere where sharpening class contradictions have already provoked a series of revolutionary explosions. Since the Tunisian people unleashed their revolutionary march, spurred on by the working class and rapidly spreading to Egypt and then more or less all Arab countries, the massive mobilisation of working people against the bourgeoisie and the intolerable measures they are taking has accelerated and taken on increasingly sharp and violent forms. The inevitable avalanche of the world revolution has started, even if its various manifestations have a spontaneous character which makes their rhythm somewhat jagged, and even though they dress up in the nationalist or religious garb of past dominant ideologies. A spectre is haunting Europe (or rather the world): the spectre of communism. Even in the last year it has appeared noisily in Egypt, then entered the scene albeit briefly in South Korea and Turkey, while more or less gate-crashed and disguised by

nationalist and religious stand-ins, defied the powerful from Palestine to Pakistan by way of Iraq and Afghanistan, and it is ready to burst out in our old Europe, albeit tempered, softened and enfeebled. And all the while, travestied and disfigured as it has been, side-tracked and losing its bearings in Syria, it terrifies the possessors and drives their rulers all over the world to either desperate self-defence or complete paralysis.

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

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

The lucidity of NUMSAs position and its explicit orientation towards socialism cuts through this whole dense morass to bring vital clarity into the chaotic tangle of wrong roads. It brings the light people need to separate the good seed from the various kinds of bourgeois chaff fed to it, and opens the way to the only solution, which is socialist. It is also entirely valid for all organisations, even those claiming to speak for working people in the more developed countries. It spurs us on to either act like South Africans or take sides

with the oppressors or, at best, fall into historical oblivion—and in both latter cases to drag working people into a defeat.

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

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

Not only is a bitter struggle developing inside every union, but the ANC and the SACP are undergoing an unprecedented crisis in which oppositions and groupings along a new line are

endangering the right-wing monolith Stalinism built up within them. Even the radical turn made by the NUMSA SNC would not have been possible without a decisive political turn on the part of communist and ANC activists who are NUMSA members and delegates. Do the WASP comrades seriously think that NUMSA and its leaders are going to put the brakes on this huge movement of renewal and strangle it by giving up the fight and looking for a hole to hide in somewhere outside this whole class in ferment?

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

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

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

Instead, the WASP comrades could have grasped the real job facing Marxist worker-activists by thinking through for themselves, for example, the implications of the NUMSA resolutions, instead of following the CWIs ultimatic watchwords. That organisation is known in various parts of Europe as a body locked in sectarian isolation which prefers brandishing ultimatums to democratic discussion either in its own ranks or beyond. WASP comrades have nothing to gain by following these watchwords; on the contrary, by doing so they risk doing damage to the South African workers movement. It isn't NUMSA which should break with Cosatu, but WASP which ought to break with the CWI.

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

The most obvious and natural thing to start with is to call on all trade union and political organisations anywhere which claim any attachment to the working class to publish the NUMSA resolutions and statement in full and organise a discussion about them as urgent, necessary tasks. That is an elementary duty, for if it is true that recent weather conditions have been somewhat out of kilter, it is no less true that to see the sun of workers struggles rise, from now on we should look not East but-South![/threecolumns]

Black Thursday at Marikana

By Radoslav Pavlovic,

Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International

While a heat-wave and panic in the northern hemisphere have set off rocketing corn prices, in the southern half it's supposed to be winter. But the seasonal silence has been shattered by the gunshots of the South African police on Thursday 16 August 2012. 34 miners at the Marikana platinum mine were killed, some 80 wounded and more than 250 arrested. It was a bloodbath of a kind unknown since the days of Apartheid, but with the difference that the killers and their victims are both black, while the mine owners and those giving the orders are still white.

The miners were killed because they were on strike demanding an increase in their poverty wages and rejected the management's instruction to go down the mine. So capitalism, which long since entirely entered its second stage of rotten decay, is now passing over to its third stage where free collective bargaining of wages reverts to slavery. There is just one nuance in this new class relationship: power is still in the hands of white capital, but they work through black sub-contractors in the African National Congress (ANC) and the majority union, NUM, whose leader is on the platinum mining company's board of directors. Remember how the lords of German capital bought the services of the socialists Ebert and Noske when they needed to behead the proletarian revolution? Well the same thing is happening today in South Africa.

I have a brother living in those far-off lands in the south, but I feel closer to my black brothers who are the Marikana miners, because ties of class are stronger than ties of blood. I know that on the football terraces of Zagreb, Belgrade,

Warsaw and Moscow hordes of fascist football fans hurl racist abuse at black players and call them monkeys, because they are deluded into believing that they themselves belong to a blue blooded and blond-haired white master race. They go on from abuse to physical attacks on black immigrants on the underground, like the Golden Dawn do in Greece ("Black Death" would be a better name). If there are no migrants where you live, you can always pick on your own local Roma. Then you graduate to organising militias, like the Serb tigers, eagles and wolves in the war in Bosnia and elsewhere, before ending up with regular military units for "special operations", "anti-riot" squads or "national security", in the small Balkan countries as much as in South Africa. If capitalism really is guided by a "hidden hand", it is the white hand of capital operating behind the scenes. If workers get disobedient, there are plenty of the unemployed, thirsting for violence, to turn into uniformed killers.

President Zuma, Commissions of Enquiry, reporters asking "who shot first" are just so much hot air to divert public opinion. What they did is, on the orders of white capital, they shot black miners down like sparrows.

May the memory of our black miner brothers of Marikana live for ever!