

The crisis in Numsa: The lessons and the way forward

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“We, the members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), firmly commit ourselves to a United South Africa, free of oppression and economic exploitation”

This proud and defiant statement opens the Preamble to the Numsa Constitution, which goes on to assert “that this can only be achieved under the leadership of an organised and united working class”.

The Preamble lists the conditions under which this struggle can be successful, including:

“(a) fight and oppose all forms of discrimination” in the trade union, the workplace and society.

“(c) ensure that all levels of the union are democratically structured and controlled by the members themselves through elected worker committees.”

“(d) encourage democratic worker leadership and organisation in our factories and in all spheres of society.” (“Preamble to the Constitution” at: <https://numsa.org.za/numsa-constitution/>)

And yet, it seems that this crucial trade union has fallen under the control of a dictatorial and corrupt special-interest clique. Union activists claim that this clique imposes its authority in flagrant breach of the principles expressed in the Preamble to the Union’s Constitution.

They complain about the union-linked “3Sixty Life” insurance scheme which has “been placed under curatorship by the court because it was not having sufficient funds to guarantee pay-outs for Numsa members who are

policyholders”.

They mention an auditors’ report “which shows how millions were paid out to people for dubious reasons such as undefined services rendered and monies going to a birthday party for (National Secretary Irvin) Jim and a laptop to his daughter.”

They complain about “disruptions of Regional Congress not supporting the re-election of the same Regional Office Bearers and National Office Bearers”, “the sending in of thugs to disrupt and mess up the Ekhuruleni Regional Executive Committee and Regional Congress” and “the violation of the NUMSA Constitution by suspending 53Shopstewards will-nilly” (“Save Our NUMSA” flyer posted on facebook Lindi Lee WaliWorking Class Friends Of Instimbi Ayigobi).

Numsa’s history of struggle

It was the rise of the working class organised in trade unions like Numsa which forced the imperialists and their racist supporters in South Africa between 1990 and 1994 to abandon apartheid and adopt some of the trappings (if not the substance) of an advanced democracy.

The activists who built Numsa strove to mobilise the whole masses to overthrow imperialism-capitalism as the cause of South Africa’s subjugation. They expressed their stance in the Workers’ Charter (adopted by Numsa in 1987) which explained:

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

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

Foremost among the “conditions for the building of a socialist society” is the matter of revolutionary leadership, an international party through which the masses “can complete the liberation objectives in all spheres of social life”.

The advanced workers who framed this charter could only conceive it being carried out by ensuring “that all levels of the union are democratically structured and controlled by the members themselves through elected worker committees” and encouraging “democratic worker leadership and organisation in our factories and in all spheres of society” as we saw above.

SACP and ANC

The officially-recognised liberation movement for South Africa was dominated politically by an alliance between the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the African National Congress (ANC). The SACP was in turn dominated politically by the line of “peaceful co-existence” between the Soviet bloc and the imperialist world that was promulgated by the USSR under Stalin and his successors. Against the thrust of the “Workers’ Charter”, Stalinists deliberately confined the struggle against colonialism and imperialism to the achievement of national independence and alleged democratic goals, leaving the fight for a socialist society to some unstated time in the future.

Stalinism’s allies in the African National Congress were in turn mainly tribal and middle-class elites and their supporters. They tolerated and even adopted a radical political rhetoric which they never had the slightest intention of following through once they achieved their own, limited class aims.

The SACP-ANC alliance is not and never was under the control of any workers’ democracy. This alliance looked for recognition to bourgeois, indeed imperialist, states and international bodies based in Europe and North America. While the anti-apartheid leaders toured the diplomatic circuit on the one hand, the numbers of young fighters who fled repression in South Africa in the late 1970s to the uMkonto we Sizwe (armed wing of the ANC) camps abroad got short shrift from their own

leaders. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up after the end of apartheid found that the use of torture by uMkhonto we Sizwe against their own members in these camps was “routine”, as were executions “without due process”.

At the same time, dissenting voices in the black townships in South Africa were brutally silenced by kangaroo courts and “necklacings”.

Prominent leaders associated with the ANC-SACP alliance, like Jacob Zuma and Cyril Ramaphosa went on to become Presidents of the country. With cold contempt for the working class and the masses, they set about enriching themselves while their country saw growing poverty, lack of service delivery and general instability. Ramaphosa was able to dislodge and replace Zuma because the latter was so blatantly in the pocket of the Gupta business clan, but Ramaphosa himself was exposed when other, less prominent, thieves made off with large sums in illicit cash that had been concealed in the furniture at his farm.

The whole tradition of the ANC and SACP alliance is one of high-handed contempt for the ordinary workers and their organisations. It was the revolt of workers and young people that made it impossible to carry on with the apartheid regime, but the government of South Africa was eventually passed to the Mbekis, Zumas and Ramaphosas courtesy of the international bodies of imperialism and the mining and other companies which, from Europe and America and elsewhere, still loot the country’s resources and benefit from cheap African labour. Soviet and Chinese leaders also stood as godparents to the new state.

(For a fuller understanding of the history and role of the ANC and its relationship with working-class organisations, see at the end of this article, the appendix *The ANC and Numsaby* my comrade Hewat Beukes).

Stalinism and Pan-Africanism

Above all, the new liberation leaders of South Africa were trained and brought up in the tradition of Stalinist politics which prevailed in the Soviet Union after Lenin’s death and which explicitly abandoned the international struggle for socialism. In place of that struggle, the leaders of the USSR and the world movement which they brutally dominated

looked for “peaceful co-existence” with whatever (capitalist) allies they might find abroad. The specific application of this in colonies and former colonies was to find allies among national elites keen on independence but equally keen on maintaining their privileges.

Organisations like South-West Africa Peoples’ Movement (Swapo) devoted great efforts to achieving recognition at the United Nations and elsewhere as the one and only true liberation fighters, meanwhile deliberately slandering and side-lining the genuine liberation fighters in Namibia.

The roots of bureaucracy

In the 1920s, after the Russian Revolution, in the USSR a social caste came to the fore which usurped the power of the working class exercised through the workers’ and peasants’ soviets and also closed down – often violently – any debate in the Communist Party. Trotsky described and analysed this development in his well-known study, *The Revolution Betrayed*. What interests us here is what Trotsky says about the character of this bureaucracy and its regime:

“The poverty and cultural backwardness of the masses has again become incarnate in the malignant figure of the ruler with a great club in his hand. The deposed and abused bureaucracy” (i.e. of the old, abolished Tsarist autocracy – BA) “from being a servant of society, has again become its lord. On this road it has attained such a degree of social and moral alienation from the popular masses, that it cannot now permit any control over either its activities or its income” (*The Revolution Betrayed*, London 1967, p.113).

The men and women who led the Russian Revolution of 1917 were members of the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (later re-named the Communist Party). They stood out for their steadfast devotion to the cause in the face of Tsarist brutality and dictatorship. They were equally devoted to training themselves theoretically and practically to guide the working class and broader masses. They frequently had to pay with their lives for their convictions.

But after Lenin’s death and once the new bureaucratic caste administering

the new state had usurped workers' soviet democracy, all these characteristics were turned on their heads. Loyalty to the cause of the working class was replaced by blind loyalty to the Party and ultimately the Party leader. The practical and theoretical discipline required to defeat the Tsarist police state was replaced by unquestioning subservience to allegedly infallible leaders.

Already in 1920, during the Second Congress of the Communist International, Lenin had this to say to certain over-enthusiastic and dogmatic "Left-Communists":

"...how is the discipline of the revolutionary party of the proletariat maintained? How is it tested? How is it reinforced? First, by the class-consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its firmness, self-sacrifice and heroism. Secondly by its ability to link itself with, to keep in touch with, and, to a certain degree, if you will, merge itself with the broadest masses of the toilers – primarily with the proletarian, but also with the non-proletarian toiling masses. Thirdly, by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard and by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, provided that the broadest masses become convinced of this correctness by their own experience ... Without these conditions all attempts to establish discipline are inevitably transformed into trifling phrase-mongering and empty gestures". (*Left-Wing Communism; An Infantile Disorder*).

Here are the most deep-rooted origins of the high-handed arrogance of trade union leaders like Irvin Jim, as of "liberation" leaders like Zuma, Ramaphosa, Nujoma and Geingob. Jim has surrounded himself with a clique bound together by self-interest, and this clique is lashing out at anyone who stands in its way. They expel members of the union, close down regions, disrupt meetings and remove the essential personal protection of "dissident" leaders of the union.

This whole monolithic approach to differences and debate is the creation of Stalinism. First, we must say that political parties of the working class require a different set of mutual obligations between leaders and members from what needs to prevail in trade unions, which by their nature

must embrace at least the majority of workers in a particular trade, sector or region, irrespective of their ideology and politics. Workers' unity in action can only be achieved through the broadest possible discussion and freedom of expression. That is the significance of the passage written by Lenin and quoted above.

Comrades will – or should – know that in building the party which ultimately led the Russian Revolution to victory, Lenin and his supporters laid enormous stress upon the responsibilities a revolutionary party imposes upon its members. They openly broke (in 1903) from others who had a much more relaxed attitude to this very question. Experience showed that the Lenin faction (Bolsheviks) went on to lead the Russian Revolution and the opposing faction (Mensheviks) attempted to strangle it.

Nevertheless, it is wrong and out of place to impose the constitution of a revolutionary political party onto the functioning of a trade union.

Numsa specifically has a well-established tradition of free and open confrontation between different political tendencies.

In any case, in any part of the world any major action by workers is always prepared by a seething low-level but widespread process of argument and debate at the workplace, in the pub, on the terraces of a sporting event or at home and with the wider family and even sometimes in religious congregations. That is the springboard for the official discussions and decisions at workplace meetings, union branches, regional and national executives, etc. **Nothing could be further from the mark, by the way, than the accusations in the bourgeois media that this or that trade union leader can “call their members out” on strike at the drop of a hat.**

But even in a political party, even a revolutionary party operating under conditions of illegality, as Lenin's Bolshevik Party did for many years, it is a myth that a “line” elaborated by some “lider maximo” was submissively adopted, passed on and carried out by automatons in the ranks. Unfortunately, it is that very mistaken conception that has since then been accepted as “democratic centralism” in many circles, even among

groups who claim to oppose bureaucratic methods.

On top of demanding automatic obedience, would-be bureaucrats in the movement skilfully pick on alleged “bourgeois” traits in members and activists who might raise awkward questions or oppose some nonsensical “line” that is being promulgated. All sorts of sly comments and innuendoes can undermine those who are genuinely trying to build the movement and want to question the “line” that is being handed out. Not infrequently false accusations that this or that person is an “agent” can be used to side-line the person concerned and contribute to an atmosphere of paranoia.

Often, activists are driven into huge and fruitless rounds of activity which turn out to be pointless and lead to demoralisation. Such methods have unfortunately become widespread, and are often sanctified as “Bolshevik”.

This is what Trotsky said about the culture of revolutionary parties in 1936 in *The Revolution Betrayed*:

“The inner regime of the Bolshevik Party was characterised by the method of *democratic centralism*. The combination of these two concepts, democracy and centralism, is not in the least contradictory. The party took watchful care not only that its boundaries should always be strictly defined, but that all those who entered these boundaries should enjoy the actual right to define the direction of the party policy. Freedom of criticism and intellectual struggle was an irrevocable content of the party democracy. The present doctrine that Bolshevism does not tolerate factions is a myth of the epoch of decline”. (*ibid.* pp 94-95).

These profound issues of working-class organisation and leadership may seem to be forgotten details of history. But they assume new significance as the working class around the world awakens after a period of setbacks and defeats to a new round of struggles. It is hard to overstate the scope and significance of these past experiences now, as the economic crisis, openly acknowledged and unresolved for over a decade, lumbers on

and both established and “wannabe” imperialist powers square up against each other, beating the drums of war.

One of the very earliest signs of this working-class recovery was the wages struggle of platinum miners at Marikana in 2012, their sharp confrontation with officials of the National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa, the planned and coldly executed murder of striking miners by the South African police and the subsequent mass strike wave. It was within the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa that the most positive response to these events was raised. The subsequent development of that initiative, the different tendencies involved and the methods by which they propose to carry forward the struggle, deserve careful thought and attention. Vital past experiences of the working-class movement need to be revived in the process of educating a new generation of fighters.

The meaning of Marikana

The deliberate killing of 34 miners at the Lonmin platinum mine in Marikana, Rustenberg, North West Province, by the South African Police Service on 16 August 2012, at the instigation of the mine’s UK-based owners and with the agreement of the then South African government minister (and now President), Cyril Ramaphosa, underlined in the most dramatic way possible how correct the Numsa Constitution Preamble was to say that the ending of “oppression and economic exploitation” can only be achieved “under the leadership of an organised and united working class”.

The former, avowedly “Marxist”, and indeed vocal leader in the past of the South African Mineworkers’ Union, Cyril Ramaphosa had been one of that leadership of the African National Congress and South African Communist Party who were prepared to accept an end to Apartheid rule and introduction of “one person one vote” in exchange for abandoning any aim of a socialist South Africa. The state murders at Marikana – and remember that Cyril Ramaphosa explicitly signed off for the police violence – laid bare the profound betrayal of the working class and masses which that settlement represented.

Under a “liberation” regime of African National Congress, South African Communist Party and trade union confederation Cosatu, “independent” South

Africa had to try to move forward with economic power still vested chiefly in the great imperialist monopolies and banks which had grown rich by exploiting labour of every country and ethnic background and plundering natural resources around the world.

Political democracy and effective administration on behalf of the people of South Africa has remained a fantasy while political power has been exercised by puppets of these monopolies and banks, by the Ramaphosas, the Zumas and the Mbekes. Such politicians can only function as the boot-lickers and facilitators of imperialist oppression and exploitation.

At the most basic level, they have led a systematic looting of the nation's wealth and resources for personal gain. At a political level, they very quickly abandoned any progressive policies for the development of the country and instead adopted wholesale the nostrums of the neo-liberal International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other imperialist agencies of world governance. Their venal incompetence has added economic chaos and widespread lawlessness to the existing poverty of the majority.

This was what was at stake in the preceding conflict discussed above between Numsa's "Workers' Charter" and the politics of the ANC-SACP.

But as apartheid was dismantled between 1990 and 1994, the issue was fudged. ANC leaders declared that workers' demands could be accommodated within the scope of the Freedom Charter. They assured trade unionists that, for example, South Africa's mineral resources now belonged to the people, although in fact, the imperialist monopoly groups kept a grip of the extraction, refining and export of the nation's wealth, and thus of their enormous profits. Dissenting voices were drowned out in the wave of publicity greeting the new order, and by violence and the threat of violence.

The fudge continued. While the ANC-SACP government moved over more and more clearly to abandon any hope of progressive legislation and towards directly neo-liberal policies, there was opposition from trade unionists. There were angry confrontations, but they were contained within the Tripartite Alliance of ANC-SACP and the union confederation Cosatu.

The real rupture did not emerge until after Marikana, the massacre and

the massive wave of strikes across different trades and industries which followed.

Numsa Special National Congress 2013

In the wake of the Marikana massacre, Numsa led a fight within Cosatu to break the trade union federation from the alliance with the SACP and the ANC. For that reason, Numsa was expelled from Cosatu and, alongside a number of other trade unions, established a new South African Federation of Trade Unions" (Saftu). Numsa also worked towards and held a Special National Congress in December 2013 to draw the lessons of the Marikana massacre and chart a new course of independent socialist struggle.

The documents of the Numsa Special National Congress held in December 2013 (after a through debate throughout the trade union) still make compelling reading:

"2.2 The South African Communist Party (SACP) leadership has become embedded in the state and is failing to act as the vanguard of the working class ...

For the struggle for socialism, the working class needs a political organisation committed in theory and practice to socialism ...

3.2 As Numsa, we must lead in the establishment of a new UNITED FRONT that will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities ...

3.3 ... we must explore the establishment of a MOVEMENT FOR SOCIALISM as the working class needs a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a socialist South Africa".

Also, the union must: "Commission an international study on the historical formation of working-class parties. As part of this study we need to explore the different type of parties, from mass workers' parties to vanguard parties. (Quoted in *Movement for Socialism! South Africa's NUMSA points the way*", Workers' International, 2014, pp 4 and 5)

While the resolutions and documents of the 2013 Special National Congress clearly name and identify the direction of travel of the SACP, ANC and Cosatu leadership, there is no clarity about the treacherous political

tradition underlying it – Stalinism. A weakness of the Special National Congress decisions was that they still expressed illusions in the Stalinist politics of the settlement which ended apartheid and the hope that the Freedom Charter might leave a door open for future progress.

The 2013 Congress documents correctly identified how “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”. (ibid p.4).

However, under the sub-heading “ANC has abandoned the Freedom Charter and any change in property relations”, the Declaration of the Numsa Special National Congress says:

“The Freedom Charter as the basis of our existence as an alliance, the glue that brought the alliance together, has not found expression in government policies. In fact the ANC no longer adheres to it. The ANC has not only departed from the Freedom Charter, but also from the Morogoro Conference core values and the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP).

“The ANC-led government continues to ignore and duck the question of how to fundamentally change property relations in the country”. (ibid. p. 22)

It reads as if most comrades had grasped that the liberation regime in South Africa has not brought the benefits which were promised, but had not yet taken on board the fact that the SACP’s Stalinist politics of an alliance with the bourgeois nationalists had always meant that imperialism-capitalism would stay in the driving seat. The Irvin Jim leadership never resolved the contradiction at the heart of the ANC/SACP/Cosatu alliance, that as a “liberation” regime it acts as a caretaker or “Comprador” (local business agent) on behalf of imperialism.

The policy of Stalinism has lived on even after the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union has gone into the dustbin. The departing gift of the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy to imperialism was to replace apartheid with a group of politicians in charge in South Africa who were very ready to enrich themselves by selling out the masses.

Stalinism's afterlife

Stalinist rule in the USSR and her satellites collapsed over thirty years ago. It is dead and buried. How are we to explain that Stalinist methods have been reborn at the very head of Numsa, a trade union born in mass workers' struggles which has consistently been foremost in fighting in a principled way for workers' interests against all comers?

Since the 1970s. US imperialism had been wooing the Chinese Communist Party government of the People's Republic of China. Mao and the leaders who followed him gladly facilitated a massive transfer of industry from North America and Western Europe to China. While this has led to spectacular (and desperately needed) economic growth and development in China, it has deeply damaged the ground on which the US and European workers' movements stood. Whole working-class communities have been undermined, weakened, and demoralised as jobs were transferred abroad. It was a movement which had been underway for decades, but the open door into China has accelerated it massively.

At the same time, attempts by the Soviet bureaucracy to self-reform blew up in their faces. In the early 1990s the Soviet Union fell apart. The oppressed and resentful masses in the Soviet bloc "satellites" seized their chance at independence. Many workers had had their hopes in a socialist society dashed by their experience of nearly five decades of brutal rule from the Kremlin through local satraps. Very quickly they were plunged into economic and political chaos as the old links with the disappearing Soviet Union and Comecon were not immediately or easily replaced by new ones.

On top of the industrial devastation of the old working-class centres came a huge deluge of propaganda against socialism which aimed, especially, to discredit the idea that the working class can play a revolutionary role in the transformation of society. This very idea has been bitterly attacked, and those who upheld it marginalised, not least by many former activists in and around Stalinist parties.

All these conditions have combined to keep a generation or more of workers away from socialist politics. This was reflected in the growth of

xenophobia amongst workers, and the domination of left-wing politics by middle-class, university-educated people and moralistic or what are nowadays called “cultural” issues and methods. Indeed, it has been among these layers that such obvious signs of the crisis of capitalism-imperialism as the financial crisis which started in 2008 led to a renewed interest in Marx and Marxism. The unemployed and the poor flocked into the squares across the USA and Europe to demonstrate and protest and shake a fist at the rich, without any practical political programme, while the intelligentsia crowded into the libraries to study and write about, among others, Marx.

In fact, Marxism became the flavour of the month, but mainly in quite restricted academic and student circles. And mostly even these circles were interested in going “beyond capital” in peaceful ways. What has become prominent, and had a significant impact at a policy level, is a warmed-over version of the work of John Maynard Keynes. He and his followers after World War II aimed (1) to curb the tendencies to crisis within imperialist world economy and control business and finance through regulation and (2) through various forms of the “welfare state” to make life tolerable for the working class, at least in the leading imperialist states. Keynesianism fell into disrepute at the end of the post-World War II economic boom in the 1960s. “Supply-side” economists pointed out that many of the safeguards that had been put in place were actually barriers to individual capitalists getting very rich. The new economic doctrines, when put into practice, produced a series of banking and stock exchange crises since the mid-1990s. These have led to public critiques of capitalist economy which have turned away from the fundamental relationships of capitalist society – the exploitation of human labour power in the expanded reproduction of capital and the growing contradiction between the forces of production and the social relations of production. Writers like the widely-acclaimed Thomas Picketty do not trouble their heads about the *source* of capital and its essential nature. Instead, they devote hundreds and thousands of pages to the evils of inequality. They do not consider the class struggle and its outcome, but concentrate on ways to arrange a fairer society without smashing up the furniture. This approach is reflected in some of the most prominent and ambitious socialist leaders – leaders who have a genuine and significant

following – like Senator Bernie Sanders in the USA and Labour Members of Parliament John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn in the UK.

Meanwhile the passing decades have re-shaped world economy. Parts of the Americas south of the Rio Grande, the Pacific Rim (Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma, India and Pakistan), parts of the Middle East (Turkey, Egypt) have considerable industrial bases, and have in some cases become significant financial centres. Russia and her Confederation of Independent States (CIS) partners have become an important source of raw materials, hydrocarbons, and grain (as we know now from painful experience!).

China is now “workshop of the world” with one of the largest economies – second only to the United States. While state power (which includes great power of the economy and banking) lies in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party, this economy is an integral part of world imperialism. For decades it has depended on exploiting the Chinese working class to an extraordinary degree and on selling the products of their labour on the world market. Chinese businesses are now among the biggest and most advanced in the world.

In today’s clash of imperialist rivals, China strives to extend her commercial and economic power in order to engage effectively in competition with the United States and Europe. In the nature of imperialism, behind commerce and diplomacy lurks the threat of war. Imperialist rivals clash over territorial control in order to gain access to raw materials and markets. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Dutch, British and French East India Companies established commercial networks which provided the capital to start the industrial revolution. Although purely commercial at the beginning, these networks soon required the establishment of naval and military bases. Later, these networks hardened into formal colonial empires.

Today, China is starting a similar process based on the “New Silk Road” initiative to set up her own network. Like any imperialist power, China needs pliant customers and willing providers of cheap raw materials in its dependencies around the world, as well as robust logistical links.

In past centuries, Britain extended her imperial rule by “liberating” parts of Latin America from Spanish rule. American imperialism assumed the same mantle of the “liberator” in Cuba and the Philippines in the early twentieth century, and in the name of freedom and democracy supplanted Britain, France and Holland in most of their former colonial possessions after World War II. With remarkably few actual colonies, the USA has been the main colonialist-imperialist power for nearly a century. Now China offers her support to countries chafing under the economic domination of the United States. In all these cases, subject populations need to scrutinise very carefully indeed the credentials of any would-be liberator.

Multipolar World

One feature of imperialism is that formerly insignificant and weak nations have been able relatively quickly to claw their way to a powerful position at the top table among the great powers. In the 19th Century, previously quite unimportant nations, like Germany and Japan, were able to hurtle into prominence over a comparatively short period, in mere decades. Of course, they could not achieve this by the tried and tested and time-consuming means of a bourgeois revolution and the achievement of modern democracy, as happened in Britain, Holland, the USA and France.

By-passing a final knock-down, drag ‘em out confrontation between the rising bourgeoisie and the old feudal rulers, Germany and Japan under powerful central governments cherry-picked the aspects of the technical, industrial and political achievements of the earlier capitalist states that would enable them to become great powers, successfully applying the very latest techniques in all these fields. The achievements which had cost the older states centuries to bring about were absorbed in their latest developments and as a massive transfer of knowledge, science and theory. This could only happen under a very tight central control, which is why some Marxists refer to it as the “Prussian” road to capitalist development.

The capitalist class of the USA was playing with fire when they started to provide the People’s Republic of China with access to world markets and specifically the advanced technology on which modern industry is

based. Maybe they assumed that the development of capitalism in China would undermine the rule of the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Liberation Army. To be sure, that state has had to change in significant ways to accommodate the changes in Chinese society since the 1970s.

However, China has followed the real logic of the modern imperialist epoch. The Chinese state made it clear in the way it dealt with the Tiananmen Square protest in 1989 and the re-integration of Hong Kong more recently that there is no intention of introducing any measures of democracy. To succeed in an imperialist world, China has to be able to face down the present great powers of imperialism.

The claim that what the CCP is doing is a sort of extended form of the New Economic Policy adopted in the Soviet Union at the end of the Civil War and the wars of intervention in order to restore a national economy which had been largely destroyed is by the way laughable. A wealthy Chinese bourgeoisie has grown up in the decades since Nixon's first visit. Rule by the CCP, protection by the CCP and support from the CCP have made this a rich class. Its wealth and privileges are tightly bound up with the Chinese state, and depend on how the Chinese state conducts its diplomatic, economic, and political affairs.

There are indeed inevitable contradictions between the interests of that state and the functioning of those Chinese businesses which, for example, would like to trade their shares in US stock markets. Some big Chinese operators with interests abroad who probably hoped they were too big to push around have been brought sharply to heel by the Chinese government recently. But this does not mean that the CCP is about to abolish capitalism in China anytime soon.

The old imperialist powers confront China militarily, asserting the right to send naval battle groups to patrol China's home waters. They confront her diplomatically and politically.

China goes ahead modernising her armed forces and building up her trading networks across the world. These are both elements of hard power, reflecting the weight of China's capitalist economy.

China also deploys soft power, seeking allies and front-men around the

world to enhance her image and reputation.

So, money is spent resurrecting the old traditions of Pan-Africanism, anti-colonialism and the Bandung movement of “non-aligned” states. In the past, these were deployed in order to win allies for the USSR, while deflecting genuinely revolutionary movements (which only caused trouble as far as official Communist Parties were concerned). Although the USSR no longer exists, the idea of backing China (supported by Russia) as a rival to US hegemony is put forward and finds fertile soil because so many political careerists with a past in the Stalinist movement resonate to this logic of development without a workers’ revolution. China presents herself as a friend of the local bourgeoisies in the “Global South”, a big sister who will support them against the fatal effects of US imperialism.

What of the masses?

The only problem is the working class and the masses. In China itself, as throughout Asia, Africa and South America, the working class is exploited more ruthlessly and thoroughly than it still is in Europe, North America and Australasia, where there are still remnants of the social gains workers made in the 20th century. The conditions in the rest of the world are such that in many of these countries up to 40 percent of the population are without any access to the means of production – they are unemployed.

Small-scale farming is squeezed out by big agricultural monopolies. The history of imperialism has littered the scene with remnants of national, ethnic and religious groups excluded from modern life. Millions scrape an “informal” living in modern slums. No “radical” alliances with allegedly-progressive capitalists are going to equip these masses with a way forward. **Of all the classes in the “global south”, only the working class is a progressive force able to weld all the other oppressed and exploited groups together and point the way forward.** This is the real meaning of the 2013 Special National Congress of Numsa and the policies that it adopted, even if that was not completely clear to those who pushed ahead on that.

It was clear at the time that Irvin Jim was not rejecting Stalinist politics; he was merely emphasising – often in a striking way – that the ANC-SACP government was “failing to deliver” for the South African masses. He did not go on to analyse the roots of that failure in the persistent influence of Stalinist conceptions.

So, the promise offered by Numsa’s Special National Congress has been frustrated. Building a United Front and an alliance with the impoverished communities never happened. No “Movement for Socialism” was established. There was no clarification of how a mass workers’ party can be built on revolutionary principles, because along the way towards making international allies, Irvin Jim turned away consistently from any working-class alliances and met up with apostles of “multipolarity” and “a new Bandung” such as Roy Singham. The Socialist Revolutionary Workers’ Party that arose from that encounter and which also brings in some independent “leftists” in South Africa has made zero impact on the masses in South Africa because it has done nothing to overcome the terrible political legacy of Stalinism. Nor have any of the petty-bourgeois socialists who have joined up with it themselves shaken that off, whatever label they identify with politically.

But Numsa members have refused to be limited by the bankrupt leadership of Irvin Jim. As these members of Numsa carry forward their recognised class interests as workers against the current Numsa leadership, they will need to enrich their activity with the theoretical lessons of those revolutionaries who opposed Stalinism at its origins and upheld real Leninism. The Left Opposition in the Communist Party of the USSR, together with its scattered supporters around the world, started the struggle to rescue the real party and international of Lenin. That struggle was later taken forward in the formation of the Fourth International. It is that international which must be rebuilt so that the working class can carry through to the end the struggle for a socialist society.

Bob Archer

9 October 2022

Appendix: The ANC and NUMSA

(from <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/formation-sanncanc>)

"The South African Native National Congress (SANNC), later known as the Africa National Congress (ANC) was founded on the 8 January 1912. At SANNC's inaugural conference, Rev. John Dube was elected as its first president in absentia. The organisation developed out of a situation of racial exclusion and discrimination under the new Union of South Africa. SANNC aspired to unite Africans in the advancement of their political and socio-economic status. Contrary to its aim of unity amongst its African constituents, SANNC was restrictive and narrow in its membership. Participation was limited in accordance with class, gender and tribal status."

The formation of the SANNC/ANC

Bloemfontein is the birth place of the SANNC, which became the ANC in 1923, one of the largest organizations in later years to struggle for freedom and justice in South Africa. Between 1908 and 1909, constitutional discussions towards Union took place which prompted numerous meetings organized by Africans, Coloureds and Indians to protest the Whites-only exclusivity of these constitutional discussions.

In 1909, a group of Black delegates from the four provinces attended the South African Native National Convention (SANNC) in Waaihoek, Bloemfontein, to propose ways of objecting to the draft South African Act, and the Union constitution. The SANNC meeting convened by John Dube and Dr Walter Rubusana decided to send a delegation to London to convince the British government not to accept the Union in its present form. The delegation led by former Prime Minister William Scheiner failed in its aims as White supremacy was entrenched under a unitary state.

On 8 January 1912, several hundred members of South Africa's educated elite met at Bloemfontein to establish a national organization to protest against racial discrimination and to appeal for equal treatment before the law. The group comprised of South Africa's most prominent Black citizens: professional men, businessmen, journalist, chieftans, ministers, teachers, clerks, building contractors and labour agents. This

meeting was the most significant in the history of Black protest politics as it was the first joint meeting of Black representatives from all four self-governing British colonies and indicated that Blacks were capable of united action.

History of the African National Congress

Although it was not the first African political organization in South Africa, its formation marked a clear break from the past as the focus of Black politics previously centered on electoral activity in the Cape Colony where Blacks with the required property and educational qualifications could vote and stand for office.

Their voice in politics at the Cape was significant. At the turn of the century Black voters constituted nearly half the electorate in five constituencies, which contributed to the belief that the most effective way of accelerating Black political advancement was to use their vote to influence the election men who would be sympathetic to Black aspirations. But the years succeeding the Peace of Vereeniging in 1902 witnessed the declining force of this argument. The founding of the SANNC marked the realization in middle-class Black circles of the contention that Black interest could best be promoted by action by Blacks themselves and not through sympathetic intermediaries.

Several reasons contributed to this change in opinion. Some members of the Black elite had hopes raised initially by the defeat of the Republics in the South African War and were bitterly disappointed. Despite expressions of imperial loyalty intermingled with polite phrased reproach at the prevalent discrimination against educated Black men with good character and ability, the British government made it clear that its paramount concern was White unity in South Africa.

Hopes that non-racial Cape franchise would be extended to the defeated republics were rapidly dashed as preparations for the Act of Union indicated that existing rights would not be respected in future. The Act removed the theoretical right of enfranchised Blacks to be elected to parliamentary seats which had existed in the Cape and also provided for the removal of the franchise from Black voters through a two-thirds

majority vote of both houses of parliament in joint sessions.

By 1912, Black concern moved further than constitutional issues. The first post-Union administration, responding to the mining industry's labour demands and the disquiet of White farmers squeezed between capitalist agricultural companies on the one hand and competitive Black peasants on the other, moved swiftly to safeguard its position with these groups. Regulations were introduced, which made breaking a contract a criminal offence. Blacks were also excluded from skilled industrial jobs. The prohibition of rural land ownership by Blacks, or occupation outside the reserves dispossessed many landowners and leasing or tenant-farming relationships between Blacks and Whites were outlawed.

It was therefore made clear that there was more at stake here than just the interests of a small group who through their education at mission stations had come to form an identifiable petty bourgeoisie. The Land Act of 1913 and its complementary labour legislation were the tools used to destroy a whole class of peasant producers, forcing them into already crowded reserves or driving them to seek work as farm labourers and mine workers, and later in the least skilled and most badly paid positions in urban industrial, municipal and domestic employment.

The group of men that assembled at Bloemfontein was well aware of the wider dimensions of the social tragedy being enacted around them. But their particular concern, the fear of any petty bourgeoisie at the time of crisis, was being thrust back into the ranks of the urban and rural poor. The main aim of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) was to represent the concerns and anxieties of the small professional middle class which was mainly responsible for convening the Bloemfontein meeting.

Its first President was John Dube; a Minister and school headmaster who studied in the USA and was strongly influenced by the American educator and activist Booker T Washington. Pixley ka Isaka Seme, a lawyer and prime mover in organizing the meeting to establish the Congress was appointed Treasurer. The position of Secretary General was occupied by Solomon T Plaatjie, a court translator, author and newspaper editor who had worked in Kimberly and Johannesburg. These men retained close ties

with African aristocracy and the rural chieftaincy, who were conservatives concerned with protecting a moral and social order they correctly perceived to be under attack while at the same time being anxious to promote the general advancement of the Black race in South Africa.

The Congress intended to function as a national forum to discuss the issues which affected them and to act as an organized pressure group. They planned to agitate for changes through the following: peaceful propaganda, the election of Congress sympathizers to legislative bodies through protest and enquiries and finally through passive action or continued movement"

I am sending you this extract from the website "south African history online", in my opinion a very well researched website.

From it the class nature of the ANC was well established by 1912. Its impetus was the Failed expectations of in specific a tribal royalty. Its history until now simply echoes the basic principle that the class nature of an organisation cannot be changed except by total destruction.

The rise of the working-class mass struggles since 1971 in Namibia and since 1973 in South Africa uncovered the basic reactionary and anti-working-class nature of the tribal petit-bourgeoisie represented by organisations like the ANC and SWAPO. The self-organization of the working class was met with hostility, treachery, and violence. The SWAPO in 1971 distanced itself from the general strike in Namibia by publicly condemning its leaders as irresponsible elements. The emerging leadership of the working class were confronted with severe repression from the side of the South Africans and slander by the tribal nationalists. Since 1976 working class leaders that fled south Africa and Namibia were liquidated physically in exile. Inside South Africa the forms of liquidation were necklacing and summary execution facilitated by the South African state, the latter that operated its official liquidation.

The ANC and SWAPO were vehemently opposed to new working-class organisations that developed since 1976 and earlier. They slandered and ostracized the leaders as collaborators, agents and spies.

The Communist Party that developed out of a severely deformed working class, contradictory struggles, and the indelible influence of Soviet Stalinism became the transmission belt for liberal bourgeois politics into the mass struggles and sustaining the ANC and SWAPO.

The period after 1980 saw the replacement of the leadership of the working-class organisations with tribal nationalists especially in the trade union movement. That explains the rapid and frantic privatization after 1994.

A significant exception was NUMSA, a union of the industrial working class that was well outside the influence of the extremely primitive right wing tribal petit bourgeoisie.

The dichotomy in South African politics that arose after 1994 reflected in NUMSA and the ANC must be understood from the foregoing. The attempted expulsion of NUMSA leaders can perhaps be explained by the strengthening of anti-working class policies by Chinese Stalinism. It is an attack against especially the industrial working class, but it is proof that organised working-class politics is still existing in South Africa. The SAFTU seems further proof of that.

The discussion and understanding needed is about Stalinism and its true class nature in relation to working-class politics in South Africa. It cannot be treated as an ideological current in the working class, but a reflection of degeneration and confusion. But, most seriously the expression of capitalist objectives and political destruction within the working-class movement. Its methodology needs to be dissected and understood as alien and against the methodology of Marxism.

Hewat Beukes

October 2022

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]

December issue of the Journal

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Editorial:

Reinstate NUMSA in COSATU

Bosnia:

'Dig Deep for DITA' interview and appeal

Namibia:

WRP Election Manifesto

France:

Beefing up the Bonapartism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. The state of the world capitalist system

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

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

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

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

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

as we know it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

South Africa today is firmly and fully imbedded in the world

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

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

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

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

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

Was our struggle for social grants?

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

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

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

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

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

For Nkandla? For Ghuptas? For tenders perhaps?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our poor rural populations have simply been forgotten!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

politics and in the South African revolution.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the black parties may be!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

world.

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

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

Forward to a socialist world!

Forward to a socialist Africa!

Forward to the Socialist Republic of South Africa!

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

Andrew Chirwa,
Numsa President
12th May 2014.

original posted here:

<http://www.numsa.org.za/article/numsa-president-opening-speech-central-committee-lakes-hotel-conference-centre-12-april-2014/>
[/threecolumns]

Numsa on the United Front and

the possibilities of establishing a movement for Socialism

4 March 2014, Posted in Press Releases

Numsa convened a press briefing on Sunday 2nd March 2014, for purposes of presenting our 2014 statement on a range of issues and to report the outcome of the historic Numsa Special National Congress held on 17-20 December 2013.

The media on Monday 3rd March 2014 ran with headlines screaming that Numsa is establishing a new political party. Given the many media enquiries we received we opted not to do a multitude of interviews, but to offer this brief statement which is in line with our 15 page statement of 2 March 2014, wherein we reiterate the following;

1. The Numsa Special National Congress concluded that the ANC led-Alliance has become dysfunctional and incapable of defending working class interest in the midst of the implementation of anti-working class policies such as;
 - The National Development Plan (NDP) which seeks to postpone the resolution of poverty, unemployment and inequality to 2030;
 - Implementation of the e-tolling which is nothing short of the privatization public roads;
 - Failure to ban Labour Brokers;
 - Introducing a National Youth Wage Subsidy which is a tax incentive/subsidy to the rich but a promises of an investigation into the modalities of a National Minimum Wage;
 - Etc

2. The Alliance springs into action every 5 years when it is time for elections, but would otherwise not address pertinent issues agreed upon in Alliance Summits since 1994.

3. For all intents and purposes, the Freedom Charter, which is the minimum program which glued together the Alliance, has been abandoned in favour of GEAR and the NDP.

4. In the current circumstances we see leaderless services delivery protest of about 37 per day furthermore illustrating that the vulnerable and the poor in our society are left to their own devices.

5. The United Front Numsa resolved upon in its Special National Congress is a mobilising tool to organise and coordinate working class struggles. It is no different to what Cosatu had attempted in its Civil Society Conference. It is not "A Party".

6. Numsa is on record as saying that we shall explore and internationally research the possibility of a Movement for Socialism and report back to our Numsa Central Committee in March 2015 on the international experience in the struggle for Socialism. This remains our position as taken in the Special National Congress.

7. In a question posed in the media briefing on Sunday 2nd March 2014, Numsa NOB's did indicate that exploring a Movement For Socialism and the report-back on our international research report to the Numsa Central Committee of March 2015, shall invariably lead to the establishment of a working class party the form, shape and content shall be determined in consultation with left and progressive formations in our country. Whether such a working class party contest elections in 2016 or 2019, the Numsa March 2015 Central Committee shall resolve.

8. Numsa provincial and national consultative conferences shall be convened to enable Numsa National Office Bearers to share with left and progressive formations in our country the meaning of the Numsa Special National Congress resolutions. This Numsa position is no different from the one taken by Cosatu's 1993 conference in Shaft 17 which was never acted on by Cosatu but also never rescinded.

9. The idea that Numsa is forming a political party to contest 2014 elections is false and baseless.

10. Whereas Numsa shall not endorse nor resource the ANC's elections campaign, the SNC resolved that;

- Numsa shall not endorse any political party in the 2014 national and provincial government elections;
- Numsa members and officials have a right to vote for a political party of their choice.

We hope that this brief statement clarifies the Numsa Special National Congress position and resolutions

Issued by:

Karl Cloete

Numsa Deputy General Secretary

On behalf of the Numsa National Office Bearers

Contact: **Karl Cloete, Deputy General Secretary, 083 389 0777**

Numsa Views on the state of Class Struggles in South

Africa and the Crisis in Cosatu

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

Numsa Headquarters, Johannesburg

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A.2. The Freedom Charter and the Negotiated Settlement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

conditions of life in these communities.

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

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

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

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

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

B. State of the Nation Address (SoNA)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and insist on fair treatment and efficient service.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

D. The ANC 2014 Budget speech

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

E. The crisis in Cosatu

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

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

b. Cosatu is a Revolutionary Socialist Federation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Numsa’s positions are very clear and quite simple:

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

of Cosatu Constitution.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the Freedom Charter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There is poor or virtually no assistance from the employers.

Unemployment which makes those who are working to support

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

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

H. What is to be done?

As Lenin so well said, in 2013:

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

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

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

As immediate tasks, we state the following:

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

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

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

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

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

Issued by: Numsa National Office Bearers

March the 2nd, 2014.

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Numsa General Secretary's presentation to The Cape Town Press Club

Find the link to this on our Global Pages > South Africa.

An end to apartheid or a new form of slavery?

This article examines the background to the talks between leaders of the African National Congress and the South African government. Based on discussions at the executive of Workers International, it was written by J.T.Barney. It was first published in *The International* no. 2, July 1990

[threecolumns]South Africa is the leading capitalist country in Africa and a major ally of world imperialism. A successful proletarian revolution here will be a turning-point for Africa, and its effects will be felt throughout the whole world.

Thus today the main issue gripping the attention of everyone in the country is the talks that have begun between the National Party and the African National Congress. These talks are aimed at creating a climate for negotiations which are supposed to lead to the dismantling of apartheid. The unbanning of the ANC and all the other political organisations, together with the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, are steps forward which all revolutionaries support. But what is the political programme

of the ruling class? Why did they unban the ANC? And why are they now willing to talk to an organisation which until recently was said to be the 'main enemy'?

The hated apartheid system has never known a time when it was not under attack from the oppressed and exploited masses. Not even the state of emergency – which has not been lifted – and the detention of tens of thousands of activists has been able to break this spirit of resistance. But as the class struggle has intensified, with the working class organised in COSATU and NACTU playing the leading role, so the pressure on the racist ruling class to change their form of rule in order to ensure their survival has intensified.

The ruling class are determined to prevent the destruction of their system of oppression and exploitation. Their political power, profits, wealth and privileges are all bound up with maintaining apartheid and capitalism. But how are they to save this system when the masses have shown so clearly that they are no longer prepared to live under it? This is the key to understanding their willingness to talk to the ANC.

To preserve their system they desperately need to co-opt a section of the black petty bourgeoisie who still have credibility among the majority of the oppressed. And the section of the section of the black petty bourgeoisie they have turned to is the ANC led by Nelson Mandela. But even before agreeing to hold these talks with the ANC, de Klerk made it clear that the only basis on which he was prepared to negotiate was the protection of group rights and the preservation of the system of private property as the bourgeois press was quick to point out:

'De Klerk spoke again on Friday [2 February 1990, in his speech announcing the unbanning of the ANC] of a "basic principle" being one of "no domination" in the new South Africa, which [means] his insistence on "group rights". That in turn effectively means a white minority veto on any

substantial changes to the socio-economic system ...' (Observer, 4 February 1990). In other words, the ruling class will not be negotiating about dismantling apartheid-capitalism, but about how to extend the life of apartheid-capitalism. The bourgeoisie is talking to the ANC about how to save itself from the working masses.

How has the ANC responded to the plan of the apartheid rulers?

The ANC has nothing but praise for this plan of the ruling class. In the first press interview after his release, Nelson Mandela spoke highly of de Klerk: 'I am on record as saying that I regard Mr de Klerk as a man of integrity. And I sincerely believe in this and I believe that he himself wants to have a new chapter in the history of this country.'

But Mandela did not stop here. He went further, saying that he did not rule out 'the possibility of a future coalition between the ANC and the National Party in government ...' Why? Because according to Mandela, there was no such thing as a 'non-negotiable' issue. The ANC had to be 'flexible over fundamental issues even minority rights.' (Weekly Mail, 16-22 February 1990).

Mandela was even more positive about talking to the bosses, stressing that they would have a very important role to play in the future South Africa: 'It is a natural thing to have discussions with businessmen ... and our struggle has been supported by (some) businessmen from all over the world. There is nothing so logical as meeting them, exchanging views and trying to allay their fears. Sanctions and disinvestment were specific political tactics ... but once the situation is settled, investment in the country is the normal development which we will want.' (Weekly Mail, 23 February – 1 March 1990).

Mandela has now also dropped all talk of nationalisation of the big multinational companies, saying that this was something for the 'experts' to decide upon, and that the ANC

would follow the advice that it was given. But what is clear is that Mandela will not be following the advice of the workers for workers' control of the economy.

Mandela himself made this absolutely plain in a speech to capitalists in the Transkei: 'Regarding the ANC's position in relation to businessmen, Mandela said the organisation was not anti-capitalism and rejected the commonly-held belief that the Freedom Charter was fundamentally socialistic. Mandela said the youth had perpetuated the belief that the ANC opposed businessmen.' (Weekly Mail, 27 April – 3 May 1990).

The political programme of the ANC is no different from that of the ruling class. That is, no fundamental change and no attack on the system of private property. This programme is in direct conflict with the struggle of the working class and oppressed masses, who are seeking an alternative to apartheid and capitalism, and whose most politically conscious sections put forward a Workers' Charter aimed at ending both oppression and exploitation.

How does the ANC defend this betrayal of the oppressed masses? And how does it hope to carry out this betrayal when it knows that the masses will not accept it without a fight? To understand the confidence of the ANC and its ability to confuse and deceive large sections of the oppressed and exploited masses it is necessary to understand the role that the Stalinised South African Communist Party, led by Joe Slovo, has played and continues to play in the liberation movement.

The role of Stalinism

Stalinism has its roots in the betrayal of the Russian Revolution of October 1917. Under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky was transformed from an instrument of the working class into an instrument against the working class and for the ruling class. Using the Soviet Union's immense standing among the

international working class as the first workers' state, Stalin also transformed the Third International from a world party of socialist revolution into an agency of the international bourgeoisie. Marxism was abandoned and trampled upon, and substituted by a crude and vulgar falsification of revolutionary theory.

One such theory to emerge was that the working class of the so-called 'Third World' Asia, Latin America, Africa had to subordinate their struggle against their national bourgeoisie to the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. The working class had to give up its political independence, and not only accept the political programme of the bourgeoisie but also fight under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie.

This theory was given the name 'two-stage revolution', which meant that the working class had first to struggle for democracy, and only after this had been achieved could the struggle for socialism begin.

This political strategy had disastrous and tragic consequences in China between 1925 and 1927. The Chinese Communist Party was ordered by the Stalinist bureaucracy to accept the leadership of the Kuomintang the political organisation of the Chinese bourgeoisie and dissolve their own independent political party into this organisation.

But when workers began to put forward their own demands and occupied the factories, the Kuomintang turned on them and massacred thousands of communists. Completely disarmed by Stalin's two-stage conception of revolution, the Chinese Communist Party was unable to defend itself and the masses that supported it. This theory became a central part of Stalinism. The modern examples of this theory are Nicaragua and Zimbabwe. In these countries the working class was also told: first overthrow colonialism and only then can you struggle for socialism. And with what results?

In Nicaragua a bourgeois government firmly allied to American

imperialism is now in power; and in Zimbabwe the multinational companies are as powerful under Robert Mugabe's 'black majority government' as they were under Ian Smith's 'white minority government'.

The two-stage revolution has not meant an end to imperialism, but the consolidation of the power of the bourgeoisie. Today it is this very same theory that the South African Communist Party is defending on behalf of the ANC in South Africa. As the self-appointed 'vanguard' of the South African working class the SACP says to the workers:

'First overthrow apartheid. But to do this you must first accept the leadership of the ANC. You must give up any ideas of an independent political programme and an independent political organisation. Only after apartheid has been destroyed can the struggle for socialism begin.'

But what does this mean? Is the SACP saying that apartheid can be destroyed without destroying capitalism? That there can be democracy in South Africa without socialism? These are life and death questions for the South African working class, and the fate of millions in our country and the rest of the world depends on the answers that we give to them.

Permanent Revolution and the Fourth International

The Fourth International arose as a challenge to the betrayal of Marxism by Stalinism. Its political programme is based on the continuity of revolutionary theory and practice. For this the members of the Fourth International were slandered and persecuted by the Stalinists, and tens of thousands of its best fighters were murdered by Stalin's gangs.

Its leader and founder, Leon Trotsky, was assassinated by an agent of Stalin's. But Stalinism did not succeed in destroying the Fourth International, and in May 1990 in Budapest, Hungary, a Workers International was founded with the main aim of rebuilding the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

At the centre of this theory is an uncompromising struggle against the bourgeoisie and the influence of bourgeois ideology in the working class movement. The theory of permanent revolution does not ignore the anti-colonial and democratic struggle or underestimate their significance. Just the opposite.

Because the theory of permanent revolution attaches so much importance to these struggles, it insists that it is only the working class that can provide the leadership for these struggles. Why? Because the working class is the only revolutionary class in society. But to lead the anti-colonial and democratic struggle, the working class must be organised into their own independent political party, and must struggle on the basis of its own independent political programme.

The alternative to this political independence of the working class are the Popular Fronts and People's Governments that Stalinism imposed on the working class, which resulted in betrayals and bloody defeats (as happened in France and Spain in the 1930s, and in the present day is happening in countries like Angola, Mozambique and Nicaragua).

But once the working class takes leadership of the anti-colonial and democratic struggle, it will carry this struggle through to the very end. It will not stop at any so-called 'first stage', but proceed to the socialist reconstruction of society because it is on this basis that colonialism can be destroyed and genuine democracy achieved. Trotsky outlined the perspective of permanent revolution as follows:

'The theory of permanent revolution ... pointed out that the democratic tasks of the backward bourgeois nations lead directly to the dictatorship of the proletariat and that the dictatorship of the proletariat puts socialist tasks on the order of the day. Therein lay the central idea of the theory. While the traditional view was that the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat lay through a long period of democracy, the theory of the permanent revolution established

the fact that for backward countries the road to democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus democracy is not a regime that remains self-sufficient for decades, but is only a direct prelude to the socialist revolution. Each is bound to the other in an unbroken chain. Thus there is established between the democratic revolution and the socialist reconstruction of society a permanent state of revolutionary development.' (L.Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, New Park Publications, 1997, p.2.)

The correctness of the theory of permanent revolution was proved during the October Revolution of 1917. The Russian working class showed concretely that it was only under their dictatorship, exercised through the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, that democracy could be won and the land question solved. But to break the power of the bourgeoisie the working class was forced to attack the system of private property. Thus the revolution grew over into its socialist stage. The phrase that Lenin used to describe this process was 'uninterrupted revolution'.

The position of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International

1. On a negotiated settlement

The ANC-SACP lies to the South African masses, saying that fundamental change can come through negotiating with the racist ruling class. The Workers' International says that fundamental change can only come through the revolutionary overthrow of this ruling class. This means the revolutionary mobilisation of the working class on the basis of its own political programme and under the leadership of its own independent political party. Why must the masses believe that their oppressors and exploiters will willingly hand over power to them? When and where in history has this ever happened?

The very nature of the talks between the National Party and the African National Congress is itself a clear indication of

the kind of democracy that the masses can expect from a negotiated settlement. The talks are profoundly anti-democratic and a negation of all the democratic demands that have been advanced by the South African masses over the years.

No free and open election of delegates took place. The ANC simply appointed people to speak on behalf of the masses. The talks were closed and secret. The ANC agreed that there would be a news black-out while the discussions were still in progress. The talks went on for three days, but at the end only a one-paragraph communiqué was released. Why can the masses not decide their own destiny? Why can they not know what the ANC has been saying on their behalf? The masses have spared nothing in their struggle for democracy. They have been detained, tortured and killed. But now the ANC says to them: 'Leave everything to us. We are your leaders. We will decide for you.' To this, the Workers International replies:

The talks are a swindle. They are the main means to prevent a revolutionary outcome of the struggle against apartheid. This is the only meaning of the negotiations. Therefore the working class has to build its own party to achieve democracy. Workers have to take into their own hands the struggle for democracy that is being betrayed by the ANC.

This means putting forward the demand for a Constituent Assembly with full powers, elected by universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage, which excludes all fascists and racists. But who can convoke such a genuinely democratic and representative assembly? The racist ruling class who has no interests in democracy? The ANC that is prepared to share power with this racist ruling class? No! Only the mobilisation of the working class can lead to the convening of such a Constituent Assembly.

In Russia it was only after the working class had taken power that it was possible for such an assembly to be convened. Thus for the South African masses to convene a genuinely democratic Constituent Assembly they need to build their organs of

struggle. That is, they need to build their own part and they need to build soviets (workers' councils).

But even if the racist ruling class were to convene a Constituent Assembly, which is highly unlikely, such an assembly would be powerless to implement any of the democratic demands one person, one vote; a non-racial united South Africa; the expropriation of the land and its redistribution to those who work it so long as economic power remains on the hands of the capitalists. Only the working class organised in factory committees, locals, trade unions and soviets can break the power of the capitalists and ensure an end to the injustices and repressions of apartheid perpetrated against all of the oppressed.

In Namibia it has been seen what happens when the bourgeoisie convenes a Constituent Assembly. There the Constituent Assembly did not advance the struggle of the working class against imperialism, but was used against the masses to strengthen imperialism. And the most important democratic demand of the Namibian masses the expropriation of the big landowners was not, and will not, be carried out.

In all great revolutionary struggles the masses strive to take their destiny into their own hands. This happened in South Africa during the uprising of 1984-1986 when the masses created their own street and area committees. Is it a surprise that the ANC remains silent about these committees? That any attempt to learn the lessons of these events is suppressed? For contained within these street and area committees was the germ of soviets, that is, the revolutionary councils of the working class.

To struggle for the Constituent Assembly therefore means to rebuild these organs of struggle. It means to build soviets. That is why the ANC chose secret negotiations and not the struggle for a Constituent Assembly. The ANC knows that if the working class was mobilised on a revolutionary democratic

programme, it would struggle against both apartheid and capitalism. Thus the ANC presents itself as the 'saviour' of the masses, but only in order that it can prevent the independent organisation of the working class.

2. On apartheid and capitalism

Apartheid has grown up together with capitalism and is inseparable from it. It has served capitalism well by providing it with cheap black labour; dividing the working class; policing the oppressed masses; and ensuring that 87 per cent of the land remains in the hands of a small Afrikaner bourgeoisie. The army, police force, legal system and state bureaucracy are all in the direct service and pay of the apartheid system. For the whites it has meant one of the highest standards of living anywhere in the world.

The average income of a white person in South Africa is R14,000 a year, compared to R1,400 for a black person. For the blacks it has meant misery, poverty and human degradation. Out of every 1000 black children born, 63 die at birth compared to 9 white children. Over 60 per cent of black people are illiterate, compared to 7 per cent of white. Black unemployment is over 40 per cent, while white unemployment is hardly known. The racist legislation, physical separation of people, and so forth, are there to keep all this in place.

What perspective therefore can there be of eliminating apartheid without a radical change in the material conditions of life of the oppressed and exploited? But this means attacking the very foundations on which apartheid rests. That is, the capitalist system of exploitation.

On the basis of their own experience, the workers have already identified the inextricable links between apartheid and capitalism. And on the basis of these experiences, they have put forward demands which not only call for the destruction of apartheid, but also for the destruction of the capitalist system.

Thus a main demand of the Workers' Charter put forward by NUMSA was that the mines and banks had to be brought under workers' control. For the workers knew that while capitalism survives, the conditions of apartheid will survive. That is, cheap labour will remain, unemployment will remain, racism will remain, poverty will remain and the land will remain in the hands of a small minority.

The ability of the capitalist class to prevent any advance to democracy while it still owns the means of production is easily realised when it is seen just how powerful this capitalist class is. The ownership and control of the major sectors of the economy mining, finance, banking, manufacturing and transport is in the hands of a tiny number of big corporations. Close to 70 per cent of the South African economy is controlled by eight private corporations. Of these private corporations, the biggest, Anglo-American, controls assets worth more than the combined income of the nine member countries of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference.

In other words, Anglo-American on its own has more assets than Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania put together.

Agriculture has also been heavily penetrated by the monopolies. For example, today 80 per cent of the sugar industry is controlled by two of the country's biggest monopolies, Anglo-American and Barlow Rand. These big corporations, in turn, are completely integrated into foreign monopoly capital. Anglo-American, for example, is the largest single investor in the United States.

How then does the ANC hope to eliminate apartheid, while not disturbing the existing economic structure? A handful of monopolies control our lives and the ANC promises fundamental change without taking power out of the hands of those monopolies!

The working masses of southern Africa have direct experience of what it means not to break the power of monopoly capital. In Zimbabwe over 80 per cent of the economy is still in the hands of the bourgeoisie. This means that the bourgeoisie have the power to prevent any advance of the working class. As a result, most of the gains from independence have been lost.

Today Zimbabwe has trade union legislation which is no different from that which it had under Smith's regime. The domination of Zimbabwe's economy by the multinationals and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has also meant that it has not been able to assist the poorer countries of the region to overcome their chronic problems. Angola is on the brink of economic collapse and Mozambique has become one of the poorest countries in the world. It is clear that while monopoly capitalism still has the economies of southern Africa in its grip, there can be no hope of a solution to the problems in the region.

3. On democracy and socialism

South Africa is a highly developed capitalist country which has advanced to the stage of imperialism the rule of monopoly and finance capital. But capitalism has reached this highest stage of development without introducing democracy in South Africa. This indissolubly bound up with the socialist revolution is the struggle for democracy. That is, the overthrow of the apartheid state and its replacement by a democratic state based on majority rule. But the question is: how are the democratic tasks of the revolution to be solved and who alone can solve these tasks?

The working class has already made clear that the struggle for democracy is at the same time the struggle for socialism. On the basis of its own living experience under apartheid, it put forward a Workers' Charter which challenged the ANC's Freedom Charter.

In opposition to this bourgeois nationalist programme of the ANC, the Workers' Charter advanced the position that there

could be no democracy in South Africa while economic power still remained with the bosses. The working class was thus consciously moving towards a socialist solution to the democratic struggle.

But what has been the response of the ANC to the demands of the working class?

Since its unbanning the ANC, with the full support and backing of the SACP, has been making every effort to take over COSATU and subordinate it to its structures. This work is being carried out mainly through the trade union bureaucracy. In Natal it is NUMSA that is used as the main recruiting agency for the ANC, and in the Transvaal this same role is being played by NUM. And this is the same ANC which only recently said that it is prepared to integrate Umkhonto We Sizwe into the SADF.

In other words, by subordinating the trade unions into its structures, the ANC is preparing for the physical integration of the trade unions into the bourgeois state that will emerge from the negotiated settlement.

The class independence of the trade unions has always been a big problem for the ruling class. Since the formation of independent trade unions in the 1970s and 1980s, the apartheid state has used every means to break the trade union movement. It has used violence to suppress strikes; harassed and detained union organisers; bombed union buildings; and only recently, introduced the Labour Relations Act to try and curb the militancy of the working class. But every effort failed, and the independent union movement continued to grow in size and strength.

But now the ANC has come forward to do the job of the apartheid state. Through using the trade union bureaucracy, the ANC hopes to smash the class independence of the trade union movement. But the ANC can only have confidence to

attempt this because it knows that it will have the complete support of the Stalinist South African Communist Party.

To dupe and confuse the working class, the SACP has put forward its own so-called 'Workers' Charter'. But this Workers' Charter is a complete fake. Unlike the Workers' Charter of the trade union movement, it says nothing about the inextricable links between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism. Instead, it tries to spread the illusion among the working class that there can be democracy while economic power still remains firmly in the hands of the big capitalist bosses.

This fraudulent 'workers' charter' has therefore nothing to do with the struggle for democracy, and even less with the struggle for socialism. What it is quite simply is a Stalinist manoeuvre to save the bourgeoisie.

Only the working class can lead the struggle for democracy. It is the only class that is able to unite all the oppressed behind it on the basis of a programme for permanent revolution. The working class has no interests in seeing any vestiges of apartheid remain.

Take a concrete example. Mandela says he wants justice for all. Everybody will support this demand. But who is to apply this justice? Who are the judges going to be? Are the courts going to remain in their present form? Who is going to be in charge of the army? Mandela says that the present executioners of the people can be relied upon to bring about this justice. But it is only the working class, by smashing the apartheid state, that will be able to guarantee justice for all.

The examples could be multiplied. How is the chronic housing shortage to be solved if the building industry is not taken out of the hands of the profit-hungry capitalists and brought under working class control. How is unemployment to be tackled if the power of monopoly capital is not broken? How is migrant

labour and the compound system to be ended if gold mining is not organised on a different basis?

And the killings in Natal? The unbanning of the ANC and the release of Mandela has not brought an end to the vicious cycle of violence. Instead, Mandela has given his approval to the deployment of the South African Defence Force in the Natal townships. His only concern is that the ANC should have been consulted before the troops were sent in. Is this then the justice for all that Mandela wants?

Like every other problem, only the working class can solve the problem in Natal. But in order to do this it has to take the lead. COSATU has to set up its own peace committees in the factories which bring together all workers, and not entrust the solution of this problem to those who do not wish to see an end to the violence.

It is only the working class that will be able to solve the land question. A minority group of private white landlords holds 87 per cent of the land. The rural working class is paid starvation wages and not allowed to organise into trade unions. Landlessness is an acute and growing problem. All the 'homelands' are overcrowded and unable to support the people living in them. In Bophuthatswana, for example, 142,000 families are living on land that can only support 26 000. Environmental problems, like soil erosion, are spreading rapidly.

How else is the land question to be solved except through large-scale nationalisation and re-distribution of the land? But the ANC has already promised the big white landlords that they have nothing to fear from an ANC government, that the ANC does not intend to take the land away from them.

But the position of the working class will be that only those farmers who work the land themselves will be allowed to keep their land, the big capitalist farms and the agribusinesses

will be nationalised and the land will be redistributed to the landless. The precise way in which this will be carried out will be decided by the agricultural workers and peasants themselves in their own freely-elected organisations.

It is also only the working class that will be able to protect the small businesses and traders against the banks and the big capitalist conglomerates. By nationalising all the banks, a workers' government will be able to provide easy and ready credit to these small businesses and traders who are presently at the mercy of finance capital.

Trotskyism and Stalinism two roads

Given the betrayal of the masses that is being prepared by the ANC-SACP, what is the programme of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International? The starting point for the Workers' International is the principle that the liberation of the working class is the task of the working class itself.

This means that the working class has to build its own organs of struggle and its own independent political party. Only on the basis of its political independence will the working class be able to fight for its class interests and for the interests of all the other classes and groups who also suffer because of the control that finance capital has over every aspect of the lives of the oppressed and exploited. Thus apartheid cannot be overthrown in South Africa without the overthrow of capitalism. The working class will have to attack the power and rights of the capitalist class in order to secure its own power and rights.

But the South African revolution, while beginning on national terrain, cannot succeed as a national revolution. It forms an inseparable part of the international struggle of the working class and can only be completed as part of the world revolution for socialism. In the immediate term the South African revolution will have to be spread to Southern Africa.

While imperialism divides southern Africa, imposing austerity programmes on the working masses, the programme of the Workers International strives to unite southern Africa in a Union of Workers' States. This United Workers' States of Southern Africa will be based on the principle of self-determination of all the countries and nations of southern Africa.

The ANC-SACP turns to the world bourgeoisie and the IMF to solve the problems of southern Africa. Is this international policy of the ANC-SACP merely a mistake? To believe this would be dangerous. This policy is the other side of Stalinism's theory of two-stage revolution, that is, peaceful co-existence with imperialism. This is the logical consequence of Stalinism's abandonment of the struggle for socialism.

Today, as Stalinism decomposes under the blows of the working class in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, its dependence on the international bourgeoisie becomes even stronger. In fact, it is the profound crisis of Stalinism which has led to the present situation in southern Africa. To protect its position in the Soviet Union, the Stalinist bureaucracy needs the support of imperialism. But to get this support, Gorbachev has to give something in return. This Cuban troops were withdrawn from Angola, and a deal was made in Namibia. Pressure is now being exerted on the ANC to make a deal with the racist South African government that will not threaten the interests of monopoly capital in the region. That this means sacrificing the masses of southern Africa to the IMF and the World Bank is of little concern to the Stalinist bureaucracy. In a meeting with Kaunda of Zambia in November 1987, shortly before leaving for talks with Regan in America, Gorbachev made clear what his new political thinking will mean for southern Africa: 'The principle of political settlement is fully applicable to the solution of issues in southern Africa. If guarantees are needed for reaching a political solution, it might be a good idea to think of such guarantees being made by the United Nations and the permanent members of the Security

Council. As for the Soviet Union it is ready to play a positive (?) role in this matter.' (Novosti Press, Moscow, p. 82)

The Stalinist bureaucracy has made it clear that socialism is not on the agenda in southern Africa, and will not be on the agenda for at least a century! Thus on the one side of the struggle in South Africa is imperialism and its main agency in the working class movement, Stalinism. Together with the ANC, Stalinism and imperialism are working to politically disarm the South African working class and smash any movement for democracy and socialism.

On the other side is the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International as the World Party of Socialist Revolution with its section now being established in South Africa. The Workers International has no other interests but those of the working class, and no other class to serve but the working class. It is still weak and its numbers are still small. But the Workers International is the only international organisation that has a revolutionary programme and that is committed to an uncompromising struggle against both imperialism and Stalinism.[/threecolumns]

The Workers Charter

Workers' Charter

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

Preamble

We, the working people of South Africa, the main producers of

our country's wealth, declare:

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

That, as black workers, we are subjected to even more intense exploitation by a system of capitalism which uses national domination to keep wages low and profits high.

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

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

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

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

That, we extend a hand of friendship to our white class

brothers and sisters whose long-term interests lie in the unity of all labour – black and white.

In order to ensure:

that victory in the national liberation struggle is not hijacked by a new exploiting class, of whatever colour;

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

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

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

Ownership and control of the economy

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

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

Participation in the state sector by domestic or foreign private capital, where judged necessary, shall not give such

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

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

The right and duty to work and to a living wage

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

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

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

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

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

The right to organisation and struggle

There shall be no restrictions on the rights of workers to organise themselves into political parties or trade unions. Trade union organisation shall be based on the principles of “one industry – one union” and “one country – one federation”.

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

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

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

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

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

The right to media access

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

The right to family life and social facilities

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

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

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

The right to health and safety

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

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

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

necessary, the provision of alternative employment.

The right to security in old age

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

The rights of women workers

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nelson Mandela's Legacy by Bronwen Handyside



"The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has it, to the best of my recollection, ever condemned capitalist society."

(Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom, p. 435)

How is it that UK Prime Minister David Cameron can say of Nelson Mandela: "A great light has gone out in the world. Nelson Mandela was a hero of our time"?

How is it that newspapers like the Daily Telegraph, the voice of the British ruling class, can express their regret at Mandela's passing?

Contrast this with Maggie Thatcher's opinion that Mandela and the ANC were nothing but a bunch of murdering terrorists.

Some might say the British ruling class is just jumping on a bandwagon and hoping to bask in some kind of reflected glory from the international outpouring of praise directed towards the ANC leader.

I think their approval of Mandela's history goes deeper than that. It fits in with the world bourgeoisie's global narrative of how the world's brutal inequalities should be solved, which is pumped out on a daily basis by their lackeys in the mass media. It is also propped up by the remnants of the grip that Stalinist ideas retain on the international working class (in particular the idea of "peaceful coexistence" between capitalism and socialism, which arose out of the deal the Stalinist bureaucracy made with imperialism to divide the world between them after the Second World War. This line

constantly tended to limit and hamper struggles against imperialism, including those against colonial domination, and blunted them by stifling revolutionary socialist forces and working through handpicked bureaucratic leaders. This is why uprisings of ANC militants demanding to wage the armed struggle in South Africa were violently, sometimes fatally, suppressed by the ANC's security apparatus(1).)

Brutal systems like apartheid are based on deliberate divisions created between working people across the world. Over centuries they have enabled imperialist countries and capital to exploit labour power and natural resources belonging to other nations and peoples. Apartheid stands out as a particularly anti-human system of institutionalised racism.

The soothing myth the politicians and media are peddling is that such systems do not need to be violently overthrown, but can be resolved peacefully to the benefit of the oppressed through a "negotiated settlement". It says that the protracted and deepening problems of gross inequality between different countries, and different classes within those countries do not emanate, as the siren voices of socialism say, from the capitalist system. They do not require the overthrow of the system of private property (progressing through a programme of nationalisation of the banks, industry, and land) but a process of "civilised" negotiation in which big business (aka capital) preserves the lion's share of the wealth while permitting a minority of the country's bourgeoisie to participate in the feast. The bourgeois narrative tells us that the brutal inequalities we see today (where an Indian child of 11 can be sold into a brothel for life, while on the other side of the world boys like David Cameron and Boris Johnson are born to wealth and power) are nothing to do with the class system, where the majority who produce all the wealth through their labour are exploited by a minority who own all the industries and the land.

This narrative declares that the violence of each side during the oppressed classes' struggle for equality can be brushed over with the "bland screen of moral equivalence"(2) as it was in South Africa at the so-called "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" (a useful model the bourgeoisie rolled out across the world, notably in Northern Ireland). The just violence of the masses in their fight for the equal redistribution of wealth of their nation is declared to be the same as the reactionary violence of those preserving their right to exploit others.

It says: not only is there no necessity for class antagonisms, there are actually really no class divisions in society. It is just that some people are born clever and resourceful and naturally grow rich, while others are not. The British ruling class, on a roll with its austerity measures and full of confidence, has started articulating much more clearly what really lies at the heart of this fairy tale.

Tory London Mayor Boris Johnson, now positioning himself for the Tory leadership – treading the ground where the rest of the Tories still do not quite dare to go – says: "Like it or not, the free market economy is the only show in town. Britain is competing in an increasingly impatient and globalised economy, in which the competition is getting ever stiffer.

"No one can ignore the harshness of that competition, or the inequality that it inevitably accentuates; and I am afraid that violent economic centrifuge is operating on human beings who are already very far from equal in raw ability, if not spiritual worth."

Tory Prime Minister Cameron now calls for permanent austerity – "a leaner state" – in other words a country in which the hogging of resources by a tiny elite will plunge millions into poverty, illness, despair and degradation. He wants a world in which such inequality is simply accepted – as a kind of natural phenomenon.

Negotiated settlements such as those in South Africa are the plan B the bourgeoisie rolls out at the point where it realises it can no longer govern with the iron fist, murdering and torturing to repress dissent, and that it is under threat by a militant working class which is looking to the redistribution of wealth from the despoilers to the toilers. It needs to collaborate with a selected layer of the oppressed which it feels will do business, and cheap MLB jerseys in particular will collaborate in the suppression of the working class and its political programme of socialism.

This plan appeared in South Africa in the mid-1980s, when the country had become ungovernable, brought to its knees by a popular uprising led by an extraordinary and brand new trade union movement – which above all, and most important of all, had at its heart a conscious workingclass socialist current which produced the Workers Charter, demanding the redistribution of the wealth and the land to the masses of South Africa. “The scent of revolution was in the air”³. The Workers Charter was founded in opposition to the ANC’s 30 year old Freedom Charter (which as Nelson Mandela explains, was never a socialist document, but rather a programme for the establishment of a black bourgeoisie).

The plan appeared as it became clear to big business and AngularJS, filter the banks inside and outside of South Africa that the productivity and therefore the profitability of South home African workers had plunged into terminal decline as a result of the mass resistance against apartheid.

The suppression of the socialist Workers’ Charter in favour of the reformist (i.e. aimed at reforming capitalism and not overthrowing it) Freedom Charter inside the trade union movement, after the formation of COSATU in 1985, was the signal to South African capital that the way was open to a deal with the ANC.

Talks about the possibility of such a settlement had begun in late 1984, between exiled ANC leaders (in Lusaka and in London) and representatives of South African big business.

Some may say: what's the problem? Didn't that negotiated settlement bring about the enfranchisement of the black masses, and the creation of the "rainbow nation" so highly praised throughout the world's media? But that deal between the white bourgeois exploiters of South Africa and a new and very small black bourgeoisie, together with the violent repression of the working class and its socialist programme, is precisely what is currently bearing fruit in the "new" South Africa. Its government openly pursues the worst of the neo-liberal policies (fiscal discipline, deregulation, free markets and trade liberalisation, privatisation, low taxes and secure property rights) and instructs its police force to shoot down unarmed striking miners in the back (not the first time its police force has shot down protesters against its policies). It is clear why the rhetoric of Thatcher and her political allies was different from Cameron's, because when she was making her pronouncements, the South African ruling class was still hesitating between the iron fist of repression and the necessity of a settlement.

The "new" South Africa has resulted in:

The second most unequal society in the world – more unequal now than before Mandela came to office. The greatest inequality exists between blacks and other racial groups. Black income has virtually flat-lined since the ending of apartheid, wholesale NBA jerseys in contrast to that of other racial groups, particularly white South Africans.

- 40% unemployment. Importantly, 70% of SA's unemployed are younger than 35, while the unemployment rate among people aged less than 25 is around 50%50% of the population living below the poverty lineMore than half of black children are growing up in povertyAverage life expectancy declining from 62 years in 1990 to 52.6 years

in 2012A crisis in public services including housingA collapse in social structures which means the highest rate of rape, gang rape and child rape in the worldThe highest rate of HIV infection in the worldThe slaughter of 34 striking miners at Marikana, shot for demanding a living wage, after ex-NUM and current ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa urged both the ANC Police Minister and the mining company Lonmin to deal with them, referring to them as “criminals”.The fabulous enrichment of a tiny minority, like Cyril Ramaphosa, (currently worth \$700m, which the ANC explains he made out of his business acumen – see Boris Johnson’s explanation for the divisions in society), and current ANC president Jacob Zuma who recently did up his residence to the tune of 17.2m of public money

Was it for this that the black masses fought and died?

And was it for this that the millions in the international workers’ movement, students and others waged their decades-long campaign against apartheid, and gave unstinting political and financial support to the exiled ANC, SACP and SACTU (the South African Congress of Trade Unions)?

Confusion

Mandela was surrounded by political forces from the 1960s to the 1980s which sowed confusion by representing him as a “communist” – including the South African and British ruling classes, and the South African Communist party (SACP) (under instructions from their international leaders). The SACP now declares that Mandela was a secret member of their Central Committee at the time of the Rivonia trial, which completely fits with their theory of the necessity for a two-stage revolution for South Africa. First a revolution in which the native bourgeoisie would come to power, followed many, many, many years later by a socialist revolution against capitalism, bringing the working class to power.

But Nelson Mandela never pretended that the ANC was a socialist organisation, with any desire to attack capitalism. He himself said at his Rivonia trial:

“The most important political document ever adopted by the ANC is the Freedom Charter. It is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state. The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated a revolutionary change in the economic structure of the country, nor has it, to the best of my recollection, ever condemned capitalist society.”. Later, speaking about What the Freedom Charter’s demand for the nationalisation of the mines and industrial corporations, Mandela said:

“The charter strikes a fatal blow at the financial and gold mining monopolies that have for centuries plundered the country and condemned its people to servitude. The breaking up and democratisation of these monopolies will open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous non-European bourgeois class. For the first time in the history of this country the non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own, in their own name and right, mills and factories and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before.”.

When the constitution of the “new” South Africa was negotiated (by Cyril Ramaphosa and Thabo Mbeki, ANC leader following Mandela), a clause was inserted which, according to the ANC leadership, entirely negates that section of the Freedom Charter which calls for nationalisation of the land, the mines, and the banks. Throughout his life Mandela acted completely in accordance with his principles, which were to build a society in which a black South African bourgeoisie could partake of power and wealth along with the white owners of the banks, industry and the land.

Unfortunately that has produced a society of brutal inequality.

In 2006 Tory leader David Cameron was able to say: "The mistakes my party made in the past with respect to relations with the ANC and sanctions on South Africa make it all the more important to listen now. The fact that there is so much to celebrate in the new South Africa is not in spite of Mandela and the ANC, it is because of them – and we Conservatives should say so clearly today." Fortunately the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and other forces in South Africa continue the battle for the working class and its socialist programme. We should lend them every possible support in their fight against the violent repression promoted by the likes of Cyril Ramaphosa and the other bourgeois rulers of South Africa.

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<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR53/027/199> 2/en. Based on first-hand research among surviving victims of such abuse, it documents a long-standing pattern of torture, ill-treatment and execution of prisoners by the ANC's security department.
2. Terry Bell. Unfinished Business: South Africa, Apartheid and Truth. 2001.
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5. <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-10-25-marikana-massacre-ramaphosas-statementrevisited/#.Uqm2gPRdV8E>
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