

# WORKERS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Print  
version £2

Political and theoretical journal of Workers International (to Rebuild the 4th International)

No 10

January 2014

Political struggles across the world:

## South Africa, Bosnia, Croatia



Clockwise:

NUMSA members mobilise to defend their movement;

Workers in Bosnia organise to counter desperate poverty;

Croatian Workers' Front agitation wins growing public support.

### In this issue

#### Namibia

WRP election successes.....page 2  
Reply to US Embassy invitation.....page 2

#### Bosnia

Cauldron ready to blow.....page 3

#### Croatia

Invitation to a conference.....page 4  
Workers Front programmatic principles.....page 5  
"We want to abolish capitalism": Interview.....page 7

#### South Africa Dossier

KZN United Front.....page 9  
Stalinist witch-hunt underway.....page 10  
Vavi wades into the discussion.....page 11  
Two opposed conceptions of the socialist revolution.....page 14

### WORKERS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Political and theoretical journal of Workers International to Rebuild the 4th International  
Workers International,  
PO Box 68375,  
London E7 7DT, UK  
workersinternational.info  
Email:  
info@workersinternational.info

# WRP election successes

Workers Revolutionary Party to Rebuild the Fourth International is a member of the Workers International for the Rebuilding of the Fourth International.

Its leadership emanated from the liberation struggle of Namibia and were part of the socialists in the SWAPO Youth League, which in 1976 unsuccessfully challenged the SWAPO Leadership for all-encompassing corruption and imperialist collaboration due to imperialist intervention.

In 1984 we started building our party clandestinely and stood in the forefront of the struggle against the terror campaign and mass killings of SWAPO members by the SWAPO leadership in exile in Angola and Zambia.

In 1988 our party called out the mass protests of 4 May 1988 against South Africa just prior to independence obtained in 1989.

Since 1990 we have fought on all fronts on issues wracking the working

class and the colonial status quo maintained by the colonial ruling classes through a caretaker boss-boy SWAPO regime.

We dealt with trade union issues, the homeless, the landless and workers who were in struggle over the past 24 years.

We participated in elections to articulate a workers programme and self-determination for national groups.

We did not stand in the 2009 elections due to our work with mass workers groups such as the TCL miners whose pensions were stolen, teachers who were being pauperized, fuel workers who were being brutalized, the Truth and Justice Committee seeking historical restitution of history and the landless whom the regime sought to bulldoze after they had taken their land by themselves.

We took part in the 28 November 2014 general elections, incorporating former soldiers of South Africa who

were forcefully conscripted during the colonial era and whose pensions were stolen by the SWAPO regime, and won two seats in the National Assembly to the consternation of the bourgeoisie.

The media speculate on how a party which has not made one rally or campaigned could obtain such a high number of votes and for that matter a communist party.

Our votes varied between 1.5 and 2% over this vast country (1,600 km north to south, from central Namibia to north west 1,600 km, east to west 800 km.)

Our votes came mostly from organized groups and from supporters of our work over 24 years.

**(We plan to produce a fuller report on the Namibian election campaign and results in the next issue of Workers' International Press - Editor)**

## **Letter:**

to Mr. Charles Lobodell, Political Officer, American Embassy, Windhoek, re: Meeting



## **WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY TO REBUILD THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL**

P.O. Box 3349 Windhoek

Fax: 088641065 Tel: 061-260647

[jacobusjosob@ymail.com](mailto:jacobusjosob@ymail.com)

10 December 2014

Dear Sir,

You have requested a meeting with me to discuss:

1. Our position on the election.
2. Our programme for the next 5 years in parliament.

We have delegated Mrs Erica Beukes, Jacobus Josob and our two parliamentarians to meet with you on Thursday, 14:00, 11 December 2014. As indicated I will not be able to attend.

Our delegation is to discuss the following concerns.

In 1976 Dr Henry Kissinger on behalf of the American Government requested Sam Nujoma to get rid of the "radicals" in SWAPO. The "radicals" were SWAPO Youth League and PLAN fighters who were demanding a stop to the corruption of the SWAPO leader-

ship and a Congress to call the leadership to order and chart out a political programme centred on self-determination. This leadership were using warehouses of weapons, food, clothing, medicine and general provisions as their wholesalers while PLAN fighters were dying of hunger in the camps.

They were also opposing the Sole and Authentic Representative status of SWAPO bestowed on it by the United Nations Organisation. The SWAPO leadership was tribal and did not represent the Namibian Nation.

Dr Kissinger also had talks with President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia.

Shortly thereafter the Zambian Army rounded up the Plan and Youth League members and started killing them. The survivors were kept at Mbaroma Camp in Zambia.

As a result of the Kissinger initiative, SWAPO in 1978 started building 3 metre deep dungeons in which it threw hundreds of SWAPO members culling them regularly by firing squad and hurling some of them from a mountain cliff in Southern Angola. Thousands died in this manner until 1989.

Three days before the Cassinga massacre the SWAPO leadership ordered the Mbaroma Camp inmates to be dressed in army fatigues and brought to Cassinga in southern Angola to be massacred on 4 May 1978.

Sam Nujoma during this reign of terror caused the 11-year old son of Martha Ford (née Beukes) to be killed as reprisal for her criticism of their treacherous politics and sexual abuse of young girls. Mrs Ford was a member of the Politbureau.

The ultimate consequence of this was that the issues of self-determination and civilization was deferred to today. We now sit with a kleptocracy which ravages the country and its people like a swarm of locusts.

Our delegation will also inform you of the electoral fraud which has become endemic in this country. The very sovereignty of the country has been shown to be void with the Indian voting

machines. This has been declared "free and fair" by the European Union while the German Supreme Court has declared voting machines to be intransparent and open to fraud. Even Universal Franchise has been assailed and nullified.

Our concern is that the Kissinger Initiative put an indelible question mark on your invitation. We cannot be blamed for suspecting that this may be

the beginning of American intervention in Namibian affairs which bodes ill for Namibia, ourselves and our party.

If that is the case, we demand that you desist from continuing the Kissinger initiative.

We write this letter for the historical record, the laws of which are stronger than any power.

*Hewat Beukes*

Authorised Representative.

---

## Bosnia

# A cauldron ready to blow?

RADOSLAV PAVLOVIC recorded a day of high drama as workers in Tuzla marched to the border

**Sunday 28 December, 2014: 09:00:**

As I write, high-tension developments are unfolding in the class struggle in Bosnia-Herzegovina. No-one can tell in advance how it will play out.

Ten minutes ago, 200 workers from 4 firms in Tuzla – Dita, Konjuh, Aida and Livnica (detergents, timber processing and furniture-making, shoemaking and a foundry) – gathering at the Croatian border in Orasje, decided to actually leave the country and go looking for work and a crust of bread anywhere in Europe. They don't even know if they will be let over the border, but what they do know is that this is their last hope; they are fighting a life-and-death struggle at the highest political level. They have nothing to lose: they weren't even able to afford cheap sweets to give their children for Christmas.

### **Tensions**

Tensions have been building up for years, and it has picked up pace since the revolt in February whose sparks ignited explosions in big towns all over the country. But none of their demands were met. What's worse was the feeling hundreds of thousands of workers in this country had that they were being treated like worse than beggars, like idiots. Over recent months, especially in recent weeks, they have knocked on every door, lobbied all the politicians, demonstrated in the street, occupied cross-roads, even slept on the steps outside the canton government building so that freshly-shaven cabinet ministers could meet them to examine the unbearable situation. They got nowhere!

The thousands of workers who used to be employed at these factories are today down to a few hundred. The factories are publicly-owned but con-

demned to death by the public authorities on behalf of private business people who are mostly Mafiosi. The Bosnian state, which came out of the Dayton agreement with three heads of state, two entities and nine cantons simply does not have a clue what to do with its working class. This ramshackle entity, run under the eye of a European satrap, would make many a former colony blush. Year after year, factory after factory, the economy has been left to rot, industrial plant has gone to rack and ruin and corruption has flourished at every level. The international market has left Bosnia-Herzegovina by the wayside like a bunch of beggars unable or unwilling to work for Bangladeshi wages – \$35 a month – when you need 200 euros a month to survive in Bosnia. The only ones who get anything in Bosnia are the leading officials, all hand-in-glove, whether nationalist or social-democrat, and a state-of-the-art riot squad with all the latest gear.

From time to time over recent years the canton government has made one-off special payments to the compulsorily unemployed. Then they promised 400KM (convertible marks) or 200 euros, equivalent to a month's salary, for the end of the year, but they changed their minds. Apparently they had no legal basis for the offer, there was no credit line available, etc.

### **Response**

Then, faced with a determined response from workers, they started to haggle, offering 120KM one day, then 180 KM the next, then 220KM (drawn from the Red Cross) and coupons for the rest of the 400KM.

That did it! Two hundred workers decided to get up and leave their country, "leave Bosnia to the gangsters" and go anywhere else in Europe. They

walked the 75km from Tuzla to Orasje in three days, in good order and determined, for all the cramps and blisters. Determination grew as country people, young people, townsfolk came out as they passed and offered them everything they could.

### **Solidarity**

A wind of general solidarity breathed on the highroad. Even the cops who came with them to control the traffic felt like part of the march. Medical personnel, all kinds of benevolent associations, former combatants, they all gave without hesitation, while at the government building in Tuzla, all was total paralysis and confusion. The whole town was ready to explode if the slightest thing went wrong for the marchers. With mobile phones, communications are immediate and total. The other night, the canton government (who are still in place, although they have actually resigned?!) intervened to beg the marchers to stop. But their hands were empty, since they needed authorisation from the canton parliament before they could offer anything. People got more and more angry, saying: "They really do take us for idiots!"

Only minutes ago they were thanking a head teacher (who had loaned them his school for the night) and set out for the Sava river. Before they went, one of them threatened to throw themselves into the icy waters of the Sava, which flooded a third of the country last spring, if they were not allowed to leave the country. Bosnian and Croatian police chiefs have said in advance they will only let people with passports through, but only 23 of the 200 have one. What will they do? They have declared a hunger strike under the starry Bosnian flag that marks the

border of the fleur-de-lys State. Support from a Croatian trade union at Osijek, a town 60km away, raises hopes that comrades in Croatia, where everybody has been talking about a Workers Front for the last two weeks, will make a symbolic gesture of support, a symbolism beyond price at so tense a moment. The coming hours will cast a long shadow in future over the class struggle of Tuzla workers. Either the government will give way all along the line, or it will set the whole town alight! There is no room left for half-measures on either side. 200 euros will see people through one month. A victory or a defeat for workers will last years.

To end with, this is what Hasan UZICANIN, a trade union leader at "Aida", said ten minutes ago:

"We don't know what is going to happen from one minute to the next. We don't know what to expect. The spokesperson for the Osijek trade unions (in Croatia) have declared total support. I don't know if they can help us to get over the border.

#### "Trailed around"

"They've trailed us around shamelessly, we want to leave this country because you can't live here. I'm 53 years old and my 18 years' service at the company means nothing to any of them. I've got nothing to live off, although I'm employed at a state-owned business."

**10.30:** Bosnian police are preventing them from crossing the border and threatening them. One woman worker

is ill and has been taken away in an ambulance. It is snowing hard. Hasan says: "Either they let us all through, or no-one will get through!"

**Postscript at 14.30 Sunday 28 December 2014:** Today the wall round Europe was too high for the workers of Tuzla. The border police were under very strict instructions not to let anybody through the border without a passport! Very few did have one.

#### Big brothers

The European Union is first of all two big brothers, then the smaller ones, then the children by a second marriage, and then the more or less distant cousins, finally the ones born out of wedlock ... The massacre at Srebrenica in full sight and with the full knowledge of the whole of Europe twenty years ago stirred profound emotions at the time but that doesn't seem to count for much on the money markets and stock exchanges today ...

Even the weather was against the workers: It got very cold and it snowed heavily. With the average age closer to 50 than 30, exhaustion after three days on the road left the women hardly able to stand. A hundred of the toughest ones stood their ground in front of the border post and the implacable police for several hours, the abyss of Europe yawning in front of them, the abyss of Bosnia behind ...

The mayor of Tuzla was elected by workers' votes and was happy to provide the after-sales service. Three

buses were sent to Orasje at ten in the morning. At 13:30 they set off back to Tuzla. A whole hospital was requisitioned to receive the marchers who were completely exhausted, for the Bosnian state looks after those in its care, even if that doesn't extend to giving them enough to eat. There would be warm drinks and the famous Čevapi kebabs. They even hired six cabs to get everybody home! Yesterday they couldn't raise a bus fare, today everybody gets a taxi home. It's a miracle!

#### Bitterness

But the miracle only fools those who want to be fooled. Edina ALICIC, president of the union at Aida, swallows her bitterness and says: "You had to go through it to understand it. It's something we will remember for the rest of our lives. And it's not over yet. We won't stop."

Even as I write this, citizens are heading for the meeting-place at the canton government office to form a welcome party. Everybody remembers this building was set on fire last February. Hasan, who wanted to go on but not to let everybody get dispersed, says they are going straight there "to see if they haven't freshened it up a bit in the five days we were away. If not, maybe we could sort it out and put it back as good as new so everybody can admire it". Work may not start tonight, but it will one day soon.

## Croatia

# Necessity of a broad workers' front – Attack is the best defence!

Invitation to a conference in Zagreb 31 January - 1 February

Workers' Front (<https://www.radnicka-fronta.org>) invites you to attend and give a talk at the trade union conference which will be held in Zagreb at the Centre for Culture and Information (KIC) 31 January - 1 February 2015 (Saturday and Sunday)

This trade union conference is the continuation of the past two conferences organized by Workers' Struggle under the working title "Workers' resistance to the destruction of companies" in 2012 and 2013, which tried to help create space for discussion, tighter connections and a network for information exchange between trade unionists, as well as social movement activists, and contribute to the strengthening of labour movement in

Croatia. The Third Trade Union Conference, "Necessity of a broad workers' front – attack is the best defence!" is organized by Workers' Front, an initiative aiming to become a workers' party which should give additional importance to this conference.

In the light of increasing poverty of a large majority of the population, declining economy and unprecedented social stratification, as well as a joint attack on the workers' rights by all political parties and business elite, we intend to question past strategies of organizing workers' resistance and offer a vision of an alternative model which would unite trade union and political levels of struggle into a

stronger entity.

The aim of this conference is to exchange trade union experiences in terms of workers' struggle, forge closer links between militant trade unions and point out the necessity of labour unions for all workers.

We think that it is of essential importance for unionists and activists to join forces in a common resistance against this social and economic system and its supporters – the political elite. Some of the most honest and active Croatian trade union leaders will be present at the conference, such as Mario Iveković (Novi sindikat/New Trade Union), Mijat Stanić (HAC / Croatian Motorways),

**For more information regarding the previous conferences, please refer to the following links:**

<http://www.radnickaborba.org/2012/11/22/sindikalna-konferencija-radnicki-otpor-unistavanju-poduzeca>

<http://www.radnickaborba.org/2012/12/03/veliki-uspjeh-sindikalne-konferencije-radnicke-borbe>

<http://www.radnickaborba.org/2012/12/12/deklaracija-sindikalne-konferencije>

<http://www.radnickaborba.org/2013/03/14/uspjesno-odrzavna-druga-sindikalna-konferencija-radnicke-borbe>

Željko Stipić (Preporod School Trade Union), Zvonko Šegvić (Brodosplit Shipyard) and Denis Geto (HEP/Croatian Electricity Company). Alongside the trade unions leaders will be members of the Workers' Front who will present their opinions regarding political, but also trade union landscape in Croatia. Beside domestic unionists, we have also invited international speakers to the third

union conference: unionist Goran Lukič from the largest Slovenian trade union organisation ZSSS (Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia) members of *Združena levica* from Slovenia (the United Left) and activists and workers from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We hope to see you at our conference in Zagreb.

If you have any further questions,

do not hesitate to contact us.

Best regards,

On behalf of Workers' Front:

*Dimitrije Birač*: +186 99 594 9485

*Denis Geto*: +186 98 165 568

*Marko Milošević*: +186 95 659 6149

[kontakt@radnicka-fronta.org](mailto:kontakt@radnicka-fronta.org)

Croatia:

# Programmatic Principles of the Workers' Front

**1. The Workers' Front** is a political organization of workers, unemployed, retirees and students, fighting for a radical change of political and economic relations for the benefit of all oppressed and those who live off their work, for realisation of their social demands, and for protection and extension of their rights.

Unlike the existing parliamentary parties in Croatia, including those which in a populist and opportunist way occasionally appeal to workers, the Workers' Front does not aim to establish itself as a traditional political party. Our goal is not to get integrated in the institutions of the system and secure parliamentary seats, salaries and pensions through petty politicking or to advocate only surface reforms, make different coalitions and compromise with those who are responsible for the current situation in the country.

The goal of the Workers' Front is to bring about a radical change of the society we live in through a political struggle, both on economic and political levels. Therefore, participation in elections would only be one of the means to achieve our goals. In order to be able to accomplish this, we must build an organization rooted in workplaces and connected with everyday social struggle of the disenfranchised.

Unlike the existing political parties, our organization will be truly demo-

cratic within itself but act in a disciplined and effective manner. We strive for an organization of activists who would continuously be engaged in trade union, women's rights and students' movement, as well as in the struggle for the rights of all oppressed social groups.

We strive to be a political voice of the social movement which would gather into its ranks 99% of the exploited people in capitalism, and finally, to be an organization that would fight for an essential change of the social order and for transfer of the totality of political power from the hands of the political elite, large capital and banks to the hands of the people.

**2. Capitalism and the so-called "free market"** are directed against workers and the majority in society and inevitably lead to their exploitation and poverty, both in Croatia and on a global scale. They form an unstable system which exists in the periods between two global crises and in each one of them hundreds of thousands of workers are thrown into the streets, their lives being destroyed, all in order to save the profits of the richest few.

The accumulation of profits on the backs of workers, unemployed, students and pensioners and against the interests of the majority, is the motivating drive of those that rule society, while everything else like employment, food security, housing issues, etc., is just

a by-product of the profit economy which may get only partially realized, but never to the full extent and never for society as a whole.

A fundamental characteristic of capitalism is the irreconcilable difference between the two basic classes: capitalists, holding monopoly over the means of production, such as banks, companies, factories, chain stores, hotels etc., and making profit through the work of others, and workers, i.e. all those who rent their labour to survive.

This antagonism cannot be resolved in any other way but by the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and its political system, which represents the ultimate goal of the Workers' Front, achievable only on a broader scale.

In Croatia, the newly made capitalists, or *tycoons*, assisted by their political allies, i.e. parliamentary parties, have destroyed most of industry, which is a natural consequence of the drive for private profit, rather than the interests of the entire society, and sold everything that took decades and many generations of workers to create.

The representatives of large capital and the powers that be keep cynically saying to the poor, "you have to work harder and give up more" trying to sell them the twisted logic that they will be better off with lower salaries and fewer rights.



The Workers' Front will uncompromisingly confront that kind of logic and system. We want the exploiters and political elite to know that "the time has come for you to pay". Our principles are that everyone deserves a job that pays a decent wage; the burden of the economic crisis needs to be shifted from the backs of the poor onto the backs of the richest; democracy needs to stop being an empty phrase used by capital to hide its dictatorship and become social reality through which working people can realize their interests; all privatizations and sales of state assets need to be stopped immediately while all basic resources of public interest should be nationalized; implementation of workers' control over the entire industry.

Since the aforementioned is in severe conflict with the principles of the capitalist system, as well as with the interests of the ruling class and political elite, the realization of these goals is possible only with the abolition of capitalism.

**3. Although recently founded,** the Workers' Front does not start from scratch. The rich history that inspires and teaches us is a hundred-year-old history of the international trade union and workers' political movement. It is precisely the persistent and devoted struggle of workers organized into trade unions and parties during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that won us the political and material rights we still enjoy today but which have been increasingly under attack, including an eight-hour day, universal suffrage and social protection.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is only the trade union and political struggle of workers that can, as a first step, counter neoliberalism and bring new victories to those who live off their wages alone, and then make possible the realization of a new society in which the currently oppressed working class, together with allied groups, will take power.

In accordance with the aforementioned, the Workers' Front will strive for the workers' movement to return to its revolutionary roots and reintroduce it openly into politics. Populist politics and political trade-offs will be confronted with a clear workers' social program, and preposterous appeals to the common sense and mercy of the ruling class will be replaced with activism, struggle and pressure from below.

Furthermore, the Workers' Front will try to help the development of true and revolutionary trade unionism and



*Sisak ironworks in the Slavonski Brod area in Eastern Croatia used to employ 14,000 workers but numbers are now down to 800*

support trade union activities while integrating the WF members into them to create the synthesis of political and trade union activism.

We will strive for reforms of current trade unions as well as for transfer of as much influence as possible to the mass of trade union members and their democratization, for the rejection of the current bureaucratic rigidity and accommodationist politics now carried out by the leadership of the biggest labour unions, so they can become one of the most important tools in the workers' struggle.

**4. The rule of big capital** has long outgrown national borders. The complete domination of corporations and banks, uniformity of neoliberal measures implemented within Europe and beyond, and the most powerful nations in the world that pursue imperial politics and continuously launch military campaigns in order to preserve their interests, influence processes in each country, including Croatia.

It is impossible to fight for the rights of workers, students, unemployed, retirees and other oppressed groups only within the borders of one country.

Therefore, the Workers' Front bases its views and activities on full solidarity with all workers and social struggles in the Balkans, Europe and the world, supporting and trying to actively participate in the global movement of dissatisfaction with capitalism and undemocratic systems, including the capitalist parliamentary system whose rise we have witnessed all over the world, from the USA to Spain and

Greece to the Arab world. Furthermore, the Workers' Front believes in the need for unity of all workers and all oppressed people in the struggle against the dictatorship of big capital, which is why it most vehemently opposes all the ideologies and movements (nationalism, chauvinism, racism, homophobia, fascism, clericalism, etc.) that want to divide the oppressed, keep them alienated and turn them against one another.

All the oppressed share the same interests, which can only be realized in unity and solidarity with others. The Workers' Front supports the creation of a strong and coordinated European workers' movement and close connections between all the oppressed in the world. Consequently, the Workers' Front solidarises with all nationally oppressed peoples whose lands are occupied and their language and cultural rights denied.

**5. Above all short term goals,** the fundamental goal of the Workers' Front which determines its activities is the abolition of the capitalist economic and political system and the institution of social ownership over the means of production, built on principles of workers' management of economy and the political power of the working classes, using democratic decision-making to address all questions of direct interest to people across the board – at the level of the workplace, organization, neighborhood, city, and finally, the whole country.

# 'Yes, we want to abolish capitalism'

An interview with DIMITRIJE BIRAC

*One of the founders of Workers' Front says: "Our final goal and the character of the party are anti-capitalist, and our current aim is to show that all the problems we talk about, such as unemployment and the collapse in production, are consequences of the socio-economic system, and not of the success or failure of this or that economic policy".*

**Q: Worker's Front has been organising for six months or so, but last week you decided to show yourselves in public. Who belongs to your organisation beside the linguist Mate Kapovic and the trade unionist Denis Geto?**

DB: Mainly young people, activists, workers, students, unemployed people. We will introduce some of them to show that it's not limited to a tiny group.

Our organisation is working along two lines. The first is to work on the infrastructures in different towns, the second is to form links with working people, to support workers' protest demonstrations and to get in touch with various trade unionists, particularly those who want to put up a struggle.

We are open to all those who are interested in changing society in line with our principles and transitional demands.

**Q: You have said the future party will not have a classic hierarchical structure, but is there a formally constituted leadership at the moment?**

DB: We think that it is necessary to function in a more democratic way, with rank and file members controlling the leadership. Of course there has to be an organised leadership, but for the moment it's still all coming together.

We still have a lot of work to do on the organisation and structure, but what we can say is that we are preparing a workers' trade union conference where we will try to bring together a number of militant trade unions.

We have meetings where we discuss uniting the workers movement, and in that sense we are in touch with trade unionists like Zeljko Luksic of HZ (Croatian Railways), Zvonko Segvic of Brodosplit shipyard, and trade unionists in the power and chemical sector independent union (EKN) and the "Feniks" Post Office union.

We have also been in touch with Mija Stanic about a referendum over the plans to raise money by selling or



*Dimitrije Birac*

leasing off parts of the highway network.

**Q: Apart from a few positive comments, most of the media have ignored the appearance of the Anti-Capitalist Party?**

DB: Most of the commercial media have ignored us. On the other hand we did get a reaction from alleged adherents of the neo-classical school of economic thought, who have gained a monopoly position in economic science over recent decades. They do everything in their power to depict us as charlatans and try to discredit us by saying we are not real working people.

According to them, only a blue-collar factory worker with a moustache and a spanner in his hand can count as a working person.

The fact that we are getting resistance from these two quarters only goes to show we are doing the right thing.

The origins of the crisis lie in the system itself.

**Q: How do you see economic reality, as against these people?**

DB: We think that the profound causes of the crisis in Croatian society are that for the last 20 years a political caste which is the product of this socio-economic system caused further social deterioration, the way people are alienated, and the degradation of work.

All the other problems flow from these three main ones, and behind all these processes is the mechanism our economists know nothing about because economic science has dropped the study of reality, whereas this mechanism is the one through which a minority appropriates values created by the rest of society.

If you postulate that it is more essential to satisfy the needs of capital arising from private appropriation than those of society, then society finds itself removed from all control over work as a whole, over the value created, and then we have a spontaneous process which society cannot control.

Economists who are militant supporters of private capital may well proclaim how rational and efficient it is, but in fact it is a fundamentally irrational system, perhaps the most irrational in the whole of history.

This is the situation: technical progress is greater than ever, but people are working harder and harder and longer and longer for wages which buy them less and less.

**Q: So in Croatia there are fewer people working more and more, while the others become surplus to requirements?**

DB: It's one more proof that the system is irrational, because it cannot use the social potential that is there to develop society's productive forces. But it is also one of its characteristics, because when you have lots of unemployed, the price of labour power falls and in that way, people accept any wages just to get work. All these contradictions show that the necessary structural change cannot just come from the economic policy of a political party, since the

source is precisely in the socio-economic system.

**Q: What do you propose?**

DB: We propose a cut in the working week from 40 hours to 35 hours at existing wage levels to increase the number of those in work.

We propose to raise the relative wage, or to put it another way, the part of the wealth the worker creates which comes back to that person, to lower the retirement age, and increase pensions and the minimum wage, to cap the spread between minimum and maximum wages at a ratio of 1:4, to place banks under social control and other steps to develop society, not profits.

We should put a stop to privatisation.

**Q: The tendencies you describe are present everywhere. What can the State do to counteract them?**

DB: We are not working for some sort of utopian society, but something that flows from the mode of production itself.

We are not enemies of technology, but we are against the capitalist application of technology which means we see the productivity of labour rise, but that is not done for the benefit of society, nor in order to shorten labour time and the proportion of our life we spend at work.

On the contrary, that is getting longer and longer, and the surplus value created is more and more appropriated and more and more used to create new value.

The data shows that while Gross Domestic Product (GDP) keeps rising, globally and in Croatia, wages have risen more slowly than GDP. In that sense we are afraid that you cannot

proceed just by redistributing the profits and the value created, since you can introduce taxes, but you cannot by doing so change the system which creates the inequalities.

We see that in periods of economic upswing, capital only grows because it does not pay labour adequately and then, in a period of crisis, the only way capital can get out of it is to reduce the price of labour power so that investments once again become profitable.

We do not say that the state on its own can resolve this problem. Capitalism is a global system, and people should co-operate and organise society in common.

But it is possible to set an example by lowering the working week to 35 hours, so that others can take the question on board.

## Some fascists seen off – but no cause for complacency



**Saturday 29 November 2014, Greek Embassy, Holland Park, London:**

Fascists had planned to picket the Greek Embassy in support of Golden Dawn – the Greek fascist organisation, several of whose MPs are currently in jail on various charges including murder, weapons offences and attacks on immigrants.

In the event about 20 turned up but they were seen off, after about an hour, by anti-fascists who had assembled some time before.

Polish fascists, who were reported to be behind the picket of the Greek embassy, are beginning to organise amongst the emigre community in the UK. They organised an attack on a music festival in Tottenham recently.

The counter demonstration was called by several groups: Greek Solidarity Campaign, Unite against Fascism and Anti Fascist Action for Greece (AAfG). Later a group of young anarchists arrived to give much appreciated support.

Speakers welcomed the necessary collaboration of groups from a variety of political backgrounds.

A National Union of Journalists (NUJ) member spoke of the increasing

anti-immigrant noise coming out of the media, including the BBC, reflecting the capitulation of the main bourgeois parties in United Kingdom to the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), a right-wing nationalist and anti-immigration party which hopes to do well at the general election in May.

Greek comrades outlined the extreme social dislocation, unemployment and social hardship in Greece as a result of the EU bankers' imposed austerity measures. This is the background to the rise of Golden Dawn (GD) – a fully-fledged fascist party which openly applauds the Hitler regime and organises attacks, including murder, on immigrant populations, trade unionists, socialists and anti-fascists. They are currently the third grouping in parliament with close ties to the police and various sections of the state and the ruling class.

The fact that the Greek state has, for now, felt constrained to "crack down" on GD shouldn't for a moment convince anyone that the fight against fascism can be left to the state to take care of.

To quote an interesting leaflet distributed by Anti-Fascist Action for Greece (AAfG) on the counter-picket: "The political servants of Greek capitalism are neither ready nor willing to step aside on account of a potential coup by fascist forces, and nor is the Greek ruling class prepared to resort to a fascist solution before exhausting every parliamentary means to implement the most reactionary regressive ant-labour and anti-democratic laws in Greece's history."

In UK we have somewhat different situation. An anti-immigrant party – UKIP – gaining support due to the bourgeois parties' programme of austerity and a widespread disaffection with "normal" politics. It's not yet a fascist organisation but such a container could easily be filled with a different content.

So long as workers and other people get no answers to basic issues like housing and unemployment from the main bourgeois parties and socialists fail to construct an alternative, the potential for a fascist movement is there. There is no room for complacency.

**Nick Bailey**



This special feature on political developments in South Africa includes a report on steps by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) towards establishing a United Front, a warning of a growing witch-hunt against NUMSA and her United Front allies, with particular reference to a recent speech by the South Africa Communist Party General Secretary “Blade” Nzimande, and responses to recent written and oral statements by Cosatu General Secretary Zwelinzime Vavi and NUMSA General Secretary Irvin Jim

10 December 2014: Media Statement

# KwaZulu Natal United Front

<http://unitedfrontsa.wordpress.com/>

It has been realized that the Government is failing to meet the needs of most if not all poor communities. This is evidently shown by a significant number of community struggles such as road blockade, burning of tyres, etc. While on the other hand the government is using the state through police brutality to smash those communities that are aggrieved.

This led NUMSA in its Special National Congress (SNC) that took place in December 2013 to take resolution of being a catalyst or a facilitator in forming the United Front (UF), since most NUMSA members are the victims of the policies promulgated by the government.

For instance E-Tolling, affects the poorest of the poor directly. If the bread cost R10 including delivery cost, the owner of the bakery will add E-Toll amount into the price of bread, of which the poorest of the poor may end-up paying R12.

Likewise the National Development Plan looks like a good plan, but most people hardly look at how it is going to be funded. It talks about infrastructures like roads to be built, funding coming from users, of which it will be through the e-tolling system.

It is evident that in most countries outside Europe where Western countries have intervened; the situation gets worse than before. That means in South Africa we need to coordinate these protests in order not to be hijacked by agencies of the West. And everything should and must be from below (Bottom Up Approach).

On 15 November 2014, the KwaZulu Natal (KNZ) had a UF provincial workshop to address the Numsa idea of a United Front. The people who attended the workshop adopted the



*A United Front meeting*

Numsa idea of the UF which is independent from Numsa. A steering committee was elected of 15 people around KZN.

The steering committee had its first meeting on the 7th of December 2014. On that meeting, 5 interim office bearers were elected, who are Themba Mchunu: Chairperson, Bonginkosi Khanyile: Deputy Chairperson, Bandile Mdlalose: Secretary, Philani Nduli: Deputy Secretary, Gcina Makhoba: Coordinator.

The role of the KZN UF is to form UF local structures and encourage communities to form their own community organizations that can affiliate to UF; to dismantle the silo system that communities and organizations are working within, to address the issues faced in KZN emanating from the government policies.

The UF is not a political party, not affiliated to any political party, not a trade union nor a structure formed to attack or being against the governing party, but it is formed to unite the Civil Society to speak in one voice as the united body.

Having observed many community protests, such as blocking roads, burning tyres, etc. demonstrates that

these protests are genuine but not coordinated. And it is the fact that the real struggle is not about short term reforms, but it is all about struggling for economic equality, which will assist in closing the inequality gap in the society.

Some of the activities that we are going to start with, to deal with these challenges till the end of March 2015 are as follows:-

**Water and man-made diseases:** Mtu-batuba

**Transit Camps:** Shaka's Head  
**“Grey Water”:** Inanda

Within the three campaigns we will also be engaging with researchers and academics to be assisting communities in the fact-finding and scientific evidence.

There will also be political education workshops that will be taking place from time to time in various community areas.

On 13 and 14 December 2014 the KZN UF office bearers will be joining the United Front National Assembly to be held in Johannesburg this coming weekend.

As we go, we shall be doing the formative assessment, and then do the summative assessment by the end of March 2015.

# Stalinist witch-hunt paves the way for violent repression

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

"The good example set by Slovo epitomises the importance of unity in the struggle for liberation, the unity of our Alliance; the unity of our broad movement; the unity of the working class; the broad unity of our people!"

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

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

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

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

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

And it is true that the working class has not "abandoned its independent class objectives", but it has had to turn to its militant trade unions to fight for them, since the SACP is not an "independent class organisation". The SACP certainly does not fight for real "independent class objectives", as the reply of COSATU General Secretary Zwelanzima Vavi to SACP Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Cronin (also discussed in another article), for all its very diplomatic language, makes abundantly clear.

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

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

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

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

But "the abandonment of socialist perspectives and ... a surrender of working class leadership" by the SACP leadership is precisely what Zwelanzima

Vavi describes at length in his letter (discussed elsewhere in this magazine).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

broader union leadership's plans to form a United Front.

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

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

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

"Banda's car was broken into last week and Bond's office was ransacked and his hard drive was stolen last Sunday. It appears as if a second break-

in was attempted, but this time only the lock to his office was damaged."

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

"The strategy to divide Cosatu, including attempts to separate it from the Alliance" (it is the SACP which sent its supporters into Cosatu to expel NUMSA, as Vavi complains!) "represents a classic imperialist strategy to defeat revolutionary movements ... The initiative led by the Numsa leadership fits perfectly into the same imperialist strategy to try and dislodge the ANC-led Alliance from power. It is therefore important that we understand the idea of a 'united front' and 'workers' party' from this political angle."

It will soon become urgent to build international capacity to defend NUMSA, its leaders and members and the United Front it is establishing from a state-inspired Stalinist witch hunt. Fortunately the United Front provides an excellent framework for explaining and mobilising such support and discussing the way forward. Real unity between those who struggle in a principled way for the interests of the

oppressed (and not unity with the imperialist exploiters) can and must contain and accommodate real diversity as activists and organisations establish a clear understanding of their past, present and future while struggling together for that future.

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

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

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

## Vavi wades into the discussion

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

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

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

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

The basic division in the political crisis is between the working class and wider layers of working people on the one hand and the bourgeoisie and its representatives in the Alliance on the other. That was made very clear when armed police opened fire on striking rock-drillers at Marikana on 16 August 2012 and in the way political forces

have lined up subsequently. It is therefore very hard to understand why in his reply Vavi makes no reference of any kind at all to the events at Marikana. The silence on this issue robs his remarks of meaning in a certain sense. It belies the very reality he attempts to portray at considerable length in the letter.

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

It is a crisis in which the developing leadership of the working class lies in the hands of the NUMSA officeholders, who correctly take the fight through all parts of the Alliance, while at the same time building their movement in a very open way in the United Front and among their international contacts. Their insistence upon their right to belong to COSATU and fight within the

federation testifies to their understanding of their responsibilities towards their class and the masses in general. Big, indeed historical, political issues are at stake. They cannot be resolved by walking away from this fight or displacing it elsewhere.

Vavi comes across from this letter as a man of a somewhat different kidney from the NUMSA leaders. He describes very tellingly the abusive nature of the working class's relationship (through the COSATU federation) with the SACP and the government, but also he is looking to restore a relationship that is damaged, appealing to common sense and goodwill to overcome a rocky patch in a fundamentally sound, if occasionally violent, marriage.

For all its diplomatic language, however, this long letter makes it absolutely clear that it is the government which is smashing up the ANC-SACP alliance along class lines on behalf of bourgeois interests, and that many leading figures in the SACP are up to their necks in collaboration with this government. It stands out that, to say the very least, the

SACP fails to provide leadership for the working class, deceives and betrays the interests of that class, uses prevarication and double-talk while class interests are attacked and that, having stood back while neo-liberal "reforms" are inflicted, belatedly adapts to pressure from workers' organisations via bombastic rhetoric not backed by actions. The leaders of the SACP are the splitters. Vavi is not just any member of the SACP: he is the elected secretary of the trade union confederation Cosatu.

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

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

Vavi goes through a long list of issues which have been contentious. His treatment of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution plan (GEAR) provides a good example of the problems he is describing. Vavi recalls that the SACP statement of 14 June 1996 welcomed and "fully backed" GEAR, insisted it "situates itself as a framework for the National Democratic Revolution", asserted that it "resists" "free market dogmatism" and "envisages a key economic role for the public sector" and "reaffirms and reinforces the bilateral (between government and unions) National Framework Agreement process." The SACP statement went on that it "envisages the extension of a regulated market and it introduces an innovative approach to flexibility. It rejects laissez-faire market-driven flexibility and instead calls for negotiated regional and sectoral flexibility."

### "The opposite of the truth ..."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vavi praises the SACP's policies on the banks and the land, but points out: "But deeper analysis suggests that it has studiously avoided anything which could be construed as taking on the

state ... where it has raised criticisms they have tended to be muted, or so 'nuanced' as to be ineffective or simply sending out confusing messages".

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

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

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

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

According to Vavi, the SACP neglects macro-economic policy and believes "we must rather focus on micro-economic policy, industrial policy, etc. In this respect the Party has shared

common ground with many conservatives inside and outside the state..." But he explains that this is a problem because "macro-economic policy is the state's major lever to drive development". He goes on: "Our progressive IPAP policy has failed to stem deindustrialisation ... because the incorrect macro-economic policies are in place".

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



*Cosatu General Secretary Vavi (Photo: Oxfam)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The SACP can't say that we want worker controlled unions and a demo-

cratic federation, but we also want to purge particular unions we disagree with, or change the democratically determined mandate of their federation."

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

More broadly, Vavi raises the general question:

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

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

Discussing the source of the degeneration and collapse of the USSR and the international Communist movement, Slovo said: " ... the party leadership was transformed into a command post with overbearing centralism and very little democracy ... the gap between socialism and democracy widened ... the commandist and bureaucratic approaches which took root during Stalin's time affected communist parties throughout the world".

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

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

“They were attacked with exactly the same sort of insults and absurd conspiracy theories we hear today in South Africa, in which NUMSA and

COSATU leaders, NGOs and progressive civil society groups are charged with ‘anti-majoritarianism’ and conspiring with international counter-revolutionaries to destabilise ‘our’ ANC government.”

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

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

A useful introduction to our analysis, and the issues raised, is contained in the articles *Stalinism and Bolshevism* which Trotsky wrote in 1937. It is

easily available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1937/08/stalinism.htm>.

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

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

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

**Bob Archer**

January 2015

A response to Irvin Jim

# Two opposed conceptions of the socialist revolution

A fresh wind really has started to blow from South Africa, where the leadership of the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) has responded positively to the growing resistance of the masses against the African National Congress (ANC) regime and the situation following the massacre of platinum miners at Marikana in 2012.

NUMSA proposes to:

(1) Break the trade unions away from the ruling alliance with the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) because that alliance has been “captured by hostile forces”

(2) Commission an international study of the history of previous attempts to establish working class political parties in different parts of the world in order to prepare to form one which can defend the interests of working people today

(3) Establish a united front of struggle with all who are suffering and resisting under the present pro-imperialist government.

In a few short months since taking these decisions, NUMSA has successfully organised political schools for its militant activists and also held an international seminar attended by a range of left-wing political and trade union

activists from different parts of the world. More recently they have managed to achieve united-front actions to defend manufacturing jobs and employment in the country and made great progress towards organising an actual united front as an instrument to take forward the struggle of the broad masses of South Africans.

The NUMSA website and other sources now provide a rich stream of material in the discussion arising from this turn.

The union is at the heart of an increasingly fierce political and organisational struggle as the panicking supporters of the ANC-SACP alliance use a familiar range of strategies to silence and isolate this threat to their class-collaboration with the imperialist interests which are bleeding South Africa and her human and material resources.

Late last year they bureaucratically forced through a decision to expel NUMSA from the Confederation of South African Trades Unions (COSATU) – a body which NUMSA activists helped to establish in previous decades in the teeth of apartheid oppression! Workers’ International stands foursquare with NUMSA and her allies against this undemocratic move to silence her.

A campaign of slander and intimidation against NUMSA and her supporters is now developing (cf. “Reinstate NUMSA in its rightful place in the leadership of COSATU” in *Workers International Press* no. 9.)

This present article seeks to contribute to the discussion NUMSA has forced open, with particular reference to two speeches by union general secretary Irvin Jim: his introduction to the NUMSA political school last January and the lecture he gave at Witwatersrand University in commemoration of the SACP activist Ruth First, murdered in 1982 by terrorists in the pay of the apartheid state.

(The text of Comrade Jim’s address to the NUMSA Political School on 26 January 2014 is available at <https://www.facebook.com/polotiking/posts/691125047574724>. His Ruth First Memorial Lecture of 15 August 2014 can be read at <http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=9329>).

A major strength of Comrade Jim’s speeches is his excoriating critique of how the ANC/SACP regime has failed to deliver on the promises it made to the masses when it took office in the early 1990s (“the 1994 democratic



breakthrough” according to ANC legend). It bears constant repeating: The ANC/SACP made certain very specific promises when it persuaded workers in NUMSA to shelve socialist aspects of their programme, including nationalisation of industry under workers’ control; **it has not delivered**. Read these explosive speeches and form your own conclusions.

### A necessary discussion

South African workers and their own leaders in the organisations they control, such as NUMSA, have been trying to force the leaders of the SACP and the ANC to make good on the promises they made in the early 1990s, when government rule in South Africa was peacefully handed over from the apartheid Nationalist regime to the Alliance. The hope was dangled that the constitutional handover would start a National Democratic Revolution (NDR) which would gradually pave the way for a more radical socialist transformation of society. It seems inevitable that the present positive and necessary flowering of political discussion in South Africa should take the form of trying to hold the political leadership of the movement around the SACP to make good what it promised then.

The conception of the NDR was rooted in the Freedom Charter adopted by the SACP and the ANC in the 1950s. But long before that they were the conceptions of the “official” Communist movement which dominated working class politics around the world for a very long time.

There are great and profound issues to air and clarify. What is special about the “NUMSA moment” is the union’s determination to mobilise on a mass basis to engage in this process at the highest political level possible.

At stake are two conflicting views of the way forward for the working class and broader masses in colonies and former colonies like South Africa. (But a further note is necessary here. The Stalinist view already separated such countries off from the rest of the world in a “Third World”. The opposing, Marxist, view is an internationalist one which sees capitalism in its imperialist phase as an international phenomenon and the working class as an international class, while understanding that each country embodies a unique combination of the system’s essential features.)

One strategy, the “two-stage” theory, explained that the first stage



**NUMSA General Secretary Irvin Jim**

was for the country to achieve its independence. In the case of South Africa, which was independent but ruled by a White minority apartheid dictatorship, the first stage was to achieve majority rule and remove the various forms of discrimination under which the Black majority suffered. Action on a “second stage” of carrying out a socialist transformation of society was to wait until the newly-liberated nation could build up the economic and social resources needed for that task. The Freedom Charter adopted in the mid-1950s lays out this view.

The theory of permanent revolution, on the other hand, explains that the two stages are in Lenin’s word “entangled”, that although they are different, they are carried out in an uninterrupted process.

Unless working people organise and play the decisive role in dismantling imperialist rule in its various guises, the job will be botched and incomplete and dangerous remnants of the old oppression will remain.

Meanwhile, the conditions of world imperialism mean that most countries cannot hope to replicate the way capitalism in Western Europe (and then exported to North America) evolved through a series of stages over many centuries. A gradual development from feudalism to small-scale capitalism via manufacture and trade towards the factory system and finally a fully-fledged “modern” finance capitalism is not an option today. And the exceptions here prove the rule: Countries which have apparently achieved this have done so in a leap, either because like South Korea they had an important role in the West’s Cold War strategic arrangements, or because, as in Japan and now China, their rulers have devel-

oped methods of super-exploiting labour to an extreme degree.

Hopes of a new arrival achieving balanced national development of society and economy today under capitalism are an illusion. The real way forward involves nationalising industry and finance under workers control and socialist methods of planning, and the scope of the plan must be international. The continent of Africa is one sustained essay on this topic from the negative side.

Nevertheless, at the decisive moment, when the apartheid regime faced collapse and a new page was turned, it was the ANC and the SACP whose policies, based on the Stalinist conceptions underlying the Freedom Charter, prevailed and won the support of the trade unions.

Comrade Jim insists that the Freedom Charter written in the 1950s is and remains a valid “mass line” for South Africa. He attempts to justify this by copious reference to Lenin’s 1905 pamphlet *Two Tactics of the Social Democracy in the Bourgeois Revolution*.

Lenin and Leninism really can guide our revolutionary socialist movement today. But in reading Lenin’s writings we should take his life and work as a whole which combined very solid continuities with momentous changes and development, and we need to read his various works and understand the tactics he proposed within their historical context.

### Lenin the social-democratic leader

Comrade Jim seems perplexed that some critics of the ANC have described the Freedom Charter and the whole conception of a minimum and a maximum programme as “social dem-

ocratic". In his Ruth First lecture he insists:

"Ruth First was killed for the Freedom Charter! Yet today, we are told that the Freedom Charter was influenced by the social-democratic fashion of the 1950s. Others even say the Freedom Charter is now irrelevant. Did Ruth First, and many others, die for fashion ...?"

Of course not! Ruth First, like many countless others, died at the hands of the bourgeoisie as a fighter in the class struggle. But the fact that she was deliberately murdered by the other side does not of itself mean that the political line and tactics she chose were correct.

The conceptions of "minimum and maximum" programme underlying the Freedom Charter absolutely are drawn from the – long outdated – arsenal of social democracy.

This must be known to Comrade Jim. Addressing the NUMSA Political School in January this year, he quoted effectively from a well-known author on the subject who was, at the time he wrote the pamphlet quoted, a leading member of the Second International and of the Russian **Social Democratic Labour Party**, an author who at the time had a lot to say about the question of maximum and minimum programmes. Jim said, for example:

"Lenin makes this absolutely clear in his *Two Tactics*, when he says: 'A Social-Democrat must never for a moment forget that the proletariat will inevitably have to wage the class struggle for Socialism even against the most democratic and republican bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. This is beyond doubt. Hence the absolute necessity of a separate, independent, strictly class party of Social-Democracy. Hence the temporary nature of our tactics of 'striking jointly' with the bourgeoisie and the duty of keeping a strict watch 'over our ally, as over an enemy' ..." etc.

When he wrote this, in 1905, Lenin (like all the serious Marxists of the day) was a declared social democrat. Lenin wrote the pamphlet *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* during the Russian Revolution of 1905. The pamphlet explains the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party's programme and tactics intended to take that revolution forward and showed how they could guide the working class in Russia. He emphasised (in 1905!) how profoundly he identified at that time with "International Social Democracy":

"When and where did I ever claim to have created any sort of special trend in International Social-Democ-

racy *not identical* with the trend of Bebel and Kautsky? When and where have there been brought to light differences between me, on the one hand, and Bebel and Kautsky, on the other—differences even slightly approximating in seriousness the differences between Bebel and Kautsky, for instance, on the agrarian question in Breslau?"

It must be said that what Lenin proposed in 1905 utterly puts to shame the ANC-SACP alliance in terms of its sweep and ambition.

### **Lenin against the theory of stages!**

In 1905, Russia was a sprawling empire in which the majority of the population were small farmers working the land under very backward conditions. Barely forty years previously they had still been serfs, the property of their feudal landlords. In 1905 they were still paying redemption payments (in other words buying their freedom by instalments) as well as rent for the land. The political system was autocracy: The Romanov Tsars ran the whole empire through a bureaucratic and military machine ideologically backed by the Orthodox Christian clergy.

What stands out in Lenin's handling of the question of programme and tactics even in 1905 is his refusal to rigidly separate the maximum and the minimum programme. This is one expression of the difference between him and other prominent leaders of the Socialist International who were later themselves openly "captured by hostile forces". He was, it is true, absolutely convinced that the 1905 Russian Revolution had the historical job to abolish tsarist autocracy based on serfdom and replace it with a bourgeois society. He says in *Two Tactics*:

"It means that the democratic reforms in the political system and the social and economic reforms, which have become a necessity for Russia, do not in themselves imply the undermining of capitalism, the undermining of bourgeois rule; on the contrary, they will, for the first time, really clear the ground for a wide and rapid, European, and not Asiatic, development of capitalism; they will, for the first time, make it possible for the bourgeoisie to rule as a class."

Against those who want to wait with folded arms while this happens, he quickly adds:

"But it does not at all follow from this that a *democratic* revolution (bourgeois in its social and economic substance) is not of *enormous* interest for

the proletariat. It does not at all follow from this that the democratic revolution cannot take place in a form advantageous mainly to the big capitalist, the financial magnate and the 'enlightened' landlord, as well as in a form advantageous to the peasant and to the worker."

After all, he says, in tsarist Russia:

"The working class suffers not so much from capitalism as from the insufficient development of capitalism."

But it was never his view that the working class should just stand idly by and wait for the bourgeoisie to carry out its mission: It is to the advantage of the bourgeoisie, he says, if the movement:

"... does not too resolutely sweep away all the remnants of the past, but leaves some of them, i.e., if this revolution is not fully consistent, if it is not complete and if it is not determined and relentless."

**"On the other hand,"** Lenin went on, **"it is more advantageous for the working class if the necessary changes in the direction of bourgeois democracy take place by way of revolution and not by way of reform; for the way of reform is the way of delay, of procrastination, of the painfully slow decomposition of the putrid parts of the national organism. It is the proletariat and the peasantry that suffer first of all and most of all from their putrefaction. The revolutionary way is the way of quick amputation, which is the least painful to the proletariat, the way of the direct removal of the decomposing parts, the way of fewest concessions to and least consideration for the monarchy and the disgusting, vile, rotten and contaminating institutions which go with it."**

But the whole point of the handover which ended apartheid and brought majority rule in South Africa is that it deliberately avoided a revolution! That is why the Black population still suffers from all the aspects of "putrefaction" which Comrade Jim describes in detail in various speeches.

Later Lenin adds:

"We cannot jump out of the bourgeois-democratic boundaries of the Russian revolution, but we can vastly extend these boundaries, and within these boundaries we can and must fight for the interests of the proletariat, for its immediate needs and for the conditions that will make it possible to prepare its forces for the future complete victory."

He therefore recommended that workers and socialists should take their struggle into provisional governments in order to carry out the bourgeois revolution in the most thorough way possible.

Even in 1905, when he was still a Social Democrat, even when he firmly denounced any idea of the immediate possibility of a socialist revolution in Russia, Lenin castigated his Menshevik opponents who crudely divided the revolution up into “stages”. Denouncing their “theory of stages”, he explained:

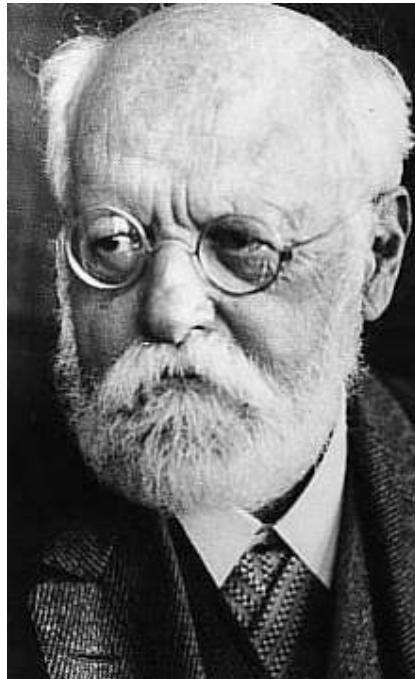
**“they have forgotten that the revolutionary pressure of the people will meet with the counter-revolutionary pressure of tsarism and that, therefore, either the ‘decision’ will remain unfulfilled or the issue will be decided after all by the victory or the defeat of the popular insurrection.”**

By 1917, Lenin’s views had undergone a significant shift. However, today’s activists can still draw strength from what he wrote in 1905 because it is permeated by the spirit of active and practical struggle. He wrote: “The outcome of the revolution depends on whether the working class will play the part of a subsidiary to the bourgeoisie, a subsidiary that is powerful in the force of its onslaught against the autocracy but impotent politically, or whether it will play the part of leader of the people’s revolution.”

And part the answer to this “whether” depends on the leadership which the workers’ party provides. The pamphlet *Two Tactics* is literally about two different approaches. Lenin contrasts them:

“One resolution expresses the psychology of active struggle, the other that of the passive onlooker; one resounds with the call for live action, the other is steeped in lifeless pedantry. Both resolutions state that the present revolution is only our first step, which will be followed by a second; but from this, one resolution draws the conclusion that we must take this first step all the sooner, get it over all the sooner, win a republic, mercilessly crush the counter-revolution, and prepare the ground for the second step. The other resolution, however, oozes, so to speak, with verbose descriptions of the first step and (excuse the crude expression) simply masticates it.”

The resolution “steeped in lifeless pedantry” was the one adopted by Lenin’s opponents in the RSDLP who formed the Menshevik faction. In 1905, Lenin stretched the politics of social



**Karl Kautsky; Lenin’s ally in 1905 and bitter opponent in 1917**

democracy, of the Second International, as far as they would go to make them serve the interests of the working class.

In South Africa, it turns out that it was the leaders of the ANC and the SACP who were actually “steeped in lifeless pedantry”. Rather than trying to “mercilessly crush the counter-revolution”, they made an accommodation with the sources of counter-revolution’s paymasters in the big mining monopolies and banks. Instead of fighting to “mercilessly crush” the practitioners of apartheid, the SACP and ANC leaders organised “truth and reconciliation” processes to protect them.

That is why South African society continues to be scarred by inequalities in every shape and form as well as social deprivation and violence, particularly against women.

It turns out that the SACP leaders who loved to quote certain texts by Lenin were closer to Lenin’s reformist, Menshevik opponents than they cared to admit.

### **The Fate of Social Democracy**

The first Russian revolution of 1905 happened on the cusp of momentous changes in world capitalism, developments which faced the Socialist International with challenges it could not deal with. So when World War I broke out 100 years ago in 1914, it was revealed that the majority of Europe’s

socialist leaders had been “captured and taken over by right-wing forces”. They supported the interests of their “own” imperialist bourgeoisie (and dynastic regimes) against workers ruled by other imperialists, and urged them on into the carnage. This set the seal on the political collapse of social democracy. Whatever long after-life it has had in western and northern Europe, it has never reverted to its potentially revolutionary days in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

One of Lenin’s responses to the outbreak of the world war was to devote considerable time to producing a handbook on the new stage reached in the development of capitalism.

His pamphlet *Imperialism* noted the end of the:

“... old free competition between manufacturers ... Capitalism in its imperialist stage leads right up to the most comprehensive socialisation of production; it, so to speak, drags the capitalists, against their will and consciousness, into some sort of a new social order”, where “production becomes social, but appropriation remains private”.

It was because the epoch thus ushered in is an “epoch of wars, civil wars and revolutions” that the Socialist International entered a crisis and the majority of its parties, having sunk to the level of “passive onlookers” and increasingly “steeped in lifeless pedantry”, turned out to have been “captured and taken over by right-wing forces” when World War I broke out, followed later by the revolutionary wave that started in Russia.

The policy of waiting for the development of capitalism to build up the numerical strength of the working class, while the socialist movement attended to its level of organisation and political maturity, hoping that the crisis of the system would ultimately make revolution inevitable, collapsed as a political project.

**This was because the arrival of the imperialist stage of capitalism signalled the need to actually carry out the socialist revolution despite the unevenness of development between different countries.**

A leader of the Socialist International such as Karl Kautsky, a man who had previously been Lenin’s mentor and ally and had fought shoulder to shoulder with him, changed his approach to imperialism. He came to view this imperialist phase as a passing policy of the capitalists, a set of measures which could be reversed by polit-

ical pressure and agitation, without a revolution. Lenin decisively broke with such leaders, asserting that imperialism is a definite stage of capitalism, and moreover, the stage which makes necessary the socialist revolution. (From this point of view, Lenin's work on imperialism also forms a basis for understanding specific features of economy, society and politics in South Africa.)

And Lenin was right! World War I led to the collapse of tsarist autocracy and the 1917 Russian Revolution.

### April Theses

Lenin's guidance for the Revolution of 1917 is summarised in the *April Theses*, written on his journey back to Russia from exile. Lenin then believed:

"(2) The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that the country is *passing* from the first stage of the revolution – which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie – to its *second* stage, which **must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants.**" (My emphasis – B.A.)

He therefore insisted:

"(3) No support for the Provisional Government" which he describes as a "government of capitalists", and "(5) **Not a parliamentary republic ... but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom** ... Abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy ... Confiscation of all landed estates ... Nationalisation of all lands in the country ... The immediate amalgamation of all banks in the country into a single national bank, and the institution of control over it by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies."

He knew: "It is not our *immediate* task to 'introduce' socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of product at once under the *control* of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies".

This is both a continuation of his approach in 1905 and a huge significant change. And the October 1917 Russian Revolution started to achieve the goals he set.

Back in 1905, in *Two Tactics*, Lenin had talked about a time in the distant past when:

"... the slogans advocating mass agitation *instead* of direct armed action, preparation of the social-psychological

conditions for insurrection *instead* of flash-in-the-pan methods, were the only correct slogans for the revolutionary Social-Democratic movement." But even then, in 1905, he already warned that:

"*At the present time* the slogans have been superseded by events, the movement has left them behind, they have become tatters, rags fit only to clothe the hypocrisy" of liberal politicians and reformist socialists.

### The "socialist" enemies of the Russian Revolution

Now the whole policy and programme of the Socialist International had been "superseded by events". Leaders of the Socialist International supported the "war effort" of their "own" bourgeoisies and tried to impose a class truce on the working class, a cessation of hostilities against their own employers. The end of the war brought revolution in Russia, the collapses of the German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires and revolutionary movements of international scope. In Russia, the revolution established a government of Workers' and Peasants' Soviets. In these events, the leaders of the old Socialist International opposed the Soviets and organised troops to suppress revolutionary movements throughout Europe. When momentous political changes are actually happening in a seismic shift, clinging to a separation of "minimum" and "maximum" programme partly reveals, partly fulfils a process in which a whole movement has rotted from within.

### The Communist International

Up until 1914, Lenin had tried to make the revolutionary action which the new situation at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries required fit into the social-democratic division into "minimum programme" and "maximum programme". He had "stress-tested" the politics of the Socialist International to its limits. That whole organisation and its programmes had become tatters and rags fit only to clothe its hypocrisy.

Lenin, the Bolsheviks and their allies rescued Marxism from the wreckage of the Socialist International and took it forward in the formation of Communist Parties and the Communist International. How these organisations faced up to the task of world revolution is recorded in the minutes and other documents of the first four congresses of the Communist International, which

are now widely available for study and should be carefully studied as part of the movement which NUMSA is setting afoot.

Among the many problems the Communist International carefully addressed was the task of winning over workers and working-class organisations which were still dominated by social-democratic policies and leaders. Two vital tools in this work were the policy of the **united front** and the development of **transitional demands** as a bridge across which working people could cross over from reformism to revolutionary politics.

### Stalinism and social democracy

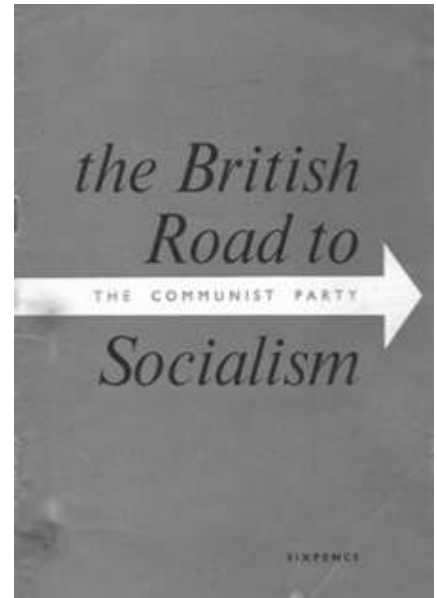
Lenin died in January 1924. Under a show of continuing his work, his successors in the leadership of the Soviet Union and the Communist International abandoned the struggle for world revolution. They established a bureaucratic regime in the Soviet Union and claimed that it would be possible to achieve socialism in that country alone. This happened under specific conditions under which hopes of a rapid spread of revolutionary overthrows were disappointed. It is not simply a matter, as Joe Slovo explained in his *Has Socialism failed*, written in 1989, (and Zwelinzima Vavi repeats today) that Communists in government got accustomed to the harsh practices of civil war and the habit of issuing orders. Trotsky and his followers in the Left Opposition and later the Fourth International analysed and explained the many factors involved in the degeneration of the Soviet Union and above all the reactionary nature of the political line that came to dominate in the Comintern. The crux of the political degeneration was the policy of building socialism in a single country.

From being the world party of socialist revolution, the Communist International started to abuse the huge respect and enthusiasm the Russian Revolution had evoked in working people to control and dominate the Communist movement. It inculcated into its members unswerving loyalty to the Soviet leaders and the view that the way forward lay in an accommodation with capitalism under the slogan of peaceful co-existence (although there were occasional but devastatingly destructive ultra-left lurches).

Vavi lifts a corner of the blanket of confusion which Stalinist history-writing has spread over the Spanish revolution (See *Vavi wades into the discussion*,



**Revolutionary workers' militia in the Spanish Civil War** (Poumista\_wordpress)



**British Road to Socialism: Not a "political fashion" but a reformist road with Stalin's personal support**

p.11). But did you know that in the mid-1940s Stalin tried to hold back the revolution in Yugoslavia, accepted the suppression (in which the British army played a big role) of the Greek revolution, told his supporters in Vietnam to crush a revolt against the restoration of French rule once the Japanese occupiers had been defeated and actually put pressure on the Chinese Communists to collaborate with the bourgeois Guomindang?

A good example of Stalin's policy in relation to colonies and semi-colonies of imperialism was his support for Ghandi in India. An entire library of books would be needed to trace how Stalinist influence in the huge wave of revolts against imperialism has systematically ended with local bourgeois puppets of imperialism running corrupt and dictatorial regimes.

Stalin and his supporters could only justify what they did by actually returning to the "tatters and rags" of social democracy. The policy of building socialism in a single country is itself a social-democratic one. So is the idea that, despite Lenin's insistence that imperialism is a new and final stage of capitalism, there is still such a thing as a benign, non-imperialist capitalism within which working people can reach an accommodation.

Today's activists should study for themselves the history of the movement in China in the 1920s and Spain in the 1930s in order to understand what it meant for the masses in these countries and the parties of the Communist International to be guided by these "tatters and rags".

Then for Britain, for example, Stalin is supposed to have personally crafted the "British Road to Socialism" after World War II, supporting gradual progress through parliamentary reform and fostering illusions that working people could see their needs met under a parliamentary bourgeois state with a mixed economy (part state-owned, part private).

How cruelly history mocks these "tatters and rags"! The Soviet Union has collapsed and many of its leading lights rushed to join the thieving mafia which has taken over. All over the world, including the "industrialised" West, workers bear the brunt of the capitalist onslaught that seeks to dismantle all the gains they made after 1945.

This after-life of social democracy was far from being just a political fashion. It was a deliberate policy to disarm the working class and dupe it into accepting a future under capitalism, a "Faustian pact" as it has aptly been described.

The theory of a "democratic" revolution as an initial stage in the socialist revolution is also just such "a tatter and rag" and it too has been tested to destruction in South Africa since the accommodation of 1990-1994. The process is ripping apart the very force which fought might and main to impose it, the South African Communist Party in alliance with the ANC.

The Left Opposition and then the Fourth International stood against the degeneration in the Soviet Union and in the politics of the CPSU and the Comintern. These comrades fought to rescue and develop the work of the Russian Bolsheviks and the Communist International in its early period. Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International continues that tradition in the struggles of today. That is why we have a distinctive and positive contribution to make in the great project NUMSA has called into being.

**Bob Archer**  
January 2015





## London bus strike for wage parity

Left: London busworkers struck for a day during January in their campaign to re-establish wage levels across the British capital. Since the privatisation of the buses under Thatcher, wage differentials between different companies have increased, leading to fears of a "race to the bottom". These strike pickets in North London also had a demand about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

## 'Support anti-austerity vote on 25 January'

*Right: a very broad range of political groups came together in Central London on Saturday 17 January. The picket was organised by the Greece Solidarity Campaign to show support for a vote against austerity in the Greek general election on 25 January. Photos of the demonstration in Parliament Square with Big Ben in the background and messages of support were sent to Athens. Similar events were organised in Birmingham and across Europe over the weekend 16-18 January.*



# Marxist Considerations on the Crisis:

## Part 1

by Balazs Nagy

Published for Workers International by Socialist Studies. ISBN 978 0 9564319 3 6



The Hungarian Marxist BALAZS NAGY originally planned this work as 'an article explaining the great economic crisis which erupted in 2007 from a Marxist point of view'. However, he 'quite quickly realised that a deeper understanding of this development would only be possible if I located it within a broader historical and political context than I had anticipated ... it would only be possible to grasp the nature and meaning of this current upheaval in and through the development of the economic-political system as a whole'

£10 per copy (Inc. Delivery in UK) from Workers' International, PO Box 68375, London E7 7DT. Cheques payable to "Correspondance"