



from below

R1

Number 54 April 2006

Against capitalism and racism, for workers' power

GAUTRAIN: Delivering to the rich



Cosatu has threatened to strike against the Gautrain in July. They have lodged a section 77 notice of intention to strike on a social issue. It is crucial that this strike goes ahead. The costs of this elite project have spiraled, now to 20 billion.

The Gautreng service will be used by about 2 percent to 4 percent of working people in Gauteng. The main target of Gautrain commuters are the middle class and rich who live in Sandton, Midrand, Rosebank and those who go to the airport. Even the airport workers are not the targeted market, as most of them don't live in Sandton.

These just show us the irrationality of the capitalist system, always addressing the interest of the rich while neglecting the needs of working class people. The amount of money that they will be spending on Gautrain, which comes out of the blood and sweat of working class could be spend on upgrading the rail system and improving overall public transport to make sure that it is available 24 hours.

The other interesting thing that we are

realising is the whole lie that there is no money when we want enough water, houses, schools or better pay. The budget for Gautrain jumped from R7 billion to R20 billion and the government is prepared to make that money available.

This strengthens the case that we have always made as socialists that there is money, the question is always the democratic distribution of it.

And under the capitalist system, the distribution always goes to addressing the ruling class interest while we have to fight for our interest to be addressed.

The fight of various workers for higher wages or to stop restructuring is a fight against the way this unjust system works.

The fight against pre-paid meters is likewise a fight for more to be used on working people's needs. It is one fight although it is fought in different places by different organisations. Its time to close these separations and strengthen the fight.

**Support
the strikes**
*Yes to
living
wages*
**Yes to job
security**
**No to water
meters**

KEEP LEFT! MAGAZINE



Affiliated to Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF)



United against the tricklers

Paul, an activist from Soshunguve, told us how municipal workers and community members have linked up against the trickler system.

What are the tricklers?

The tricklers were installed by Tshwane municipality. They told us it was part of development. After they removed the ordinary meter they installed something like a plastic disc. Now the water is just dripping out, slow slow slow. When we go to the municipality they say its for credit control. We checked the amount of water and its 116 liters per day. You can't even flush your toilet – that water doesn't have pressure. If you put the bucket under the tap at 8 am you wait until 11 am to have enough water to wash the baby.

So what did you do?

Members of Samwu showed us how to remove the trickler so we can get water. We are still removing them.

How did the municipal workers get involved?

Some of them don't have enough money themselves to pay water, and they had to install the tricklers in their own houses. During the week they had to install them and at the weekend they remove them. So they showed us how. They said they could not do

it for us because they will be expelled from work but they can teach us how to do it.

And how did you link up with them?

In the beginning, only the community members came to the meeting, not the workers. At the meeting, the community resolved that we don't want to see any municipal car in the area to install the tricklers.

But when we stopped them, they said "Let's show you how to take it out." And they said they would say at work that they couldn't come to install because they would be beaten. After that they started to attend the meetings.

What steps will you take to build these links?

We're planning to support struggles of workers in any way. We plan to invite them to our workshop, and ask them to educate us about labour, and we about the community. For example some comrades were arrested, and we'd like them to educate us about their experience of labour issues.

They have an experience of struggle also. We share our problems. For example last week the shop steward phoned. They want to stop the contracts and make the work permanent, and they invited us to a picket.



Solidarity with security guards' strike

Together with the Anti-Privatisation Forum we extend our solidarity to all security guards and your respective unions involved in the current strike action against the Security company bosses.

We unconditionally condemn the action of police who shot your fellow members marching for their rights in Johannesburg and Tswane on Friday.

To often now are the police resorting to the tactics of the past apartheid regime in firing their weapons at people involved in legitimate protests for better working conditions, wages and services in their homes.

We stand against the use of weapons by the police on any marches or protests that the working class are involved in to improve their lives at work or at home.

We were horrified to see the pictures of security guards in extreme pain after being shot in the eyes and legs by trigger happy police.

We know you are right when you say "you guard billions yet are paid peanuts".

We know that you are right to demand better wages, benefits and respect for the dangerous job you have to do to protect the property of the rich and money of the bosses.

We know that your strike and marches are about improving your lives and human dignity.

We stand with you against your profit hungry bosses, we stand with you against police brutality.

We call for a condemnation of the police action by the ANC Premier Shilowa.

Election results

* The Operation Khanyisa Movement (OKM) won 4,305 votes, and got one PR seat. A woman, Joyce Mkonzha, is at the top of the OKM list. According to the pledge she signed, her salary will be paid directly to the organization and she will be taking her direction in the council from our mass campaigns.

* On the East Rand, members of the APF joined together with other community organizations under the banner of the Displacees Residents Association. They were united by their demand for free basic services and an end to eviction. DRPA brought in more than 8,000 ward votes and 7000 PR votes, winning 3 councillors.

* The Soshungu Civic Association brought in 978 ward votes and 1068 PR votes on that message.



APF members comment:

PAUL MFISA from the Soshanguve Community Development Forum:

"We had two independent candidates. We received 2006 votes in one ward and 917 in the other. We organised two marches to the municipal offices, there were more than 5,000 of us on each protest. We also had 6 road shows. The issue was the installation of the water meters and housing problems. After the second march the municipality stopped the contract with the water company, so presently the municipality are installing water meters on a temporary basis only. We felt that this was a victory for us.

We were pleased with the vote. The winning ANC candidate got 6,000 votes. We were third.

We describe ourselves as socialists; we are affiliates of the APF who assist us with workshops. We have 5,000 members; we want housing and free water. We have learnt from the mistakes of the ANC and we are pleased they are losing members."

MPHO from Bocosfo, Bophelong Community Service Forum:

"My feeling about the OKM result is positive that they won the seat. My problems is that they need to describe what they are going to do with the seat. What are their projects?

How are they going to fight inside the council? They must come with a project. When I heard about the result for the first time I was so surprised. I didn't think they could win."

MOIPONE from Bocosfo:

"I think it is good step, it is so stupid to say 'don't vote'. It is a good place to fight; we should fight internally as well. They have many very good example and the comrades should support them."

BRIAN MOGANE, Displacee Rate Payers Association, Katorus Area:

"I think the OKM result was good and to stand in the elections was a good move. We need an organisation to contest elections. The APF is a forum, so its the wrong organisation for that.

We are socialists but revolutionary ones and we stood in the elections. I stood as a ward councillor. The ANC won but the experience was positive.

The ANC made it very difficult for us to campaign, they sat outside the polling stations and intimidated voters, asking them: 'Who are you voting for?'

Despite all of these obstacles we did better than before winning three councillors. That proves that people are becoming more confident in us as an organisation."

**What does the
"ANC
landslide"
really mean?
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Cape Town electricity fiasco

Speaking kak to power

Muna Lakhani

The recent energy fiasco in Cape Town is typical of the industry. The real cause was a bunch of afro-pessimists within Eskom and other players of the local energy market, who decided that the country would not need much more electricity as there would be an economic disaster under a black government - and this has been published in the mainstream press! We must also not forget the ongoing energy campaigns of so many organisations, which promote the decentralisation of generation of electricity, have been totally ignored to date.

The capacity constraint in the Western Cape was clear years ago, but depending on the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (PBMR) to deliver was simply silly. Nowhere in the world has any nuclear power plant come in on time, on budget, or to specification - ever! The Pebble Bed was originally quoted at "about R1 billion" - this has grown in leaps and bounds, and now exceeds the worst pessimistic projections - about R15 billion. Let us remember that the Germans abandoned this design, especially after it failed and released massive amounts of radiation, but as it happened shortly after the much larger Chernobyl explosion, it got lost in the rush. Even if the PBMR is built on time, on budget and to specification, it will still take at least 7 years of testing to determine if all is well - this is from their own information.

Yet, of course, misguided fools are using the opportunistic "sabotage" of Koeberg to call for more nukes... but it is not sabotage, just human error. According to sources, this leads to hundreds of small accidents at nuclear facilities worldwide every year. And people want MORE nuclear power?

So, while we can kak on the fools who let this happen, what needs to happen with energy?

1) Charge the volume users of energy more, and larger users even more - otherwise, not only are we subsidising energy inefficient production, we are also promoting energy efficiency - the cheapest way to resolve energy poverty.

2) Implement existing technologies immediately - even Botswana is subsidi-



a nuclear power station in South Africa

dising villages with 80% of the cost of solar power, we have no such programme.

3) It is possible to reduce demand by as much as 40% using existing technology - but no political, policy or regulations exists to enforce that.

4) Embark on decentralised, renewable energy technology based bulk generation. The solar thermal chimney, wave and ocean current generators provide bulk electricity 24 hours a day, so (unlike the usual polluters propaganda) is not "intermittent". Australia is in the process of building a 200 MW chimney as we speak.

5) Get away from the foolish idea that we must grow crops for biodiesel (diesel from plants, the original fuel for diesel engines), and use waste (like sewage) to grow oil-rich algae instead - 25 times more productive than growing plants, while helping improve the quality of the sewage without chemicals, and leaving behind both a potential animal feedstock, as well as superb compost. And all this without the expensive and environmentally unacceptable fuel, artificial fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides that the agro-in-

dustry model of production demands - where do people think these expensive inputs come from? Fossil fuel, the reason why we want biodiesel anyway! The ethical and moral issue of growing food for fuel when people are hungry is only part of the problem - the world has more than enough food for the world - it is just not distributed to those in need, and is a terrain of struggle and colonisation.

6) Develop local and localised economies - "local production for local consumption" has never been a better rallying cry than now.

The Cape Town energy fiasco is a sign of the times - the mental colonisation that tells people that only the American development model works (it does not work, even in the USA where they have 40 million children living below the poverty line), and not having faith in what African civil society has been saying for a long time, is a sad state of affairs - while it may provide momentary satisfaction to say "I told you so" the unnecessary pain and suffering that accompanies the failure of people to think deeply hurts those of us who are here to help.

Sexism in Zuma's defence

By Tebza Mokgope

The on going rape trial of the former deputy president has once again put women oppression and material power at the centre stage of public comment. Wherever you go these days most people are very much willing to voice their opinion about this case.

Their opinion run from those arguing that it was a political conspiracy to make sure that Jacob Zuma does not become the next president to those arguing that forcing someone to sleep with you is a rape no matter the circumstances surrounding that.

While Zuma's lawyer's are working very hard to win the case for their client. They should be ashamed by the kind of sexism and poisonous ideas they are using to win the case. This could be detected from the arguments that they are bringing forward in defence of Zuma. They are challenging many of the ideas that the women's movements have won previously.

Such arguments involve the following: That wearing a miniskirt or a kanga is not an invitation to be raped. That if a women has had many sexual partners this was also not an invitation to be raped.

Zuma's legal defence team is opportunistically using sexist ideas to advance their defence for Zuma. What is surprising is that there are quite a lot of women who have been raped wearing appropriately long dresses with covered shoulders.

The other reason they are arguing is that, if you behave well and don't sleep around you will not be raped. And if you have had several sexual partners and have been raped before, you cannot be trusted and your case must be treated with great suspicion.

The point should be made that one's sexual past has nothing to do with being raped. Rape has to do more with your living conditions, if you live in bad conditions with no streets lights, a lot of unemployed people. You are more likely to get raped than someone who lives in the rich northern suburbs where you don't rely on public transport for your movement and are more financial independent.

The other arguments that the legal team is using is that- to prove that you have been raped you must show signs of resistant. The evidence to prove that



you did not agree should be seen through torn clothes, bruises and other physical signs of fighting back. Failure to show signs of an immediate fight-back the legal defence is using as an argument to say that the rape accuser must have consented to sex with Zuma.

What the legal team don't tell us is the role of power relation that normally exists between the rapist and the victim. That often the relationship you share with your rapist makes it difficult for the victim to fight back.

Think of a relationship between a manager and his subordinates, the fact that you try to be on his good side so that he cannot fire you. You always try to be on his good side because you don't want to lose your job.

This kind of situation also exists between husband and wife, where you find a woman who is constantly abused, finds it difficult to leave the husband. Precisely because she relies on him for material support.

That unfavourable balance of power relation makes it impossible for the majority of women to fight back their rapists or abusers.

As much as the defence is using all

means to win the case on behalf of Zuma, they continue to deepen the sexist ideas that exist in this capitalist society. The end result will be that, very few women will have the courage to lay a charge of rape. As to the conspiracy argument, if the defence believe in their argument, let them bring evidence that links to that, up to so far they have failed to do that.

The state and its judiciary should be criticised for failing to protect women against the sexist ideas put forward by Zuma and his defence team.

While certain sections of the state and women's group have raised concern about the country's sexual offence bill as being too weak on defending rape victims, no one has mentioned anything about addressing the conditions that most women find themselves in, which is financial dependence.

However a harsher criticism should be laid at the system that breeds this kind of ideas and defends them. Through their system the capitalist have allowed the treatment of women as sex objects and co modification of sex to continue unchallenged.

What will socialism look like?

This is the first of a ten part series on "What will socialism look like". The series is adapted from a booklet written by JOHN MOLYNEUX of the Socialist Workers Party in Britain.

Adapted by ALAN GOATLEY

Introduction:

The struggle for Socialism is often talked about in the circles of the unions and the social movements. The basic idea is always put across that socialism will mean freedom, it is always that no longer will workers and the poor have to put up with a society of inequality.

At the same time people also ask for more detail like how will we live etc, how will government be run or how will we deal with such and such sort of a problem.

Karl Marx the figure that all associate with the struggle for socialism wrote a lot on history, contemporary politics and economics from which we can gain many insights but he did not write much about the subject of what will socialism look like.

He had good reason for this. The sorts of socialists that came before him he felt to be dreamers. They drew up grand schemes of how things should be run and organised. For them the people had just to follow the plan set out and all would be wonderful. But they had no way of bringing their plans into reality. They hoped that the rulers would be swept off their feet by the good sense of it all. But as we all know rulers are not motivated by good sense, they protect their own position whatever the cost.

The early socialists did not have a sense of the struggle that it would take to unseat the privileges of the rich nor did they have much sense of what group amongst the downtrodden would have the motivation to end the privileges of the rich once and for all.

Marx argued that socialism would not come out of grand plans but rather if it was to come about it would arise out of the contradictions of capitalism itself. These contradictions were the up and down and unplanned nature of capitalism and the antagonism that existed between the working class and the rich.

This meant strict limits on the ability to predict about the organisation of socialist society and put to bed any



idea of a detailed blueprint.

This fact remains today, because if socialism emerges out of capitalism as a result of a struggle against it by the working class, then the measures that a revolutionary socialist government would take would obviously depend on the circumstance that it found itself in at the time of taking power.

We can not know in advance what the particular circumstances would be nor can we predict the date of the revolution.

Workers who made the revolution would be making the decisions of how to tackle matters in front of them and most likely care little for what we may think now. It is pointless to design a house now for the future when in that future people themselves would be deciding themselves how they want to live.

But we are faced with the fact that if people are to take up the struggle for socialism then they want to know what they are struggling for. This is especially so in the face of so many societies having claimed to be socialist but it is all too obvious that they were pretty terrible places. The era of Stalinism has also had the effect of totally distorting the image of socialism.

We need in socialist propaganda an angry denunciation of capitalism, we need a hard headed analysis of the strategy and tactics of the workers movement, and we also need inspiration. We need a vision of the goal which makes the struggle worthwhile.

In many senses we are now better

placed than Marx was in his day to answer some of the questions that people ask as to what will socialism look like. We certainly live in a world of abundance that Marx talked about as being the prerequisite to marching to equality. This is all too evident when we take a look at the extreme wealth of the bosses, it is evident also how much they waste on their wars to protect their interests and the enormous waste that goes on advertising to encourage one to buy one product rather than another.

We can also clearly see how it would be so easy to make the time we spend working shorter more interesting and varied.

We have also on our side over a century of struggle that Marx did not go through. We have the experience of a few years of socialism in Russia after the revolution of 1917. We also have some the experiences of workers uprising that nearly succeeded in socialism like in Spain in 1936 and Hungary 1956.

It is at the same time important to realise that Socialism or communism, to use Marx's original term – is not a ready made society that can simply be introduced the day after the revolution. Rather it is a historical process.

The process begins with the destruction of the rule of the rich by a workers revolution. This revolution has to be a mass affair, not that of a band of heroes or disgruntled army officers.

The process is completed only when a fully classless society is achieved on a world scale. This is the point when humanity is able to manager its affairs in peace without class hostility or class struggle.

Between the overthrow of capitalism and a classless society lies a period of transition simply referred to as 'workers power'.

When discussing the socialist future, it is important to bears these things in mind. What will be able to achieved in the initial stages of worker power, a time which will still have the shadow of a battle to displace still entrenched aspects of the way capitalists did thing, is not the same as the possibilities that will open up when humanity is at last fully united.

With this in mind the next issue will be on the issue of " The conquest of Political Power"

Stop this deadly virus

By Sello M'Afrika Tladi

HIV/AIDS is no longer the only deadly virus we are facing in South Africa, unemployment is also a threat to us, 40 percent of the working age population are unemployed making it to be amongst the highest unemployment rate in the whole world.

From an economic point of view, the unemployment rate is one of the key measures of an economy's performance. But from the working class point of view, unemployment is a key factor in creating poverty.

With high unemployment rate it will be difficult, if not impossible, to alleviate poverty and inequality in South Africa. Unemployment is a national crisis and loss of jobs has made inequality even worse. Many young people have completed matric or even have university degrees. Unfortunately, the longer they remain unemployed the more they lose these skills through disuse. More and more young women are forced into prostitution or sex for gifts such as cloths cell phones to survive.

These issues make the existence of the Right to Work campaign more necessary than before. The right to work campaign is a militant campaign whose time has arrived. Time after time, labour federations have been polite and patient, while thousands of workers have been thrown to unemployment and poverty. Countrywide and in every farm and factory retrenchments struggles have been fought and frequently defeated. These struggles take place divided and within a particular sector or industry and within the employed and unemployed. The RIGHT TO WORK CAMPAIGN mandate is to bury division and build unity amongst the working class and continue the struggle against commercialisation of services which undermines the delivery of basic quality services as well a decent quality employment. Privatisation puts profit before the workers needs and through the capitalist education system it has spread a myth on students that we need to produce for profit, but if there's enough for all what do we need profit for? To enrich the bosses who re-



trench workers. This is the world of workers. We have a right to work. Government should stop telling us lies about shortage of jobs - there's certainly lots work to be done. There are schools, hospitals, and houses to build, clothes to make, recreation areas to develop and food to grow and even the state call for people to volunteer and do the same job equally as the employed person it shows that there's a need for quality employment.

R2W campaign is a call to all organisations and individuals in our communities and workplaces, such as youth, women, churches, trade unions, unemployed, community based organisations and NGOs to come together and demand:

- the RIGHT TO WORK as the government's first priority
- a basic income grant and unemployment benefits for all
- halt to all retrenchments
- permanent jobs at living wage in the government expanded public works programme
- reduce hours of work to 40 hours of work with no loss pay
- a rescue card for the unemployed
- smart card for transport, food parcel
- proper skills training for jobs

This demands will not be delivered through debates and discussions in boardrooms but by building the militant action on the ground and by supporting and joining workers' strikes, pickets, and marches. Build the movement against unemployment and exploitation of workers and strengthen a revolutionary struggle for socialism.

Projects in the APF

By Lawrence Ntuli

The APF is made up of many comrades who are excellent activists who are young but unemployed. Many of these activists feel that the APF must initiate what one comrade called "projects". An example could mean setting up a vegetable garden in the townships, or a project providing a service from which people could earn some money.

Are these ideas the way forward for the struggle and the APF? Projects, which provide jobs only to comrades, will not bring us near to our goal of winning millions into our fold. The rationale of APF struggle is not only interested to benefit its members. On the contrary its struggle is more about liberating not only the so-called comrades but also the whole working class.

The APF must think about projects, which are more concern about benefiting the whole class, for example, political education or anti-neo-liberal campaigns. In other words, projects, which belong to the APF, must be those projects, which deepen a fight against capitalism and increase unity amongst working and poor people.

We cannot say, because the government has failed to deliver jobs for all, therefore the APF must take over the responsibility of providing earnings for its members. In the same way we cannot take on the task of managing the building of houses or providing schooling or job skills type education, because the government has failed.

These projects that were mentioned at the AGM are not a solution.

Activists are proposing these ideas in the understandable desire to find employment for themselves. Some even said at the APF AGM that "just because we are a socialists does not mean you have to be poor".

We must not provide these "projects" because the problem of unemployment can only be solved by class struggle. One horrible problem of the type of projects mentioned at the AGM is that they can lead to a situation of you only get to be a part of a project if you have an APF or affiliate membership card. This fact is what we have always accused the ANC of resorting to, to hold its memberships loyalty.

We must start deepening the struggle for unemployment grants or the right to work, this struggle must be linked to the struggle against retrenchment. Socialism is about fighting for an end to poverty. We must not loose sight of the political fight against the government for real employment for everyone.

Corruption in Africa

Miles Larmer

Corruption seems to increasingly dominate the African political agenda. The corruption case against Jacob Zuma has deeply divided the African National Congress. Is the anti-corruption agenda simply a new way the imperialist West has found to tell Africans how to behave? Or is corruption a real problem for the African working-class? Maybe we can learn something from recent anti-corruption cases in the rest of Africa.

For many years, the idea that corruption has been a major cause of African poverty and underdevelopment has been promoted by Western politicians and non-governmental organisations. In recent months, corruption has come to dominate politics in some African countries as never before. In Kenya, two government ministers were forced to resign after allegations by the former Anti-Corruption Commissioner, John Gikongo. Five more ministers are being investigated over the Goldenberg scandal, whilst the Governor of the Bank of Kenya has recently been charged with corruption offences. In Nigeria, in a situation resembling the Zuma case, corruption allegations are threatening the political future of Vice President Atiku Abubaker. In countries like Zambia and Uganda, corruption has become a mainstream political issue.

It should be stressed that corruption, contrary to what the Western media suggests, is hardly a solely African concern. The US has seen huge financial scandals such as Enron, not to mention the widespread corruption in the use of public funds in Iraq since 2003. British Prime Minister Tony Blair stands accused of rewarding wealthy financial supporters with seats in the upper house of Parliament. We should not accept the racist idea that African politicians are more corrupt than their counterparts elsewhere.

However, there is a particular type of 'corruption' that affects African economies, which is a legacy of colonialism. In the late 19th century, European business elites seeking to ensure their commercial domination of Africa, its natural resources and its peoples, lobbied politicians to mobilise the power of



European states in their interests. This led to the formal colonisation of Africa. Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company was the perfect model of state-supported capitalism, ensuring colonists' unequal access to economic opportunities against their African competitors. Particularly in settler-dominated societies, Africans were prevented from accumulating capital and establishing themselves as part of the commercial elite.

After Independence, most African countries lacked indigenous private capital, and commercial banks were unwilling to lend money to aspirant African businessmen. Frustrated, many turned to the newly independent states to act as a financier and guarantor of their planned businesses, many of which were initially established as partly state-controlled parastatals. African middle-class elements in strategic economic or political positions were able to enrich themselves, often justifying their actions as a form of supposedly progressive 'Africanisation' (the sort of 'Black Economic Empowerment' that has led in South Africa to the creation of the Bee-llionaires).

Ruling and commercial elites, who enriched themselves through their manipulation of state ownership in the 1960s and 1970s, sought in the 1990s to realise the full value of this state-based wealth through corrupt privatisation processes. Western donors, the IMF and World Bank looked the other way whilst the looting of state assets took place, hoping that the result would be the growth of a wealthy middle class that would be the driving force of neo-liberal economic and political change.

Such processes, usually portrayed

as 'corrupt', should rather be understood as central to the way in which capitalism works in Africa. Corruption is a symptom, not a cause of Africa's crisis; the cause is the workings of global capitalism itself.

It is right, therefore, to be sceptical when Western governments preach about African corruption. NGOs like Transparency International tend to legitimise the idea that the removal of state controls over the economy (i.e. neo-liberalism) will lead to growth and development. Such accusations, moreover, are often used by one section of the ruling class to attack another, as has been seen in the Zuma case. In Nigeria, for example, accusations against Abubaker are widely understood as part of President Obasanjo's campaign to undermine potential political competitors as he seeks to mobilise support for a third term in office.

This does not mean that we should stand by whilst elected politicians and their business cronies enrich themselves with our resources. We should fight against such theft, and insist that all such thieves resign from office and are prosecuted. Indeed, trade unions, churches and other social movements in Africa have led some of the most successful movements against thieving politicians, for example in Zambia and Kenya, reflecting widespread popular anger against the looting of the state by politicians. Whilst supporting popular mobilisation against the theft of our resources by the ruling class, we should remember that this is only a particularly visible element of the theft of people, land and materials that capitalism has subjected Africa to for hundreds of years.

Mapungubwe and myths of history

OF THE MANY myths about South African history, two of the most important are these:

■ The racist one, that when whites began to settle in South Africa there were no black people here (except for so called Bushmen and Hottentots), or, if there were, they were uncultured savages.

■ The Africanist one, that until the Europeans arrived, Africans lived in harmonious, classless societies.

Mapungubwe, one of South Africa's top archeological sites, explodes both these myths.

A few weekends ago I was able to visit Mapungubwe (which means 'hill of the jackels'). It is located west of Makhado (Louis Trichardt), close to the Botswana and Zimbabwe borders and overlooking the Limpopo river. It is at the centre of a national park that is also a World Heritage Site.

Mapungubwe itself was the third major settlement in the area. It was preceded by places known to archeologists as Schroda and K2. As with Mapungubwe, we don't know what they were called at the time.

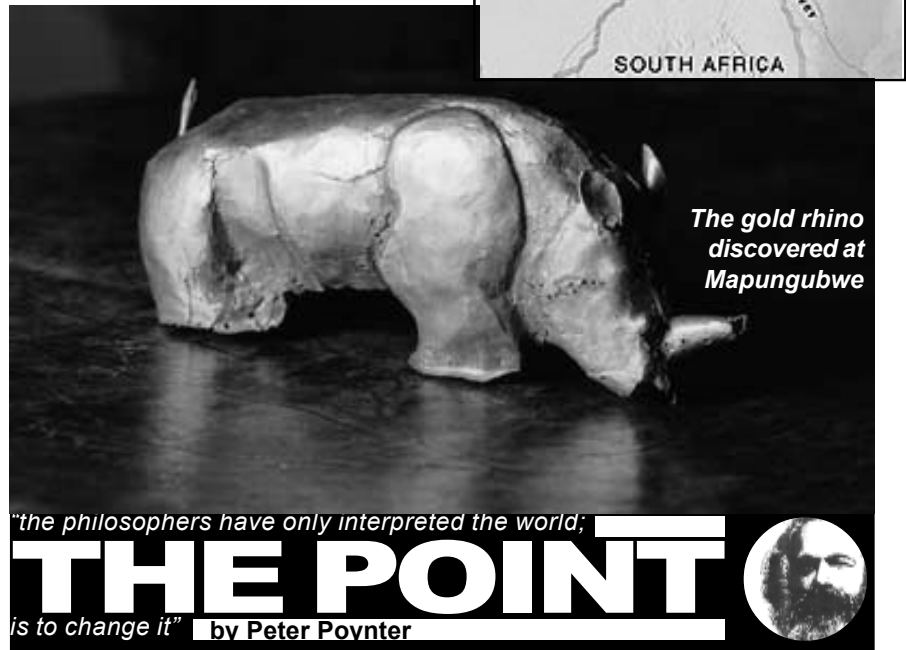
By the ninth century, tiny glass beads that came from Persia or India had arrived in Schroda (they would have been carried across the Indian Ocean by Arab traders). This was more than 700 years before Jan van Riebeck had even been born!

K2, which developed in the late tenth century and flourished in the early eleventh, was larger. Ivory bracelets were made for local consumption using metal tools, probably by specialists, and there was a wall around the settlement that is still visible today. This was something that could reasonably be described as a town.

At about 1075 the centre of this society moved a short distance, first to the base of Mapungubwe hill, and then, early in the twelfth century, onto its top.

This was a class-divided society. Its leading persons lived on the hill, where they were buried in splendour; some of them with gold ornaments.

Incidentally, the most famous of these ornaments, an exquisite gold-plated rhinoceros, is now thought to have come from India (importantly it portrays an Indian rather than an Afri-



The gold rhino discovered at Mapungubwe

can rhinoceros). This is inconvenient for the Mpumalanga provincial government, which claims that it was locally made, but it reinforces the point that Mapungubwe was part of an international trading network.

There is also considerable evidence of spindles and weaving. This suggests that cotton plants had already arrived from India. It also means that there had been an expansion in the class of skilled craftspersons.

This urban society was supported by agriculture and pastoralism (with only about ten percent of meat coming from hunting).

As argued by Martin Hall, one of the leading archeologists of southern Africa, Mapungubwe was the centre of a *state*, perhaps the region's first. As he puts it, a 'proportion of the wealth ... is systematically directed to, and retained by, a ruling group.' These rulers were not chiefs ('essentially leaders among men' as he puts it), but kings and queens.

This state controlled production and international trade, and it was probably able to impose taxation. This was made possible by providing benefits, such as beads, for those who were ruled (or some of them), but, as Hall speculates, it is likely that the rulers also commanded military power.

Who were the people of Mapungubwe? Evidence points towards this being a place of 'intermarriage be-

tween Khoisan indigenees [and] Bantu-speaking, negroid farmers.' But when this mixing occurred, at what rate and under what circumstances, is unclear. There is a claim that the Mapungubwe people were Vendas, but we do not know what language they spoke and a distinguishable Venda identity did not appear before the 17th century.

By 1290, Mapungubwe was in decline, the victim of ecological changes that were a consequence of declining rainfall (this is now a dry area). Its people moved down the river and onto the Zimbabwe plateau, developing similar societies focussed on Tula Mela (in northern Kruger) and at Great Zimbabwe.

The reason for the eventual decline of state-based societies in southern Africa is uncertain, but it was probably related to Portuguese control of Indian Ocean trade. What's clear, though, is that Mapungubwe was the centre of a class structured society.

Why do so few South Africans know about this important history? This is largely because, under apartheid, the artefacts from Mapungubwe were hidden away at the University of Pretoria. But it is also partly because, today, we are told about 'heritage' – glories of the past – rather than a factually based 'history' that helps us critically engage with our present.



Sharpeville misery

Botsang Mmope

It is almost 45 years ago on the 21st March 1960 when the apartheid forces opened fire killing at least 83 and wounding 365 in a Positive Action Campaign, in Sharpsville and Langa.

The shooting angered not only the freedom loving people of the world but Africans within South Africa.

At the time the campaign – to reject the pass laws - had been rejected by the leadership of the ANC and was described by the ANC's general secretary Duma Nokwe as having 'no prospects of success' because the overwhelming majority of Africans would not support it. However the campaign gained enthusiastic support in many parts of the country. At Sharpsville and Langa crowds estimated at 20,000 to 30,000 respectively joined the march.

Even the President of the ANC, Albert Chief Luthuli, was forced by events to join the campaign; he belatedly came to Transvaal to burn his pass. Because of the 21st March 1960 events the pass laws were temporarily suspended but the Boer republic banned both the PAC and the ANC and many leaders either went into exile or were jailed. The Sharpsville massacre nearly brought a change of government.

The ANC who had initially refused to participate in the Positive Action Campaign in 1960, have pursued a policy of 'neoliberalism' since coming to power. This has included the privatisation of state assets such as water and electricity. They have also failed to provide, after twelfth years of democracy, free services to the children and grandchildren of the victims who participated in that courageous campaign forty-

five years ago.

The same victims from their own initiative have recently formed what is called KHULUMANE, their mouthpiece to demand compensation from the government. However the Mbeki administration has refused to listen to their demands, this has come after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with Bishop Tutu at its head, refused to deliver them justice.

The same ANC government has also rewritten history by obliterating the memory of the Sharpsville massacre from the books of national history. The day had been commemorated as 'Heroes day' and has now been re-launched as 'Humans Rights Day'; this is an attempt to wipe out the political significance of the 21st of March 1960. But we remember the day and those who died.



Three million march for youth labour rights

Three million young people and workers demonstrated and struck across France on the 28 March. It was a historic day of action and a magnificent display of solidarity against the government's attempts to force through unpopular labour laws.

"Now it's time for the street to speak," was how one national newspaper had reacted to the standoff between the French government and the rest of the country over the CPE, first employment contract.

The street duly roared its anger through every major town and city in France, during the one day general strike.

People woke to find that there were no newspapers and that the radio was on strike, as workers responded to the students' call to join them in their struggle against the government.

Schools, colleges and universities not yet affected by the occupation movement of recent weeks shut their doors.

Significant numbers of rail and Metro workers, bus drivers, post and telecom workers, airport staff and energy workers took part in the action. Many workers from the private sector also showed their solidarity with the students.

Nationally the day of action was the largest display of strength by the movement against the laws so far. Demonstrations were held in over 150 towns.

In French capital Paris 700,000 people flooded through the city in the biggest anti-CPE protest yet.

University students, some over two months into their strike, were joined by the high school students who have given new impetus to the movement.

Striking workers, including impressive contingents from all the main trade union federations, took part in the march, along with thousands of young people who came into central Paris from the city's impoverished suburbs.

The demonstration in Paris on the 28 March ended in violence. The international press claimed that the violence

was the fault of 'outsiders' from the mostly black and Arab suburbs – where there were massive protests at the end of last year.

However it was the heavy and intimidating presence of riot police at the end of the march that incited the response they had been looking for, leading to skirmishes as police used water cannon and tear gas on demonstrators.

The proposed new CPE labour law allows employers to sack young people under the age of 26 without giving any reason up to two years into a job.

It is a recipe for low wages and insecure employment and has become a focal point for opposition not just to the government, but to the way that neo-liberalism introduces insecurity and fear into people's everyday lives.

Polls in March showed that not only do 63 percent of the population oppose the government's line on the CPE, but 50 percent have no faith in a market economy.

France's right wing government, led by Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, insists it will stand firm in the face of the extraordinary student-led protest movement against the CPE.

Over the past decade successive French governments have been confronted with movements of resistance against cuts and privatisation.

But neither side has yet been able to deliver a knock-out blow to the other.

Villepin wants to break this cycle of partial victories and defeats that prevent the right from introducing a full programme of hard-line neo-liberal reforms.

University and high school students have been responsible to leading the fight against the law. Thousands of university student have occupied their colleges, while attempting to spread the action to school students and trade unionists.

To build the general strike on the 28 March, students went out to leaflet workplaces. And some trade union branches invited student activists to address their meetings.

But the trade union bureaucracy is also trying to keep control of events.

A leaked internal memo from the CGT, France's main union confederation, instructed strikers on Tuesday to stick to economic slogans against the labour laws and to avoid raising wider political issues.

The student movement, in contrast, has no problem about attacking the neo-liberal government directly and calling for Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin's resignation.

The political stakes are very high. If the government is defeated it will shatter their resolve and setback the neo-liberal project across Europe.

Student voices

"The student movement is on the offensive and shows no signs of slowing down.

The trade union leaders have been more or less forced into calling for a general strike. The pressure for this has come from below.

The mobilisation on the ground has been healthy and it's forced the bureaucracy to move.

There are links between the student movement and workers, but they're not systematic. We've been going to stations, supermarkets and schools to hand out leaflets and build support.'

Christakis Georgiou

'Our university has been on strike for one month now – it's great, but it's hard work sustaining the occupation.

We had very big demonstrations that brought together university students and lycée (high school) students.'

Marie Périn

What does the ANC election landslide really mean?

By Claire Ceruti

Before the elections, the papers were packed with analysis about the delivery protests and the election threat to the ANC from independents. After the election, the "ANC's landslide" became the only story. Even Khutsong, where the turnout was less than 1 percent, was reduced to a footnote.

The ANC breathed a sigh of relief everywhere else except Cape Town. The various independents won a handful of seats compared to the ANC's 66%. Mbeki declared that the people had spoken, and they'd spoken for him. The ANC took votes away from the DA and the IFP. The number of people voting ANC increased since the last election, to 6 million.

But if you fix your gaze entirely on the snapshot of the 66% you'll miss tiny movements out of the corner of your eye that show the direction things can move in.

The elections revealed that the young struggle organizations affiliated to the Anti-Privatisation Forum that contested are still a tiny minority - but a minority that has rapidly build a wider audience for its demands and struggles. Take Operation Khanyisa Movement (OKM) for example. we got one PR seat. But OKM's 4305 votes in Johannesburg was only 1500 fewer than Azapo, a much older organization with a long-standing national profile. In Kliptown, less than 10 activists produced 150 votes; in Pimville 300 votes, far behind the ANC's 2000plus but second to it.

And the real size of this minority is bigger than it appears at first glance, because other sections of the APF contested under different names. Had we all used the same name, the number of votes identified with APF would have gone above 20,000 and forced our name into the national limelight, and cast the ANC's victory in a very different light.

Above all, the elections revealed that there is enormous possibility for this minority to grow exactly by continuing to build on struggle and by tying our councilors to militant mass campaigns. 'The masses', including many of those who would have voted ANC, are much closer to us than either they or the



triumphalists in the ANC might realize.

The figure of 66% for ANC is misleading because it is 66% of those who voted, which is less than half of registered voters, and not every voting-age person was actually registered. When this is taking into account, far from getting two-thirds, only 1 out of 4 people of voting age actually voted for the ANC. More than half of the voting age population has not demonstrated their allegiance one way or the other.

This greatly boosted the ANC's ability to snatch an apparent victory from the jaws of growing disillusionment. In an area of Durban, for example, the shackdwellers decided not to vote at all to 'punish' the ANC councilor who they put in last election only to be betrayed by him. The same councilor simply went to the surrounding rich and middle areas and won the same ward again by promising to clear out the shacks.

Election landslide or not, the election took place against the backdrop of more and more people taking to the streets to reject top-down leadership and demanding what was promised 10 years ago. Some of them undoubtedly voted ANC, but this was not so much a vote of confidence for the ANC's track record as a vote of expectation that things will change.

In a way, it was also a vote of confidence in taking action: people showed

their anger in the streets and suddenly, as if by magic, Thabo Mbeki appeared in a puff of teargas on those same streets promising a new deal: no more corrupt councilors, no more waiting for delivery, no more forgotten poor. Whoever they voted, the lesson is that mass action gets results. That leaves people in a very different frame of mind should the ANC disappoint again, and is already expressed in relation to the elections.

In fact the ongoing labour unrest did not pause for the elections. And no sooner was the election over than there were mass marches contesting the appointment of this mayor in the Eastern Cape or the imposition of that councilor somewhere else.

And there were some important counter-currents in the election. In Khutsong ANC supporters were so angry with the undemocratic relocation that they enforced a boycott. Less widely known is that Samwu, the municipal workers' union, for the first time refused to donate anything to the ANC's election campaign in retaliation for the Ekurhuleni council suing the union for damages during the strike.

Why are those so important when they were so small and localised? Because they are saying, for the first time, that even loyal members of the alliance can retaliate when the party they were loyal to abandons them.



We should also not forget the role of internal battles that surfaced recently in the ANC and the alliance in increasing the ANC vote. Long before the dubious Jacob Zuma entered the picture, there were battles over youth unemployment, internal democracy and jobs surfacing. These create the impression that the ANC is contested. So when a person voted ANC this time, who knows which 'ANC' they are actually voting for? This is not to say that no-one voted ANC because they feel its improved their lives. The ANC vote reached 80% in areas like Limpopo and Mpumalanga. In rural areas and even small towns there, where people live on almost nothing, a little bit of cash from a grant allows you to do things you could never do before. In the cities, by contrast, where people must pay services and rent, a grant might stop starvation but it's a very long way from a better life, and no help at all to those without children or in good health. In cities like Johannesburg and Tshwane, although the ANC share of the vote was still above 60%, the overall turnout was low. In the dense working class areas of Hillbrow and Yeoville just over 30% of people voted.

In a place like Soweto, people might be forgiven for seeing the road improvements and developments like Kliptown Square as a taste of more to come rather than the whole menu. Welcome

as the road improvements are, the hidden truth is that the roads have been built by paying desperate unemployed people next to nothing, and the smart new houses associated with Kliptown square are built on the cheap and will probably start to fall apart in 5 years. Their genuine faith in the ANC is balanced on the knife-edge of whether delivery will be improved or not.

Finally, what really was the alternative to the ANC for those who were disillusioned with it? The situation in Cape Town illustrates their difficulty. The people who voted ANC in the wards also voted ANC for PR – the number of votes are roughly the same. But while the DA won more wards, it got far fewer PR seats than the ANC, while the Independent Democrats got a lot of PR seats and few ward seats. That suggests that people are casting around for something different but not completely confident in the DA. In general, the DA and the IFP are seen as no alternative, and although organizations like the PAC campaigned on basic services it was easy to dismiss this as electioneering in response to the delivery riots. In many areas independents from the ANC contested, but they were often seen as opportunists using the elections to fight internal battles (and sometimes they were just that).

Apart from this there was the question of power. The numbers voting for

groups such as OKM were impressive considering how young these organizations are. However, if you think your vote really matters and you see no other way to influence events, it might seem like a waste to vote for a small organization, even if you like that organization very much – “what could a single councilor do?” These same people can still come to us in struggle.

For us, the thing to remember is that people who voted ANC can still fight and struggle over all sorts of issues – and these elections plus the recent strikes have put struggle back on the agenda as a solution to every grievance.

The same problems that produced the delivery riots are still producing plenty of struggle – security guards, telkom workers and transnet workers to name a few.

The government promised to sort out corrupt councilors but it has not said it will abandon neo-liberalism. Therefore we should not expect that people's hopes for change will be fulfilled.

Far from feeling marginalized by the ANC winning 2/3rds of the seats, we should move fast to link up with the struggles continuing around us. The door to doors, street linings, mass meetings and marches are certainly not over now that the election is done.

An immediate task is to link up with the people who voted for us. Mass meetings in all the areas where people voted for us are urgent, to decide what mass campaigns we'll take up next and how the councilor must support the campaigns. The Suez contract with Jo'burg water is coming up for review, the council is pressing ahead with pre-paid meters, and people in Alex who were promised new houses years ago are still washing away in the floods. We need to stress at these meetings that our power lies on the ground and the councilors are servants to this.

There is no reason at all to confine these meetings only to those who voted OKM. During campaigning we met others who had not registered to vote but who were interested in the “Free for all” message and asked for metres to be removed. And people can vote ANC but still struggle. We should be sending delegations from our organizations to the security guard's strike, for example, and asking our councilors to speak up in support of them.

COURAGE OF PALESTINIAN KIDS



Kids in Hebron, Palestine are blocked by Israeli checkpoint from getting to school.... eventually they have their class in the street.



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Take note!

■ Johannesburg City intends to borrow R320-million from a French agency to install pre-paid meters in Soweto. That's so strange, because Trevor Manuel, the finance minister, is notified of any foreign loan taken by the city council. And we clearly remember him insisting some years ago that the country could not go into debt to finance social welfare or delivery. The city will be repaying the money for 10 years and the interest rate is not fixed, so there is no telling how much we will actually pay in the end.

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