

WORKERS INTERNATIONAL

JOURNAL

Print
Version
£2.50

Political and theoretical journal of Workers International to Rebuild the 4th International
No 7 September 2014



September 6: Thousands rallied in London's Trafalgar Square to greet campaigners who had marched from the North-East of the country to defend the National Health Service against cuts and privatisation

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No 7, September 2014

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‘Determined to pursue the struggle for socialism as the only holistic and viable solution to the national, gender and class questions in South Africa and the world’

Numsa presents its case to the world

During August, the **National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa** held an international symposium involving socialist parties and movements from 17 different countries, as well as activists within the union.

Introducing the symposium, Numsa General Secretary Irvin Jim made a presentation about *The State of the South African Revolution and the Significance of the Numsa Moment*.

(The full text of the slides used in this presentation can be consulted online at: <http://www.numsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/The-State-of-the-South-African-Revolution-and-the-Significance-of-the-Numsa-Moment-3-3.pdf>).

By the early 1990s, the revolutionary socialists (a powerful current among those who had established the independent trade unions in South Africa) were persuaded by the leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communist Party (SACP) to moderate their avowedly socialist demands and accept the settlement which abolished apartheid and ushered in the National Democratic Revolution (NRD).

Workers knew that this was not the end of capitalism, but they expected that it would provide social progress and a context within which the passage to socialism could be prepared.

Jim started his presentation by reiterating that the South African capitalist state had been imposed from above and outside, explaining that this state is colonial and dependent on imperialist powers.

Within this colonial setting, the South African capitalist class entrenched and extended its racially exclusive system to increase its opportunities for profit. The racial division of labour, racist laws and political exclusivism guaranteed the extraction of super-profits, and this form of domination has been maintained under changing conditions and by varying mechanisms, with the colonial status of the black majority remaining in place.

Jim presented his conception of “What the South African Revolution is all about” as (1) End colonial occupation (2) Defeat colonial capitalism (3)

End imperialist domination (4) Advance to socialism and (5) End gender, racial, national and class domination and exploitation.

Reviewing the promises held out by the Freedom Charter, he noted that it had sworn to end racial oppression, end colonialism, win political and economic sovereignty and equality, entrench a bill of rights with equality, human dignity and non-discrimination as its cornerstones, restore land justice and create a single united nation: South Africa.

He reminded his audience that those basic commitments were expressed in 10 demands: The people shall govern! All national groups shall have equal rights! The people shall share in the country’s wealth! The land shall be shared among those who work it! All shall be equal before the law! There shall be work and security! The doors of learning and culture shall be opened! All shall enjoy equal human rights! There shall be houses, security and comfort! There shall be peace and friendship!

The body of his presentation involved a detailed analysis of the lack of progress made in fulfilling the promises enshrined in the Freedom Charter and the content and outcomes of the National Development Plan. (See “What the Freedom Charter promised and what has actually happened” on page 3)

The 20 years since 1994, Numsa has concluded, have confirmed that the NDR has actually favoured the bourgeoisie: Working class conditions have deteriorated; basic colonial and imperialist economy has persisted, with growing inequality and unemployment to the detriment of the black population; imperialist penetration has deepened and the uncontrolled export of capital has led to de-industrialisation.

Jim’s speech exemplifies the struggle of the working class leadership in South Africa to disentangle itself from the open class-collaboration that has really been at the heart of the ANC-SACP-Cosatu Alliance.

This is going to be a long process requiring a careful study of the political background and histories of the forces

at work in the world context. Workers International greets and thoroughly supports the process which the Numsa leadership has opened up.

We will fight with all our resources to defend, extend and contribute to this process. We note the frantic efforts on the part of the South African ANC government and its SACP supporters to put a wet blanket over the whole thing and extinguish the flames.

We note Irvin Jim’s comment to the media that Numsa is currently “under siege”. We note efforts in the official trade union movement in the UK and elsewhere to try to continue “business as usual” in South Africa, supporting the pro-bourgeois ANC government – which continues to attack working people – as if it was a “liberation” movement.

Workers international will do everything it can to defend, broaden and deepen the discussion which Numsa has started. Despite our limited forces, like Numsa, we stand in this struggle openly as Marxists and oppose all those who falsify and distort Marxism in order to confuse, disorientate and mislead the workers’ movement.

Jim obviously feels the need to explain why the leadership of the working class movement in Numsa needed a period to reach the conclusions which it has reached over the Alliance. He refers to the situation in the late 1980s and early 1990s when “the negotiated settlement” was put in place:

It was “the height of the triumph of world neoliberal capitalism”; “The Black and African middle classes were won over to the side of capitalism”; “there was clearly no significantly nationalist content in the ANC – which is why imperialism has triumphed”; “A neoliberal capitalist transition was negotiated, largely behind closed doors/secretly”; “A liberal constitution was agreed to entrench capitalism and imperialism”.

While some leading members of the South African Communist Party were “negotiating a neoliberal capitalist transition behind closed doors/ secretly”, another, Joe Slovo, was telling workers:

"It is obvious that the black capitalist class favours capitalism and that it will do its best to influence the post-apartheid society in this direction. It is obvious that the black middle and upper classes who take part in a broad liberation alliance will jostle for hegemony and attempt to represent their interests as the interests of all Africans".

Jim lists the steps by which the current leadership of Numsa and its supporters in other trade unions, "determined to pursue the struggle for socialism as the only holistic and viable solution to the national, gender and class questions in South Africa and the world", took up the fight against "those leaders of Cosatu who have been won over to the side of the defenders of South African capitalism".

Now, Jim continues: "The working class, especially the revolutionary class conscious working class, fully under-

stand that at play in post-1994 South Africa is the battle to the death between forces of capitalist reaction and forces of socialism, as the only solution to the crisis of humanity and development in South Africa and the world."

He describes how from 2008 onwards (not accidentally, the date of the open outbreak of imperialist crisis) Numsa has more and more directly asserted a Marxist-Leninist position.

It recognises and accepts what he calls the "Marxist-Leninist theory of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) in colonial terrains", but finds: "the NDR is not only off track, but ... the current NDR is thoroughly neoliberal capitalist".

Numsa charges that "the SACP has abandoned its socialist mission and is no longer a communist vanguard party of the South African working class". Therefore Numsa has resolved to "insti-

gate the formation of a revolutionary socialist party of the working class". Numsa has consequently resolved to "Break with the Alliance", "form a united front", "explore the formation of a Movement for Socialism", "instigate the formation of a revolutionary socialist party" and "adopt a union service charter".

Workers International has supported and publicised the decisions of the Numsa Special Congress in December 2013. We agree with and will actively support Numsa's decision to build a Movement for Socialism. We enthusiastically welcome and wish to take part in Numsa's decision for an international study on the historical formation of working class parties.

Bob Archer
September 2014

A summary of Irvin Jim's presentation on

What the Freedom Charter promised and what has actually happened

When rule by the ANC-SACP-Cosatu Alliance started in 1994, income inequality in South Africa as measured by the Gini coefficient stood at 0.64. By 2006 it had increased to 0.72 and it currently stands at 0.69. Income is being distributed the wrong way, from the poor to the rich, with salaries as a proportion of national income falling from 56% in 1995 to 51% today.

Whereas life expectancy for South Africans was 62 years in 1992, it fell to 52 years in 2006, rising again to only 58 in 2012. White South Africans live on average 71 years, blacks on average 48 years.

The Freedom Charter says: "The mineral wealth beneath the soil, banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole".

Jim explained that South Africa now has a finance sector dominated by four large privately-owned banks and most of them are part-owned by foreigners. SASOL oil is 30% and Arcelor-Mittal Steel is 65% foreign-owned.

The Thintana Telekom deal involving Malaysian and American capital led to massive job-losses in Telekom (from 67,000 to 25,000) and "has left the country poorer and in a worse socio-economic position".

The construction sector is also dominated by four major players involving foreign ownership, as is the cement

industry. The big names in the machinery and equipment industry are all foreign; the big retail chains are all between 35% and 60% foreign-owned; mining is also a foreign-owned monopolised sector.

The Freedom Charter says: "All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people".

The manufacturing sector declined from 20% of national production in 1995 to 11% in 2013. Between 1995 and 2012, 621,000 jobs were lost in this sector.

The removal of exchange controls has facilitated the outflow of capital. Firms have shifted their stock exchange listings abroad. South Africa has become increasingly dependent on short-term capital flows to cover expenditure, and foreign debt has risen sharply from \$25bn in 1994 to \$132bn in 2012 "with relatively little productive investment in the private sector.

"The structure of the economy remains mineral-dependent, and is now finance-led: petrochemicals, mining and basic iron and steel make up 69% or exports, and are highly capital and energy intensive. This has not changed since 1970."

The absence of controls on big mining, finance and retail monopolies is injurious to local industrial development. Also the monopolies engage in

price-fixing ("collusion prices"), including manipulation of local prices via "import parity pricing" which favours businesses importing into South Africa. Food processors and retailers also collude to charge high prices, but "there is no control to assist the wellbeing of the people". The finance sector is also not controlled, and trade liberalisation has led to a number of manufacturers shutting down.

The Freedom Charter says: "All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and enter all trades, crafts and professions".

Chief Executive Officer positions in major companies are still dominated by white males, patterns of recruitment into top positions have not changed, being African reduces the chances of being employed by 90% in comparison to being white, whites are 30% more likely to be employed than Africans and being female reduces chances of a job by a further 60%.

The Freedom Charter says: "Restrictions on land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and the land re-divided amongst those who work to banish famine and land-hunger".

Agricultural land ownership is still "concentrated and colonial"; section 25 of the constitution ("No one may be deprived of property except in terms of law of general application, and no

law may permit arbitrary deprivation of property”) is used to block implementation of the Freedom Charter’s provisions; it is estimated black people own between 13% and 16% of agricultural land; only 10% of the land earmarked for land restitution has been transferred to black farmers, whereas the whole 30% should have been transferred by this year. “At this pace it will take 100 years to transfer 50% of the land back to the people”.

The government uses the “willing buyer, willing seller” principle and quibbles about “just and equitable” compensation to retard land reform.

The Freedom Charter says: “Help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams”.

Lack of progress in providing productive infrastructure such as roads, irrigation systems and tunnels; lack of access to markets, which are dominated by white, capitalist value chains; lack of access to funds for farmers because the Land Bank is dysfunctional; lack of access to training because of the closure of agricultural colleges; lack of access to primary inputs such as tractors, fertilisers, pesticides (de-industrialisation and import parity pricing by SASOL petrochemical monopoly plays a role in this); poor support from ill-trained and understaffed agricultural extension officers. This has frustrated attempts to redistribute land. It is estimated that more than 70% of the land that has been redistributed subsequently became unproductive because of this lack of support.

The Freedom Charter says of residential land: “All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose”.

In fact the land hunger remains, due to the legacy of apartheid planning combined with an explosion in the property market. Workers still live a long way away from places of work. 12% of households still live in informal settlements.

The Freedom Charter says: “There shall be Work and Security!” and “All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers”.

For all the soothing words in the Freedom Charter and National Development Plan (NDP), that very same NDP repeats the slander that by defending their members’ rights, the unions exclude (“lock out”) unemployed South Africans from work. This is the attitude of the right-wing Democratic Alliance and the employers’ asso-

ciation (NEASA. In reality, 71% of employed workers are not unionised and 54% of workers receive no regular wage increments, or have their wages determined solely by their employers. **The Freedom Charter says: “The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits”.**

But the unemployment rate, 31 % in 1995, rose to 34% by 2013. Plans to reduce unemployment by half by 1914 have failed. The Unemployment Insurance Fund does not cover 43% of workers and amongst women, 49% are not covered by it. Because they do not receive unemployment benefits, 77% of the unemployed rely on employed workers in order to survive.

The Freedom Charter says: “Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work”.

In fact white people in the labour force earn on average 4 times what an African earns; Africans have to work a whole day to earn what whites can earn in an hour; depending on the statistics chosen, women on average earn either 77% or 50% of what men earn.

The Freedom Charter says: “There shall be a forty-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers”.

In fact 24% of workers work for more than 48 hours a week; average working time is 44 hours a week; there is no national minimum wage and sectoral minimum wages are very low and widely violated. Jim calculates that capital stole R16bn from the working class by, on average, paying 35% less than the sectoral minimum wage. Access to medical, maternity / paternity benefits and sick leave is limited; 50% of workers have no access to pensions or retirement funds.

The Freedom Charter says: “Miners, domestic workers, farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work; child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished”.

But 35% of the workforce are engaged in contract and other short-term type of employment; 20% of workers only have verbal contracts and there are now increasing attempts to treat more of the public sector workforce as “essential”.

(Under the Labour Relations Act, persons engaged in an essential service have no right to strike).

The Freedom Charter says: “All people shall have the right to live

where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security”.

But while the average household size for Africans is five, 55% of them live in dwellings with less than three rooms, and 21% of them live in one-room dwellings. 50% of white households, on the other hand, live in dwellings with no less than 4 rooms. The lot of the working class is overcrowding and squalid conditions. Conflict arises among working class communities for access to houses around manipulation of housing lists and corruption, and sometimes leads to outbreaks of xenophobia. In 2010, 50,000 houses needed to be rebuilt because of poor workmanship.

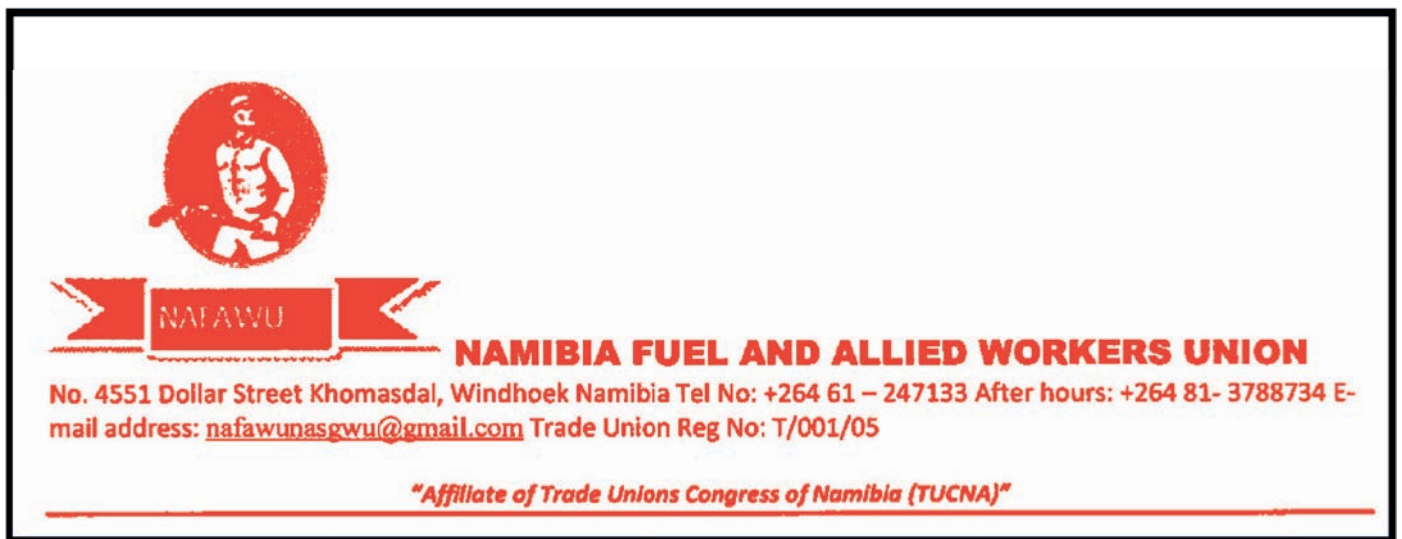
The Freedom Charter says: “The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!”

Just 11% of schools (the former white, coloured and Asian schools) account for 70% or passes at matriculation. South African 11 year-olds perform three times less well at reading than 12-year-old in Russia. It is estimated that only 3% of children who enter the school system eventually complete with higher grade maths.

Only 15% of Grade 3 learners pass both numeracy and literacy. 60% of children are pushed out of the school system before they reach grade 12. The average number of pupils per teacher is estimated at 31 in African schools and 24 in white schools. The pass rate is 43% in African schools and 97% in white schools. 42% of schools depend on boreholes or rainwater or have no nearby access to water. 61% of schools have no arrangements for the disposal of sewage. 21% of schools have no toilets on site or have more than 50 learners per toilet. 36% of whatever toilets there are depend on pit latrines. 16% of schools have no source of electricity on or near site. 93% of schools have no libraries, or libraries are not stocked. 88% of schools have no laboratories or laboratories are not stocked. 81% of schools have no computers or more than 100 learners share a computer.

(On the other hand, in 2007, 20% of people aged 5 or above who attended educational institutions did not pay fees. This figure had increased to 55.6% in 2011. Numbers benefiting from the feeding scheme rose from 60% in 2009 to 74% in 2011.)

In 2011, only 3.5% of the African and 3.8% of the coloured population were enrolled in tertiary education, compared with 15% of Asians/Indians and 20% of the white population.



26 July 2014

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL APPEAL

Dear Comrades, Sisters, Brothers and Friends,
Kindly find our report attached.

We are in a struggle with the Tripartite Alliance of the Namibian Government. Its partners are unions and employers. The employers include Shell, Engin, Total, and Puma. The puppet regime service these international companies' interests.

We have been in struggle with them since 2006.

The Alliance uses police brutality, intimidation and illegal militia such as the Special Field Force consisting of brutes and rogues to assault and brutalise us. See report.

Our members get N\$250-1300 basic wages on which no-one can live.

Our union is the only union in the fuel industry since 2005. The Alliance is trying to suppress and suffocate us by refusing to pay over our members' subscriptions. They try to force the puppet unions which have nothing to do with this industry into our place.

We treat their suppression with contempt. Because they cannot put us down they have established the so-called minimum-wage negotiation forum, the Namibia Fuel, Retail Industry Labour Forum (NFRILF), but in which they brought puppet unions to destroy our demands by fraud.

We ask the Namibian workers and people to support us politically and financially for this important struggle to expose this evil regime and the international parasitic companies. We ask the international workers to give us needed support.

We are linking up with other workers' groups to fight against this evil and dangerous alliance. Please address your protests to the President of Namibia and to the Minister of Safety & Security and the Minister of Labour. Please fax your protests to them. Please deliver your statements also to the Namibian embassies in your countries.

Kindly contribute to our fighting fund of N\$350,000. Our Bank details are: Standard Bank, Katutura Branch, WINDHOEK, NAFAWU, Cheque account: 241962994.

Yours in the struggle for real freedom,

Mr. David Frans

Secretary General (NAFAWU) 0813788734

'The Special Field Force came to disperse unarmed employees with sjamboks, teargas and assault rifles'

It all began in 2008 when NAFAWU approached the Ministry of Labour to introduce a wage order in the fuel industry as employers pay peanuts to workers or pay the way they want. There is no regulated minimum wage in this fuel industry.

The Ministry reverted to us explaining that we were to submit an intensive investigation report into our allegations to find out whether it was really true what we were alleging, as it was only then the Ministry could get involved. We gave the task to LaRRI (Labour Research and Resource Institute) to conduct the census.

The report indicated that the minimum wage was urgently needed in the fuel industry. As there was no fixed salary and no protection gear in the industry while petrol attendants inhale toxic gas every day they come to work.

The employers' organisation was called and then they asked to be given time to consult their clients. It took some time, and then ASSO – the employers' association - instead of coming with a solution they put an application to the Minister of Labour to be exempted from paying overtime Sundays and public holidays and for the workers to work 12 hrs shifts rather than the normal shifts provided for day workers. The Ministry did not entertain this application.

After we have waited for so long without getting ASSO's answer in regard to the wage forum implementation issue, we approached the Ministry to call ASSO to the negotiating table for the minimum wage to be introduced else we shall have a peaceful demonstration and petitioning the ministry. ASSO was called in 2012, when it appeared it has changed its constitution not to deal with labour issue in the petrol industry.

This was challenged by the Union as the ASSO were the only organization provided in the Labour Act as the employer's organization while the union was the workers' organisation. ASSO held an employer's organization certificate but it claimed not to deal

with labour issues of its client anymore. This was spooky.

Then came 2013. Bank Windhoek organized a meeting at Heja Game Lodge for stake holders in the fuel industry to discuss the challenges in the industry. ASSO was invited to represent the employers, Ministry of Mines and Energy to represent energy/fuel companies and Ministry of Labour was invited to represent Government. The union was not invited to represent the vulnerable workers' interest, this prompted the union to mobilize its members and demonstrate to boycott this meeting as the workers' interest were to be discussed in their absence.

We boycotted the meeting and they changed the venue and after this, the Ministry because of the embarrassment quickly called a meeting between ASSO and the Union to have a dialogue. This time ASSO started questioning the membership of NAFAWU whether we were having the majority in the fuel industry and demanded the list. We sent many letters to ASSO but 2013 passed without a solution.

This year in May, we mobilised our members again to have a peaceful demonstration against the Ministry of Labour for failing to regulate this industry. Then on the 30 of May 2014 a meeting was held between ASSO and NAFAWU. The Ministry this time also ordered the union to provide a list of all its members and other sympathizers in the industry to ASSO and the Ministry of Labour to answer the issue of majority union in the petrol industry so that a wage forum can be created and NAFAWU be the bargaining agent in the Wage forum to negotiate on behalf of the workers, and submit this list before June the 30th. This was done. ASSO was told the same, to consult and seek a mandate from its members to come to the table and start the negotiations.

But after the 30th of June 2014 the Ministry invited other puppet unions with a different scope of operation to the negotiation table, while these unions never had or indicated any interest in fighting for workers' interests in this industry from the beginning

although our struggle to force the employers and the Ministry to have a wage forum was visible to all unions and the entire country for years. These puppet unions were of the tourist industry amongst others which did not have anything even remotely to do with the fuel industry.

This conduct of the Ministry proved that it did not have the interests of vulnerable workers in the fuel industry at heart. They now wanted to confuse and delay everything again. When the meeting was set for the 21st of July 2014, we mobilized a strike, as people were tired of the delaying tactics which the Ministry of Labour and ASSO were playing to avoid awarding the aggrieved vulnerable workers their demand for better conditions at the hand of their masters.

When we appeared at the ministry that day the Ministry called in the Special Field Force to come and disperse unarmed employees with sjamboks, teargases and assault rifles. Everyone, even pregnant women were beaten to their knees. They illegally arrested me at gunpoint, took me to a unknown place, assaulted and threatened to kill me if I don't stop threatening to overthrow the Government. They claimed that the strike was aimed at doing so.

After a few hours they brought me back to the Ministry. Then I was invited to the meeting where we agreed that the workers must go back to work so that no one must be dismissed for partaking in the strike, and to our surprise on the 24th June 2014 the Ministry totally altered or ignored what we agreed in the meeting of 21 July 2014 and declared the strike illegal through a press release. They started blaming the union for the dismissals of the vulnerable workers, while ASSO and the ministry and so-called invited unions stayed clean from taking part of the responsibility of what transpired. This is what we call an undemocratic puppet government, which is thriving at the expense of its vulnerable citizens and this should be stopped. These

foreign companies harvesting monies 24/7 on the suffering of our people should be exposed to all the workers nationally and internationally and we are seeking local and international solidarity to fight our government to stop these evil doings to its own people. The tri-partite alliance in Namibia between

the Government, unions and the employers is trying to destroy our union.

They are also trying to stop us getting monthly subscriptions by the employers refusing to deduct it from the employees' wages and pay it over to the union.

About 2000 workers took part in the strike. About 300 have been dismissed. We are fighting to stop the dismissals.

Compiled by **David Frans**,
General Secretary, NAWU,
August 2014.

Hewat Beukes of WRP Namibia describes

The mockery of the Rehoboth land case

On 28 April this year, the Rehoboth Town Council served an urgent application against the Rehoboth Baster Community, Captain John McNab and Councillor Jan van Wyk for the allocation of erven (plots of land) to Baster, Nama and Damara inhabitants of Rehoboth. The allocation of erven was a legal practice since 1870. The Town Council wanted an interdict from the High Court to stop this practice.

The Town Council appointed their own judge and set down their own hearing date for 16 May 2014. When the Community tried to file their notice to oppose the case, they found that the Town Council had not filed the case with the Court. They had only served their application on the Community.

The Town Council had not a single fact in its sworn statement (affidavit) on which it relied. They stated that they had heard that 1072 erven had "purportedly" been issued by the Captain in January this year, four months before their urgent application. They took a resolution on 1 April to bring an urgent application, but only served their application on 28 April on the Community.

None of the 1072 persons who according to the Town Council "purportedly" received an erf (plot of land) had been joined to the court case nor the Rehoboth inhabitants who were entitled to an erf in terms of the Paternal Laws were joined in the case.

The application was a mockery.

The following mockeries in the case are especially noteworthy:

1. An urgent application can only be considered within days of the alleged wrongdoing. The court has no jurisdiction whatsoever to consider an urgent application after a month, which is the period for an ordinary application to be brought before court. This urgent application took four months.

2. The sworn statement (affidavit) of the Town Council contained not a single fact – that is, admissible evidence – on which the court could make a ruling. It contained not even

hearsay, but rumour without a source. The court had no jurisdiction to rule on inadmissible rumours.

3. A normal court has no jurisdiction (legal power) to make rulings that may/will affect persons who have a legal interest (legal right) in a matter when these persons are not joined to the case. The 1072 persons and those entitled to an erf were not joined in the case.

On 16 May, the judge Harald Geier disregarded these glaring failures and turned them into gross irregularities by granting an urgent interdict against the Community and the persons who were not joined in the case. He set the return date to 17 June for the Community to show why he should not make his order permanent to stop the Rehoboth People from receiving their erven on their own land. He ignored the application by the Community to have the case thrown out due to the irregularities. He had first to hear this application. He did not.

On 17 June I brought an application for Geier to excuse himself from the case as he

4. As a Southwest German was a direct beneficiary of the expropriation of the Baster and Nama peoples and the wars of extermination against them;

5. his abuse of the bench and the court's jurisdiction to grant an order on an absolutely perverted application and outside the court's jurisdiction and his legal powers.

Instead of hearing this serious matter immediately, Geier postponed the matter to 29 July. He invited the Town Council to defend him by opposing the matter and to submit opposing sworn statements in his defence.

The Town Council did not oppose the recusal nor my own joinder application. On 29 July Geier denied that he had ordered that the recusal application should be opposed and heard. He postponed the hearing of my joinder application to 30 October 2014.

After the hearing, I drew the transcript of 17 June's court hearing which

proved that he was fraudulently misrepresenting (lying about) the record of the Court.

In the meanwhile the Town Council is trying to trade with Rehoboth land on the world market. Supported by the Ecumenical Council (consisting of Rehoboth's holy men), they put prime land on the market in North America.

The above situation forces me to turn to the community for action against Geier and a corrupt court case.

The bourgeois dilemma of private property in Namibia

Judge Geier's fraudulent misrepresentation – in plain language lying about – the record is least of all significant for moral, ethical and professional reasons. It is significant in the sense that it reflects the farce of Namibian law. He cannot outright state on the Bench that he is there to defeat justice in the common sense understanding of the word. He cannot state openly that he is there to preside over a cesspool of theft, robbery and debauchery.

The Rehoboth case shows that "private property" is not meant to describe the properties of the national groups and those who were left with labour reserves, homelands or fractions of their land as remnants of their erstwhile viable spaces.

These lands are termed "communal" lands with the understanding that it belongs to nobody and therefore it belongs to the State.

But these lands or remnants do meet the definition of private land and therefore private property in bourgeois law. Each of these lands were beneficially occupied to the exclusion of others. Therefore, they were private property of each free association of persons.

It was not even that the Namibian courts had no precedence of this. It dealt with Cultura 2000. It endorsed a group of racists as a free association of persons with land as private property from which they excluded blacks.

Geier was caught out by my application that he sought to illegally deprive a community of the very land that could do a significant amount to uplift the whole community. This land has vast resources.

He abused every principle in law, fundamental rights and consistency to imbue a perverted application into a destructive legal process.

The dilemma of this law is that it is based on the pretence of equality. But, it cannot give "gestalt" (shape, structure) to equal application of the law. The truth is that the working people have no rights and no private property. When they talk of private property they refer to the property of the corporate ruling classes.

Likewise, "law and order" is reserved for the working class especially in the locations.

The Rehoboth land case is of significant to all indigenous groups and working people in Namibia.

The attack on their land rights is to subserve the workers and poor peasants to the corporate ruling classes. They should lose all and any urge to resist.

A Poisonous Independence

In 1982 the "5 Western Powers" made the protection of Private Property – land and productive assets – the central condition for Namibian independence.

In 1993 a group called Cultura 2000 which obtained its assets from the Colonial Government had their private property rights confirmed by the courts.

The group excluded blacks and Khoisan from the utility of their land allotments on the basis of protecting the culture of the white groups. They stated their aim as preserving the culture of "The Afrikaans, German, Portuguese, English and other communities of European descent as represented by the founding members".

Notwithstanding the fact that their acquisition of the property in colonial times amongst others on a racial basis was illegal; that the South African laws were illegal and that an act based on illegality was a nullity, the courts ruled in their favour on grounds such as that they were a free association which utilised the land to the exclusion of others. They ruled that it thus conformed to the definition of private property. (Note: when land is used to the exclusion of others it is private land.)

But, in terms of this ruling and the definition of private property as property utilised by free associations of people – the nations (tribes) - to the exclusion of others, the lands of the respective national groups were private land.

However, both the government and its courts very quickly dispelled the notion that the legal definitions of rights and property applied to these groups. They also dispelled the notion that the definition of private ownership applied to the various national groups' private property – their land.

This land is declared as government or nationalised land, which is then used for speculation.

Even individual property rights by individuals in these areas are not treated as engendering property rights protectable in a court of law.

Given the centrality of land to arrest the impoverishment of the vast masses of peasants and workers, the disregard of the consistent application of their illegal law the government and its courts causes acceleration of impoverishment.

Given that the land is essentially in the hands of whites and given that private property comes with such rights as the right to dispose of it, to exclude others from its utility, inheritance, etcetera, the political and legal actions of this regime not only entrench but legitimise racism. Under the present conditions racism is an economic, biological, cultural and social perpetuation which will not disappear in a thousand years.

Of course, if the notion of private property within the context of International Law was applied, the lands expropriated by Germany and thereafter by South Africa would have been private property in favour of the peasants and the workers of Namibia.

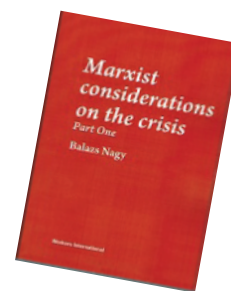
The essential difference between the colonial era and the post-colonial (independence) era is that racism was fought politically and rejected internationally while racism after independence has become a legal and institutionalised norm.

The above concepts will be used in my further posting of the Rehoboth land case.

ESSENTIAL READING

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"

'Unions in the firing line'

published in the British daily *Morning Star* on 22 August 2014

(see http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-8a5a-Unions-in-the-firing-line#.U_83VWPWCyV, also <http://www.ier.org.uk/blog/unions-firing-line.>)

George Harissis is a leading Greek public sector trade unionist and a member of the Central Committee of the radical left party, Syriza.

Activists in the UK Greece Solidarity Campaign have worked closely with him and his union confederation in the course of various delegations and other solidarity work they have done.

Co-Chair of Greece Solidarity Campaign and Haringey Borough Councillor Isidoros Diakides not only translated this article into English, he also provided a post-script which clearly explains the significance of the discussion it raises:

"Although detailed rights and freedoms of workers vary from one country to another, it seems clear that there is a co-ordinated attack on them across Europe designed to 'harmonise' such rights and freedoms around the lowest common denominator" ... "with political actors and trade unionists here in Britain increasingly becoming aware that the real target of the reforms imposed in Greece, is not just the Greek labour market, but the European one."

It is heartening for a "political activist and trade unionist" in Britain to read George Harissis' wholehearted denunciation of "the influence of neo-liberal perceptions" and "conservative and social-democratic parties" for inspiring a current in the trade union movement which accepts retrograde labour "reforms" and views the "capitalist classes and their political parties" (in plain language, the bourgeoisie) as "social partners".

We who live elsewhere in Europe have seen many examples of such believers in "social partnership" obstructing and disorganising our work too.

It is even more heartening when Harissis clearly describes these forces as "class enemies against whom our class has to constantly struggle".

Harissis describes how the initial struggle against the "memoranda" regime in Greece was hampered because dominant sections of the Greek trade union movement were "influenced" (one is more tempted to say infiltrated, poisoned and corrupted) by

social democrats and conservatives who failed to see the crisis as a "systemic capitalist" one and therefore "believed that it was possible to solve it by simply reducing public expenditure".

"As a result" these sections of the movement " ... did not join the fight to defend their colleagues in the public sector", Harissis comments.

As he says, the end result was that the working class lost hard-won rights.

But while the struggle that other parts of the trade union movement did put up failed to stop the attacks, they "nevertheless delayed substantially their implementation and have, crucially, changed the political scenery of the country".

He explains that the "changed scenery" involves above all the rise of the radical left Syriza party, which currently tops the polls in Greece and has a serious prospect of forming the next government.

But it is clear to him that the trade union movement is "the main on the ground opposition to the politicians of the 'memoranda' parties", which is why "the government is so determined to constrain its activities".

Many trade unionists across Europe will recognise what he is describing when he explains the legal attacks upon trade union and working class rights in order to curb this "main on the ground opposition".

Indeed, some attacks in Greece are more extreme than anything that has yet been tried in the UK. For example, we are familiar here with judges and courts ruling strikes illegal, but the bourgeoisie has not yet resorted to conscripting strikers (for example on public transport, the fire service or the NHS) and placing them under military discipline. In Greece this has been done to electrical supply workers, teachers, railway workers, dockers and local government workers.

But we are familiar with the attacks on collective bargaining and negotiation, raising the bar on strike ballots to impossible levels, allowing employers to use lock-outs, attacks on time-off for local trade union leaders to represent

members, loss of office space and similar "facilities", etc.

George Harissis notes that victimisation by sacking is now a commonplace way to silence shop-floor trade unionists, a situation which is sadly all too familiar in many other countries.

The bourgeoisie in power in Greece is also attacking the funding of trade unions, and using its friends in the media to attack and discredit trade unions "in order to abolish any social or union resistance".

But this thoughtful and resonant presentation stops dead at this point, when it stands out off the page that what is needed is practical proposals for a real step forward in the development of a movement of resistance embracing the whole continent!

As Isidoros Diakides makes absolutely clear in his postscript, the policy of the bourgeoisie is to suck more and more out of the working class and working people across Europe.

Marxists explain that capitalism works by extracting surplus value from labour. When people work, their labour creates new value above and beyond that required to replace that labour consumed in the act of production. This surplus value is the basis for profit.

Every gain working people have made in either wages and working conditions or in the social sphere is at the cost of the share of surplus value which falls to the bourgeoisie.

The capitalist system cannot any longer tolerate the concessions it was previously obliged to make to working people, and the bourgeoisie is absolutely determined to claw them back, not just in Greece, but everywhere.

So this is an issue of vital relevance for workers and working people across the continent, but specific, concrete proposals are needed to make their resistance a real and developing force!

For example, we must propose and seek to bring about a meeting of all those in the trade union and political movement from every country in Europe who wish to start building a continent-wide movement of resistance.

This should not just be one of those occasional conferences (such as we have seen over the last couple of years) which are then dropped and left without any outcome. There needs to be put together a standing organisation of resistance which meets regularly to plan and co-ordinate opposition to the attacks George Harissis describes (and which we are all familiar with in our own experience).

And as soon as such a co-ordination starts to take shape, it must speak up for a Europe of Working People in opposition not only to the Europe of the bourgeoisie and the bankers but also to the reactionary nightmare of the retreat into nation-states advocated by growing far-right and fascist movements.

As Yorgos Harissis says, this is a "systemic capitalist" crisis, so a realistic movement against it can only be based on progress towards replacing capitalism with a different type of society, socialism. This means making real inroads into the capitalist system itself.

One important advantage of a permanent, continent-wide co-ordination is that it would make it possible to work for a genuine, positive harmonisation of social provision (benefits, etc.) across the continent.

This would cut across the "race to the bottom" and the accompanying attempts to incite working people of different countries against each other and to whip up backward hysteria about cheap labour undercutting wage levels, "benefit tourism" and all the other inventions inculcated by the gutter press.

Such a body needs to be open to the widest range of resistance movements but should advocate and advance frankly working class methods of struggle and the socialist politics of the workers' movement. It must specifically take up the issues which Yorgos Harissis raises (and proposals in response to them) systematically in the trade unions across the continent.

The issue of "debt" plays a powerful role in the plans of the ruling bourgeoisie. There are many things one could say about banking and debt, but the important point here is that it is a means of sucking the life-blood out of the masses of working people.

Debt in this context is an instrument of mass blackmail. Millions of homeowners are driven to put up with unpleasant, humiliating and actually inhuman employment situations in order to meet the monthly mortgage repayments they owe.

Members of the bourgeoisie love to borrow large sums of money, for example to buy shares in businesses, which businesses are consequently deeply in debt. The debt is used to drive attacks on working conditions and employment, destroying jobs and forcing workers to work ever more intensively and to subordinate themselves more and more slavishly to the requirements of the job.

Government debt is the most parasitical tool of all. It is the blunt instrument to impose massive attacks on the social expenditure which provides an entire life-support system for the masses, including health provision, benefits for the sick and the old and those unable to work and education for all, while also pocketing colossal sums of money. To put it simply, international lenders such as banks regularly siphon off a significant proportion of the surplus value created in the debtor countries. The obligation to repay the debt is used as a pretext to cut and destroy social rights and gains

Therefore a European movement co-ordinating resistance to austerity would find it absolutely necessary to join with and encourage all those calling for an inquiry or "audit" into the alleged levels of government indebtedness. This inquiry should investigate what is owed and why and to whom and could then report back to working people with recommendations about how the matter should be dealt with.

It should be led by trustworthy experts with working knowledge of the field and should include representatives of workers, working women and housewives and students and young people.

All such an inquiry's proceedings should be in public and its findings should be widely publicised.

Unemployment is another scourge which arises directly from the systemic crisis of capitalism and in turn is used as a weapon to impose wage cuts and intensify exploitation. The threat of the sack is used to discipline workers and weaken their resolve to resist. At the same time unemployment offers the bourgeoisie opportunities to create and encourage splits between those in work and those who are unemployed, especially exploiting ethnic, national, gender and generational tensions.

Europe's economies are closely mutually dependent, with production by individual industries and firms spread across different member states and employers able to switch and relocate production relatively simply. The

idea that unemployment can now be dealt with on a national basis is a reactionary pipe-dream. So we need a movement across the continent which actively challenges the bourgeoisie's domination and control of economic life.

This requires, for example, building the kind of continent-wide movement that can popularise and fight for workers' control of plant threatened with closure. This will mean carefully preparing a broadly-based campaign in support of workers' control to defend jobs.

Workers faced with redundancy have been hitherto been prepared to occupy plant threatened with closure, but usually only on a temporary basis to force better severance and redundancy agreements out of their employers. So far, calls for actual workers' control of production have been generally viewed quite sceptically by workforces. We need the kind of movement that can embed the struggle for workers' control of production in mass community support. The bourgeoisie is playing hardball, and working people need to fight back with the same conviction.

Finally, the kind of movement that is needed would have to fight for genuine democracy in the way Europe is governed. The current institutions of the European Union are a set of despotic and secretive bodies and arrangements which are under the direct untrammelled control of the bourgeoisie and exist to further their designs.

There has to be a complete clean-out of for example the European Commission and the various Directorates, the European Central Bank and the European Parliament. New institutions have to be devised and put in place which function in the service of working people.

The first necessary step towards that is to work for the idea of a European Constituent Assembly and an understanding that, brushing aside the whole artificial theatre or rather farce of the bourgeoisie's Europe, this is the only way that a truly democratic set of institutions can be carefully prepared and established.

A programme like this would be a worthy response to the problems George Harissis describes and a situation which we know is full of real dangers. A programme like this could really inspire and generate the kind of movement we need.

Bob Archer
July 2014

Euro-election shock

The surprise results in the European elections earlier this year mean all political organisations have to re-evaluate the overall situation and their own policies

Complete bankruptcy of bourgeois Europe

Two highly revealing and significant facts stand out about these elections, as a whole and in each individual country. First, and certainly foremost, is the particularly high level of abstentions (approaching 60% in France!), concentrated, moreover, in conurbations where workers and working people live. Abstentions were clearly higher, it needs to be said, in the countries of Eastern Europe (more than 70% in the great majority of them, over 80% in Slovakia and the Czech Republic). This clearly reflects their secondary position within European "unity".

The second is the unprecedented and ubiquitous growth of fascist or semi-fascist oppositions, a far right which actually came first in certain countries (France, UK, Denmark).

Apart from anything else, the first and most obvious conclusion is that the vast majority of Europeans are turning their backs on and definitively rejecting that monstrous construct called "European union". This central conclusion cannot be queried or challenged just by reference to the obviously broad range of views among those who abstained, or even voted for the far-right. Of course each of their various – and sadly all too often reactionary, retrograde or simply backward – motives is crucially significant in its own way. We should note, however, that many of those who voted for the far-right probably did so in protest against that Europe, rather than out of support for fascist ideology. Be that as it may, these results express an irrevocable verdict on the part of Europeans as a whole: They are absolutely opposed to the bourgeoisie's pseudo-Europe, which they massively reject and will not tolerate.

Bourgeois leaders' vicious and criminal intransigence

Late on 25 May, French TV channels ran the election results and what the various political party representatives had to say about them. The evening's viewing provided a good opportunity to assess the immediate reactions of a whole range of the country's political parties, from the conservative or social-

democratic official spokespeople for the Euro-homunculus right through to the opposition, by way of the leaders of Front de Gauche (Left Front) and Front National (National Front) and everything in between. What they said made it blindingly obvious that literally not a single one of the representatives of this bankers' Europe has understood what voters are trying to tell them, clear as that message has been. Not a single one of the social democratic leaders or their traditional bourgeois partner-cum-opponents, nor the various subordinate currents which gravitate around them, had grasped what this means. That, of course, only surprised those incorrigibly naïve people who still take them seriously.

The main leader of the reactionary brain-dead in the Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP) is Jean-François Copé. All they could offer was the consolation that they had gained ground at the expense of Hollande's Parti socialiste (PS). Their noisy self-satisfaction, however, was tempered by regret at being overtaken by the National Front. They sadly resigned themselves to the fact that the rusty European hulk had just gone under, but had little to offer when it came to explaining why. Not that they even tried. Copé simply blamed Hollande's policies for this setback, obviously without realising that they are both in the same rather fragile European boat. Under these conditions, how could they have seen that the reason their European cockleshell foundered was design and construction defects rather than something the captain had done wrong (Even if the latter's incompetence did accentuate the more basic flaws). As a result, they were all equally baffled by the huge advances the far right made right across the continent, and just saw it as a minor passing accident.

Alain Juppé speaks for another wing of the same party, allegedly more thoughtful and moderate, but even he could not rise above the same cheap parliamentarism. Being a more serious politician than his less sophisticated colleague Copé, he at least made the effort to sketch a political line to beat

the National Front. Quickly adding the 10% of votes won by the bourgeois centre parties to the 20-21 % the UMP got, he triumphantly declared that the resulting 30% of votes cast easily beat the National Front's 25%. All you needed to do was combine the UMP and centre parties' votes, and a thorny political problem tuned into a simple parliamentary manoeuvre.

These recently-merged centre parties came in fourth place just in front of the ecologists, followed in 6th place by the Left Front. So they showed loud and overflowing satisfaction and were at pains to emphasise, in their enthusiastic congratulations, that their totally but critically pro-European policy is the way out of the current deadlock.

In fact all these good people were forced to acknowledge that current policy on Europe has suffered a resounding setback. What else could they do? They even bandied words like "failings", "convulsions" and "chaos". Oddly, but completely in keeping with their bourgeois political commitments, none of them could see that what causes it is this bourgeois Europe's destructive nature. They simply could not see that what people were rejecting was precisely this Europe.

In general, they were all self-critical, although almost all of them more or less blamed the government and Hollande personally, except for the Socialist Party – and Green – representatives. But let's not exaggerate.

Any normal person – if he or she were childishly naïve – would expect these politicians and journalists to apologise for imposing on Europe policies that the voters massively rejected. Far from it! Every single one re-stated their commitment to those very same policies, then beat their breasts for not having done more to explain (!) the setback their bourgeois Europe had suffered.

But in fact this Europe has been so well explained, not only by pervasive and aggressive propaganda but also by an eloquently destructive practice, that voters rejected it precisely because they know exactly what it means.

Socialist Party leaders just as perverse

This sort of collective blindness on the part of politicians and journalists discussing the stinging rebuff their Europe had suffered is truly amazing. It presents striking and repulsive image of the system's so-called "elite" which absolutely captures its decadent nature. What it foreshadows – should its miserable existence be prolonged – is an uncertain future full of looming threats, convulsions, pain and repeated shocks.

But the (socialist) government promptly also went in for denial of reality. TV viewers saw a clearly shocked Prime Minister Valls nevertheless insisting that the measures he has been taking in recent times are exactly what the voters wanted. To tell the truth, he had to blind himself to reality so absurdly just to justify staying in government.

But so contemptuous a distortion of the truth was contradicted not only by the facts but also the prime minister's haggard and extremely upset appearance and his dazed and lugubrious tone, which clashed oddly with the artificial joviality he sometimes affects in his new role. He really seemed to be falling apart under the seismic impact.

We should point out immediately that the very next day President Hollande stubbornly and unblushingly confirmed that they would carry on with their criminal policies which, together with their "responsibility plan", he presented as if it was what the voters said they wanted! This shameless arrogance went much, much further than even Valls' insolent effrontery. The wily old politician's practised and cool cynicism in political lying made up for the panic his rattled minister showed.

Just like all their pseudo-opponents, they both attributed the voters' general rejection of the bourgeoisie to the weakness and inadequacy of the propaganda explaining what they thought and what they were doing in relation to Europe. This brutal travesty of the truth foreshadows a swift deterioration in already difficult living conditions and even greater shocks in future.

In the absence of working-class policies, others make gains

The most telling feature of these elections has been the striking absence of genuine workers' parties. More exactly: none of the various political organisations which actually fight against the bourgeoisie's policy on Europe – and to their credit they undeniably do that – have managed to

free themselves from major shortcomings which show their dependence on the bourgeoisie.

For one thing, they do not go beyond a very restricted level of simply criticising the bourgeoisie's policy on Europe. None of them has yet been able to open a concrete perspective of a working-class Europe radically opposed to the kind of Europe the bourgeoisie are concocting. For another, and bound up with this negative position, each of them has developed their criticisms over Europe firmly within the limitations of their own strictly national framework, except for a few sentimental rather than effective solidarity links and the occasional sprinkling of gatherings and resolutions left over from the past.

Altogether and in general, all these organisations are therefore captives of the given capitalist system and submit to its pressure. Here, too, they are still largely influenced, by the enduring ideology of social democracy and Stalinism, whose national, not to say nationalist, political horizon has always been a bulwark against internationalist Marxism. The few scattered allusions to the Socialist United States of Europe we get from certain organisations of Trotskyist origin do not change anything in this general picture, since these chance references are completely detached from daily reality, hanging in mid-air and placed as far in the future as religion's Kingdom of Heaven.

Under these conditions, the rout inflicted upon the bourgeoisie's policy over Europe has led to not only a spectacular resurgence of fascist and semi-fascist organisations but also the emergence and proliferation of petit-bourgeois formations in general. (We leave aside, for the moment, analysing the considerable advances by UKIP in the UK and the People's Party in Denmark, both of which came first. They campaign openly for putting the bourgeoisie back in the driving seat and, in order to do so, they make abundant use of fascist ammunition against impoverished peoples and the migrants from their ranks and for the restoration of the national state).

As for the advances made by the fascists, it is significant that bourgeois commentators try to console themselves over the setback they have suffered with the feeble thought that fascists are unable to form a homogeneous group in the European Parliament. Splitting hairs like this is pathetic in itself, since instead of explaining why the fascists are growing so strongly, they try to make it disappear by exploit-

ing a problem that arises precisely from their growth. Nevertheless, it is true that there are differences, not to say considerable divergences between them. Maybe you cannot identify Nigel Farage's British UKIP with Golden Dawn in Greece modelled on Hitler's Nazi party, or even with the Front National in France. Nevertheless this UKIP, like the Danish People's Party, draws its politics from the same fascist arsenal. Their frenzied nationalism and clear orientation towards re-establishing a strong national state together with aggression against migrant workers and peoples of the former colonies and dependent states puts them in the same camp of semi-fascists and impels them in that direction.

From a different point of view, the idea that in the past all fascist parties stuck together in unity was always a myth invented by the bourgeoisie – and Stalinists. There were well-known differences and divergences, even between Hitler and Mussolini, for example and even when they were fighting on the same side, which tended to iron them out. To say nothing of the distinctions between Franco's party and Salazar's and others, or the military dictatorships drawn into Hitler's gravitational field.

This crying absence of genuine workers' politics is also what has allowed a set of straightforwardly petit-bourgeois political parties to flourish like mushrooms after rain. They, too, are distinguished from each other in various ways, but in a quite different fashion from the fascist or semi-fascist organisations whose open and resolute support for capitalism unifies them on the extreme right. At the same time there is a significant difference between the majority of the petit-bourgeois organisations developing a critique of bourgeois politics from the left of the political chess-board and others who try to maintain a pseudo-independence. What they all have in common, for all their often quite broad political diversity, is the attempt to camouflage society's division into classes. They replace this with secondary and sometimes quite odd problems on the basis of a shared and savage hostility to the conception of class struggle and Marxism in general.

Whether these organisations are right or left, older and larger, like the ecologists, or recent and local like "Podemos" in Spain, we can for the moment postpone their examination, necessary as it may be. On the other hand, there are, in France at least, organisations which claim to speak on

behalf of working people about which it has become essential to reflect seriously.

Where do Left Front and its European partners stand?

The Left Front coalition, which took off big time in a left-radical way during the presidential elections and since, has quite rightly raised many hopes. It created confidence that a big, genuine workers' party could replace the old, compromised social-democratic and Stalinist parties mired in class-collaboration. Consequently it also embodied the concrete possibility of the re-birth and development of the new, big revolutionary party the situation requires. And that is why, despite the inevitable and tenacious residues of its origins which blemish its activities and retard its development, it was necessary to encourage and support this initiative. It marked and expressed the possibility of a renewal of the revolutionary movement in the face of the opportunist decadence of the traditional workers' parties and also the sterile blind alley in which various organisations with a more and more blurred reference to Trotskyism find themselves. The fact that more or less identical movements came about and developed in Greece (Syriza) and Germany (Die Linke) indicated that the conditions for their existence were not only present in Europe but had also matured.

However, while supporting the Left Front, we have had to intensify our criticisms around the negative character of its political line, i.e. its reduction to a simple critique of current policy and striking lack of a workers' programme for fighting the bourgeoisie. After the municipal elections, our journal *Lutte des Classes* (no 22) wrote that in the absence of such a programme "the Left Front is condemned to mark time while the National Front has made considerable progress, including among discontented workers." (English translation printed in *Workers' International Journal* no 5, June 2014). A month later, just before the European elections, we anticipated in the same journal (no 24) that "Perhaps a pathetic result at the ballot box will shake these organisations' centrist outlook and unleash a movement for their renewal. It is a hope to cling to". (English translation printed in *Workers' International Journal* no 5, June 2014).

Indeed, the Left Front's disastrous election results fully confirmed these fears and our criticisms. In view not just of the much better results they had got in the presidential elections but also the much worse current situation, their

miserable 6.3% of the vote represents an obvious decline. This real collapse exposes a disparity, not to say a contradiction, between the Left Front's programme on the one hand and the steadily worsening situation working people face on the other. But sadly, the initial reactions to this resounding defeat are worse than disappointing, expressing a level of astonishment at the meagre results matched only by an inability to comprehend them.

The morning after the elections, J.-L. Mélançon presented his party cadres and the media with the plaintive and tearful commentary of a beaten chief. He more or less repeated what he had said on TV the previous night (mentioned above). He was so grief-stricken that he could hardly hold back the tears and he drew his comments to a rapid close to avoid breaking out in sobs.

This physically awkward appearance itself revealed a man moaning on at his wits' end rather than a fighter reflecting on the lessons of a temporary defeat. Indeed, the lamentable way he presented his interpretation of the results completely matched the whining and recriminatory content of his remarks. Faced with the cresting progress of the National Front, he lost any sense of proportion and got bitterly distressed about this "end of civilisation" (?), just as over the top as a few days earlier when he had shown boundless confidence that the Left Front would amaze everyone with how well it would do. (Sadly, the phenomenon this exaggerated and one-sided judgement failed to address was the very high level of abstentions.)

He said absolutely nothing about the possibility that his own organisation's political line might be mistaken – any such idea seemed to be outlandish, not to say sacrilegious – so all that remained was for him to try to lay the blame on the situation and/or working people. Comrade Melançon avoided saying it outright, but at the end of his breast-beating he couldn't stop himself from appealing to working people to take heart again and see where their real interests lay, which was a barely-disguised way of making them responsible for the setback.

Syriza in Greece, with visibly the same politics, did manage to come out clearly on top in the elections with 26.6% of the votes, but that was solely because the situation there is different and more favourable. The bankruptcy of Pasok, the social-democratic party, already happened earlier. Together with the servile way the bourgeois New Democracy party fell into line behind

Brussels and its Troika, this opened the door wide for Syriza, and this was extended even further by the openly and repellently Hitlero-fascist politics of Golden Dawn. However, these more advantageous conditions should not make us forget that the conservatives came hard on Syriza's heels with 23.1% of the votes, while here, too, abstentions amounted to more than 40% of the electorate. In Germany die Linke also saw their share of the vote drop to 6.5%, more or less the same as Left Front, given that quite a number of voters could see no difference between this formation and the SPD (Social-Democratic Party of Germany) in "opposition".

As for Tsipras (Syriza) standing against Barroso in the election of the new President of the European Commission, this was just opportunist grandstanding. By doing this, these parties justified and legitimated this instrument of bourgeois dictatorship for grinding the working people of Europe under the iron heel of its policies. Tsipras' political line, with a tinge of anti-German feeling (such is his nationalist resentment at the supremacy of German capital within the bourgeoisie's arrangements) clearly express the content of this opportunism. What it actually indicates is that he thought – and still thinks – that he can use the same rotten and anti-democratic organs ... for policies in favour of working people. This involves bourgeois policies without austerity, a big investment programme, a New Deal, he says credulously. So it's no surprise that now, instead of Barroso, he is backing Juncker from Luxembourg, the close and fervent friend of the big bankers, the initiator and boss of the hated Troika! There's only one way to describe this kind of clowning: going backwards.

Responsibility of the traditional far left

The general decline in these promising formations (with the exception of Syriza in Greece where it is prospering due to various objective factors) is completely mirrored by the spectacular advances the far right is making. Now such symmetry is not somehow caused by the balance of nature; the pitiful retreat by the former has directly conditioned the considerable progress the latter have made. But where is the so-called Marxist far left?

If one looks in France, for example, and also at a European level, for reasons why it has not been possible to re-discover and develop a genuine workers' programme, there is no doubt

that a significant share of the responsibility rests with the three biggest organisations which have come out of Trotskyism and profess that tradition. Without of course pretending to be able to describe then completely here, some general comments are required in relation to this responsibility.

First and foremost, for all the differences of outlook between the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA of Alain Krivine and Olivier Besancenot), Lutte Ouvriere (LO, Workers Fight, formerly of Arlette Laguiller) and the Lambertist Parti des Travailleurs (Workers Party), differences due mainly to their respective histories, all these organisations have taken a negative attitude towards the Left Front. They have regarded this newcomer with a lot of distrust and not a little jealousy: after all, they come from the suspect milieu of social democracy and Stalinism and, what's much worse, trespassed on private hunting preserves.

From the outset they carefully avoid getting "compromised" with the Communist Party and Melanchon's new party in the Left Front, which they treated with hostile suspicion. Moreover, they unanimously rejected the slightest sustained cooperation in struggle, a united front, indeed, and even any electoral alliance with these plague-carriers who had come to disturb their established daily routine. In fact, after the last big battle of clarification in Trotskyist ranks in 1952-1953, they settled down comfortably into their special role of licensed public revolutionary, a role they practice according to an arcane ritual they call Marxism. In fact it was and remains a profanation of the Marxist method, opposed to it in every way and which, to put it briefly, consists in trying to separate and fix, restrict and freeze the conditions of struggle, in particular the activity and circumference of the revolutionary organisation.

How can you expect these organisations to apply the policy of the united front or join in this Left Front coalition or at least form an electoral alliance with it, when they have been virtually incapable of establishing such an alliance between themselves for the last 60 (!) years.

Since the 1952-1953 split, the ditch separating them has just got bigger and bigger and each on its own side has settled into the split in the Fourth International as an eternal destiny in which each one has its own special corner. They have demonstrated their complete incapacity to sort out rebuilding the Fourth International, considering

the two other organisations to be enemies definitively and totally lost to that process of rebuilding. In the absence of any ability to resolve or even confront the problem at the base of the break (i.e. the problem of re-building), the split intensified further and dramatically the original cause of the separation, that is, Pabloite revisionism, systematising it into generalised opportunism via Mandel's "neo-capitalism" and finally culminating in the furtive abandonment of Marxism. But this fatalistic mutual acceptance of the break, on the other hand, also reinforced the sectarian isolation of the anti-Pabloite critics, fixed their sterile enclosure in the ivory towers of their verities singularly lacking in any perspective that offered a solution.

Where did this monumental historical deficiency arise from, a deficiency whose effects have gone on for decades and transformed what started off as a split into a veritable dislocation of the International, then into today's yawning abyss where, alongside false propositions, reaction too takes root?

Throughout their history, the French Trotskyist organisations (like the others) have been more or less intensely affected by the influence of Stalinist conceptions, often preponderant and always corrosive. Even while Trotsky was still alive, this defect was made considerably worse by the petit-bourgeois composition of the organisation, driven to the margins of the workers' movement by the Stalinists. After Trotsky's assassination, followed by the total collapse at the end of the war and then the split, whatever organisations emerged divided again, not between the real Marxists and the others, but along the lines of the various – but all equally mistaken – strategic versions which the Stalinists applied in the course of their history. The different Trotskyist organisations followed either Stalinism's right-wing orientation, or the ultra-leftism of the "Third Period". Very often they mixed the opportunism of the one with the sectarianism of the other.

But as concerns the method of political struggle in general and building the party in particular, the former Pabloites currently in the NPA, the Lambertists in the parti des travailleurs and Lutte Ouvriere invariably shared the same outrageous sectarianism, firstly towards the other "Trotskyist" tendencies and then in relation to the workers' movement as a whole. They looked at the Left Front in the same way.

Trotsky once commented that the Stalinists regarded Rosa Luxemburg

with a great deal of suspicion, unable to tell whether she was a friend or an enemy. Now the NPA, with its Pabloite origins, looks askance at the Left Front in exactly the same way (not, of course, that that makes the Left Front into any sort of Rosa Luxemburg). These hesitations have, nevertheless, already caused a number of splits in the NPA. First, a group led by Christian Picquet, then another one, split away and joined the Left Front. These breaks, however, have not led to the necessary re-awakening of the organisation as a whole. So the groups that split away have maintained their centrist character and remained unable to change anything at all in the Left Front, while the NPA has continued its unprincipled hesitation waltz.

As for Lutte Ouvrière, it has continued imperturbably on its solitary way, marked from its very origins by hostility to the proclamation of the Fourth International and by its nationalist seclusion. It persists in its isolation with an inveterate sectarianism in which both their behaviour and the arguments they use look strangely similar to the ultra-left politics of "Third Period" Stalinism. True to form, this organisation gleefully reported the Left Front's latest electoral setback as if this justified its hostility to the Front.

One can describe Lutte Ouvrière's sectarianism as intrinsic. That of the Lambertist organisation, on the other hand, is, one might say, "tempered" by its special and occasional opportunism (in contrast to the more generalised opportunism of the NPA). The Lambertist organisation is sectarian in relation to the Front de Gauche and the CFDT trade union and even the CGT, but flatly opportunist in relation to the Force Ouvrière trade union, which has been its privileged partner since that union came into being. It is opportunist towards social democracy, which it likes to identify with the working class, but the Lambertist organisation's Achilles' heel is its inclination to substitute the struggle for national sovereignty for the international class struggle. And so in 2013 the congress of their "International" suddenly decide to concentrate the international mobilisation of its militants in the "defence" of Algeria against some imaginary threat of US military intervention! Obviously this "threat" never materialised, but the whole thing worked marvellously to distract the attention of activists from, for example, the problems of Europe.

So, with either an occasional or an intrinsic sectarian conception (which

they claim to be Marxist) in relation to every other organisation such as the Left Front, they too took their own lonely, isolated stand in the recent European elections. Obviously (what is more) they lacked a clear working-class policy on Europe dealing with concrete and current problems. And of course they each in their own corner garnered about 1% of the vote – actually worse than usual, while the Left Front just got weaker.

Such sectarian outlooks, and the concomitant opportunism, are the natural products of an aristocratic conception of the party (their party!), separated from the workers' movement as a whole in a water-tight compartment, whose building is reduced to the rigorous and individual selection of the few elect into a separate elite. This sect conception, detached and distant from the masses, is only applicable at most to clandestine conditions, but it is disastrous in open political struggle. Right through modern history, it has been opposed to Marxism and its application. Since the Communist Manifesto, Marxism has clearly established, against any sectarian or elitist point of view, that it is the workers' movement as a whole, all the changes it undergoes and the methods it uses, that constitute not just the terrain but the very skeleton of the revolutionary party itself.

The Manifesto unequivocally emphasised: "The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole". Nor do they "set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement". And in conclusion: "the communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing political and social order of things". Political – and theoretical – struggle unfolds within this framework as a necessary means of clarification, not as some sort of selection criterion.

Now isolated and besieged as it was, and giving way to the pressure of capital, Stalinism in the USSR perverted Marxism, including Lenin's heritage. They adapted it to the requirements of staying in power: conciliatory towards capital and violently opposed to the workers' movement as a whole. Once Trotsky was lost, his heirs in turn succumbed to this de-natured and corrupt "Marxism".

Concretely each and every one of these "Trotskyist" formations think that in and through itself the revolutionary party already exists, and build-

ing it is simply a matter of linear and progressive growth through recruiting individuals one after another. With strictly individual recruitment of this sort, which is normal in a secret society but absolutely alien to Marxism, they can denounce all other organisations, lumping their members together with their leaderships.

These organisations are condemned to decline, although this is masked and retarded by their prolonged vegetation, punctuated by successive electoral setbacks. It is a fact which should stir their members to study past and recent experiences very carefully and draw the necessary conclusions, especially since the long decades of defeats and setbacks the international workers' movement has suffered, made particularly worse by the liquidation of the USSR and the changes in the composition of the working class, have profoundly altered the habitually-known conditions for resuming the struggle.

The essential feature in these negative changes has been the general repudiation of Marxism and socialism at the same time as the Soviet Union collapsed and was disowned. Since this workers' state was associated with the Stalinist bureaucratic regime, Marxism in turn was identified with the falsification of it at the hands of the same bureaucracy. The whole thing was greatly facilitated by the evolution and changing composition of the working class which was happening at the same time and the growth of petit-bourgeois intermediary layers. The results were not long in coming: On the one hand a shrinkage and ossification of living Marxism reduced to the level of dogma in ancient texts; on the other, a more and more flagrant contradiction between the growing size of the mass movements and their theoretical poverty, not to say the complete absence of any theory. Under these conditions, the masses' apprenticeship in struggle needs more explanations and time, and activists' development requires much more patience.

Ramblings based on impressions replacing theory

Flagrant impotence, therefore, is sadly what characterises all the organisations on the far left who oppose bourgeois politics and its Europe. Their impotence in a situation which should actually favour their development means we must undertake a serious critique of the theoretical arsenal underlying the political dead-end they are in.

We have already glanced at the way the organisations which arose out of

the dislocation and often repudiation of the Fourth International share responsibility for the Left Front's stagnation. They have been through a long death-agony and floundered, inflicting their own death-blow by repudiating or diluting the Marxism that alone could provide a theoretical, either by simply and clearly dropping it (NPA), or by letting it ossify into a collection of classical assertions ("Lutte Ouvrière" and the Lambertists).

Consequently there has been no pressure on the Left Front on sharpen up its theoretical armaments by accepting and developing creative Marxism, so that it remains captive to profoundly mistaken theoretical considerations which it peddles, like birth-marks inherited from its social-democratic and Stalinist parentage and which tie it to the existing social and political order. A recent work by the Left Party's leading economist, Jacques Généreux, provides a useful opportunity to evaluate concretely the dominant theoretical conceptions in the Left Front. *Jacques Généreux explique l'économie à tout le monde (Jacques Généreux Explains Economics for All)* is a 331-page book published quite recently (May 2014) by Seuil. It sums up rather well the theoretical nonsense the Left Front has strayed into, but which affects all organisations on the far left to one degree or another.

This economic inspirer of the Left Front thinks that the post-war period known as the "thirty glorious years" of the economy "... which persisted until the 70s, had very little to do with capitalism in the strict sense." (p.41), because "... the big industrial countries developed in a new system in which the holders of capital no longer had complete freedom or the powers which that confers". (p.42) It is important to note that as far as he is concerned, this "new system" is the goal for which we must strive.

To bolster this bold and surprising conclusion he lists some of the rules he claims limited the omnipotence of capital, although he carefully avoids putting a name to this "new system" which supposedly replaced capitalism. This prudent approach enables him later to note that during the 1980s capitalism returned in strength, simply thanks to various counter measures.

We should not waste too much time on this – to put it mildly – extremely cavalier way of dealing with the change of a whole mode of production, which in principle (and in historical practice) can only be the outcome of significant social factors accompanied by political

overturns. We merely need to underline that this crude and simplistic view exposes total ignorance, not just of the real reason for the “thirty glorious years”, but also of the resounding social struggles that took place during those years. In fact it is fairly easy to understand the historical movement of powerful social and political forces whose interaction engendered these so-called “thirty glorious years”.

Capitalism entered the war in order to suppress its insurmountable and prolonged economic political crisis which broke out in 1929. It came out of the war in 1944-1945 even weaker and more exhausted than at the beginning. In the course of the war the relationship of forces between it and the world working class had shifted strongly in favour of the latter. From the beginning of 1943, the proletarian revolution was spreading in several countries in Europe and Asia, stimulated by the Soviet Union’s Red Army’s powerful offensive.

The bourgeois political regimes which had been vassals of fascism or had fallen victim to it collapsed one after the other. The revolution was on the march – but enemies were at work within its own ranks. Above all, it was the active collaboration of the leaderships of the workers’ movement, the Stalinist parties especially and in particular, which saved the capitalist system from total collapse, a powerful rescue operation prepared and orchestrated by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union as a resolute ally of the “democratic” bourgeoisie.

Now if this new-style Holy Alliance actually did strangle the revolution, which failed everywhere (except in Yugoslavia and China, where it was brought to an abrupt halt) it nevertheless left a deep impression on the bourgeois regimes which re-emerged after the war. In other words, the bourgeoisie’s faithful servants who had sold the revolution for a mess of pottage had to be rewarded. Within a relationship of forces clearly in favour of the proletariat, this mess of pottage had to be paid for.

Such was the particular class configuration which formed the basis for the “thirty glorious years”, whose backcloth was the open and direct going-over of the Stalinist bureaucracy and its agents as a whole to the active counter-revolution. To be sure, they did not perform this immense service for free and without a recompense that let them justify and retain their influence. The extent of the concessions the bourgeoisie granted in turn reflected the degree

of danger that menaced capitalism. It also demonstrated the bourgeoisie’s great fear, since it went very far into these compromises in its concern to preserve the system, even so far as to grant concessions which altered its very appearance, and to adjust the form of its rule. It changed its face without altering its character. The capitalist wolf mutated into a loving grandmother who carefully retained her “big teeth”.

A lot of people were fooled by this ability of the bourgeoisie to manoeuvre in order to stay in power. The whole of what they call the “Left” fell for it. The chief ideologue of the Left Party, the economist Jacques Généreux, expresses this fundamental and general error like this: “Between 1945 and 1975, many industrial countries were no longer within a real capitalist economy. What rescued the industrialised countries ... is precisely they fact that they got out of the capitalist system as Marx described it. In place of this capitalism ... they substituted a mixed and highly-regulated economy in which salaried managers and civil servants had more power than the capitalists.” (p.43).

Here, Jacques Généreux says openly what people on the “Left” and even many on the far left thought more quietly without daring to put it so crudely. This way of looking at things rests entirely on the firm conviction that this whole lucky mutation came from the bourgeoisie itself which, acting freely and of its own accord, decided to make capitalism more bearable out of its infinite wisdom and magnanimity.

The class struggle, indeed any sort of struggle at all, is totally conjured away in this imaginary society ruled by understanding and discernment. The theoretical crutch upon which this conception rests presents itself as an obviously wrong interpretation of Marxism, which Généreux reduces to a few formulae, missing out the essential part. This is indicated already by the simple fact that throughout the whole 331 page book the word “class” (to say nothing of “class struggle”) does not even appear!

The basis for this misunderstanding and, more concretely, the idyllic transformation of capitalism into a regulated and more humane (but undefined) system is, therefore, an obvious ignorance of capitalism itself. To be more exact, it is a total misunderstanding (or deliberate omission) of its nature and its historic evolution, as well as of their inner driving forces and content. Even more concretely, it is capitalism moving

on from its classic, ascendant phase to its decline, death-agony and the manifold determinations involved which are missing in this fixed, immobile, capitalism. It is a well-known procedure frequently used by pseudo-Marxists who refer to Marx but deliberately leave out how Lenin and Trotsky developed his theory. This is how they strip Marxism precisely of its spirit as an analysis of living reality and petrify it into ancient immutable texts.

This is the method Jacques Généreux uses too when, claiming to present Marx’s conception, he carefully excises Lenin’s contribution. This surgical operation allows him to present the way capitalism was rescued from complete collapse between 1945 and 1975 by making concessions into proof that it had metamorphosed into a higher social order. Alchemists of old had a similar blind confidence in the miraculous ability of base lead to mutate into noble glittering gold. But in the end science taught us that that kind of transubstantiation exists in religious beliefs, but not among the natural elements, nor in social reality.

This kind of superstitious speculation abounds in Jacques Généreux’s book when it comes to the desirability and possibility of a repeating the “thirty glorious years” in today’s base society. They replace any serious reflection of the programme which flows from the situation itself, since they are so pervasive that they simply push aside the harsh realities of everyday life. But essentially this unbridled speculation masks and hides above all the reality of the concrete and particular historical conditions of the “thirty glorious years”.

The first condition for the really significant concessions made in those post-war years was the actual strength of the working class in the industrial countries, where revolutionary movements (and a series of revolutions) placed the capitalist order in mortal danger. But also the imperilled bourgeoisie, weakened as it was, had to be able to offer concessions, even on a temporary and cavalier basis, by digging even deeper into its own shrinking reserves. Finally, it also required that at the head of the revolutionary working class there should be degenerated and corrupt leaderships prepared to sell the revolution out cheaply in exchange for these concessions, while still able to produce arguments to justify imposing this abuse of authority.

Not a single one of these conditions is fulfilled today, or to be more precise, that are radically changed. The power-

ful and vigorous working class of then has suffered crucial successive defeats, and the endless retreats have merged into one general rout. Moreover, it has seen its forces drastically diminished, its make-up radically changed and its movement now only a shadow of what it was at the end of the war. Moreover, not only has it become impossible for the bourgeoisie to offer anything whatsoever to working people, its decline has grown even worse and impels it to violently and dictatorially destroy all past reforms and concessions, something it finds easier because of the weakening of the workers' movement. We should add that, following their open and brutal collaboration, the bureaucratic leaderships of the workers' movement have lost their former decisive position in the workers' movement. The historic defeat of Stalinism and social democracy's open avowed and cynical role as a direct pillar of the bourgeoisie have practically put an end to their organisational grip on the working class. (Even if the influence of their conceptions is still rife and serves to muddle the political consciousness of the majority of left and far-left activists.)

And this is how it goes with the Left Front and Left Party, one of whose most significant leaders, Généreux, in his book not only heaps praises on the class collaboration of the "thirty glorious years" but advocates a return to these policies as the right and proper programme with which to oppose the devastation caused by austerity. But we have just seen that the very specific social and political conditions, historically determined by particular circumstances, which combined to give birth to this special form of class collaboration, have disappeared. More concretely, the quite exceptional relationship of class forces at the time, with a working class on the offensive against a bourgeoisie forced onto the defensive and retreat, has today turned into its opposite.

It is the bourgeoisie which has taken the initiative and developed a general offensive against a working class weakened and disarmed, destroying their previous gains. Trying to force the bourgeoisie to make significant concessions when it is developing an offensive against a working class in disorganised retreat, quite apart from betraying a petit-bourgeois expectation of alms from the master, is in any case a terrible nonsense which confuses two entirely different situations.

In concrete daily politics, this muddle inevitably appears as a serious

mistake, as Généreux's book as a whole illustrates. The endless rambling about the possible and desirable changes in capitalism prevent him from even mentioning the current and real bourgeois offensive against all the gains that working people have made. And so fundamental problems of the day, such as the growth in unemployment, the unbearably high levels of debt, the rapid fall in wages in the face of overwhelming price rises, and the continuous dismantling of rights and benefits, to mention only a few, are completely missing from this book. So it's no surprise that one looks in vain for any sort of programme that could respond to these problems which workers face every day. All you can hope for is that something (the Holy Ghost, perhaps?) will touch the bourgeoisie and inspire it to transform its offensive against the working class into a new version of the "thirty glorious years".

It seems little short of incredible that activists endowed with the capacity to reflect, the will to fight and solid experience should fall for such twaddle. But in the Left Front and certain other far-left organisations, it is nonsense of this kind that guides and orientates their struggles. There is, therefore, an absolute contradiction between their sincere commitment to changing the world and the skimpy, retrograde conceptions which tie them to this world. That is why the main task is to overcome this contradiction by adopting a conception and policies in total harmony with this real determination to change the world.

For a radical theoretical and political turn by the far left

Theoretical and political independence in relation to capitalism, its system and its bourgeois class, is the indispensable condition for establishing harmony between, on the one hand, sincere and ambitious aspirations and, on the other, limited objectives of the struggle. Only that sort of independence allows a concrete perspective to be defined which actually goes beyond the system. All past and recent history proves that, without independence of that kind, even the firmest determination to change capitalism is reduced to patching it up, and that in principle this can only work in the short term.

But this theoretical and political independence cannot be the fruit of disembodied speculation or mental play. It is rooted in the working class, whose existence and fate are tied to those of capital, but opposed to them in a profoundly contradictory way. Hence the indissoluble organic link between

theoretical and political independence vis-à-vis capital and the struggle of the working class. Now, only Marxism expresses this cohesion and thus puts into words the necessary class independence in thought and action. *All* other theories are tied to this system or inevitably fall back into its well-worn tracks. That is why this theory alone clearly says that, instead of trying to patch up capital's dilapidated and unhinged system, the central and immediate task is to overthrow it and move on to socialism. In conclusion, the historic task of the moment is reduced to and concentrated in a vigorous return to Marxism and its reaffirmation as the theory and guiding thread of the political activity of all organisations fighting against the grip of capital.

However, as the election results have repeatedly and relentlessly confirmed, the prospects of the Left Front and die Linke in Germany have been broadly compromised. These two coalitions, in thrall to their reformist theories, are seriously threatened with disappearing or shrivelling into political insignificance. (Syriza in Greece still has the benefit of a respite due to the specific situation in that country.)

Sadly, the Left Front obviously lacks the internal resources which could enable it on its own to make the veritable leap that is necessary if it is to turn to Marxism. From now on it is useless and in fact damaging to hang around waiting for any such "cultural revolution" on its part. Instead of that kind of turn, it is attempting to avoid the more and more obvious fate that awaits it with a confused and many-hued mixture of inconsistent scraps and reformist recipes. Its recent political evolution proves this.

Within the structure of the Left Front, the weight of those formations which, formally at least, linked it to Marxism and the workers' movement has noticeably diminished and that of those which came from other horizons grown (obviously one is not speaking here of the Communist Party, which long ago silently dropped even the caricature of Marxism to which it used to lay claim). For example there were groups which broke away from the NPA (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste – New Anti-capitalist Party) like that led by Christian Picquet and others, which have lost their role and significance in this coalition, whereas the frankly petit-bourgeois group "Ensemble" ("Together") of Clémentine Autain, a loose, obscure and indeterminate assemblage, is coming to the fore. This surely represents a political slide to the

right on the part of the Front, despite the fact that the groups coming from the NPA have shown not the slightest aptitude to inspire anyone with Marxism. Faithful to their Pabloite heritage, they have continued their old politics of adaptation, this time not to triumphant Stalinism but the reformism pervasive in the Left Front. Nevertheless, their loss of influence has loosened even further the Left Front's already tenuous links with Marxist traditions.

Finally, like a drowning man clutching at a straw, the Left Front has clung even closer to the "enrichment" offered by the environmentalists and their doctrine. But environmentalism (and the politics of the "Greens" as a whole) is another way – different from the well-known, traditional, reformism – of asserting that it is possible to cure capitalist society, i.e. to maintain it, through ecological rather than socialist policies and measures. In this it is (if possible) more reactionary than traditional reformism: politically further to the right and intellectually inferior, since it squarely abandons the concrete social terrain to situate its struggle elsewhere, in man's (general!) relationship with nature – much to the delight of the capitalists! In line with this evasion, it turns its back on the workers' movement, in particular the trade unions, to place itself in the heart of the urban petit-bourgeoisie. And then,

since unlike traditional reformism, it has been and remains utterly incapable of producing a perspective, a general theoretical vision, it does not even have a coherent political programme and makes do with negative criticisms and repeating a few nostrums.

Now the Left Front (or concretely its political motor force, the Left Party) has turned even more closely towards these reactionary ersatz politics, decorating its wobbly political line with a few environmentalist trimmings. This highly-embroidered adventure it has baptised "eco-socialism", which strictly speaking is entirely devoid of meaning. What it does actually mean, very clearly, is that the Left Party (the Left Front), instead of drawing closer to Marxism, is moving even further away. Two very important political conclusions flow from this.

The first is that, despite everything, the Left Front's retreat and its slide to the right should not serve as an alibi for abandoning it or turning one's back on it. Despite all its growing imperfections, its petit-bourgeois and centrist character, it remains the only political formation which has not renounced its opposition to the policy of the bourgeoisie. It thus still has within it the real possibility of developing and improving that fight and the struggle for Marxism. It is the natural crucible par excellence for these battles.

The second conclusion is precisely the lesson that the initiative for a renewal of Marxism can only come from outside the Left Front, in particular those organisations linked to Marxism and the working class movement.

However, we have seen that the three political formations which claim to be Marxist are incapable, as organisations, of providing an impulse of that sort. Their Marxism, if they still profess it, is nothing but a collection of bookish and formal references to old texts, detached from current reality. The politics they carry out alongside these references flagrantly contradicts them. From that point of view their policy on Europe and their attitude to other anti-bourgeois organisations are equally eloquent.

Under these conditions, the impulse can only come from an organisation (or organisations?) which, like Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, openly and publicly fight for the renewal of Marxism and for socialism cleansed of Stalinist dross. It goes without saying that such a struggle ought to rally and unite all those who, though they may be in separate organisations, wish to fight openly for genuine Marxism and revived socialism.

Balazs Nagy,
July 2014

11-months struggle of 595 Greek public sector cleaners:

A handful of women show the way!

By Sonia Mitralia, July 2014 (Sonia Mitralia is a member of "Women's Initiative against the Debt and Austerity Measures" and member of the "Committee against the Debt – CADTM Greece". English translation by Isidoros Diakides)

Following 11 months of relentless hard struggle, relieved of their posts since last September and considered as "available", that is kicked off after a 8 months period, 595 public sector cleaners have become the embodiment, the symbol, the soul, the life itself of the most determined resistance against the politics of austerity in Greece.

These women have become "political subjects" and the leadership of the current resistance movement in its entirety, having the guts to face up to such powerful enemies as the Greek government, the Central European Bank, the European Commission and the IMF.

However, after 11 months of struggle, having set themselves against the government and the TROIKA and

becoming their main enemy, having short-circuited the implementation of the austerity measures and having a constant presence on the political scene through the mass media, these fighting cleaners are still treated, by opponents of the politics of austerity, as though they are not political subjects.

The fact is that, from the moment the Troika-imposed austerity measures appeared, the women came out en masse on the streets and their resistance displays its own dynamic, with its own specificity which is rich in political lessons.

In the four years of austerity politics which have transformed Greece into a pile of social, economic and above all human ruins, few amongst us have spoken of the lives of the women and

of course even less about their struggles against the diktats of the TROIKA. It was therefore to be expected that public opinion would be shocked by this exemplary fight which is executed exclusively by women. But is this fight really that shocking?

Women have participated en masse in the 26 general strikes. In the "movement of the indignant" they occupied city squares, set out camps, demonstrated.

They mobilised at the front line for the occupation and the independent running of the national broadcaster, ERT. Acting in an exemplary manner, they became the soul of the strike committees of the universities' admin staff against the "reserve pool" policy, (ie those to be sacked after 8 months, at

75% of their normal salary). 25,000 public servants, women being the majority, will be the victims of staff cuts in the public services. And it is also women that form the vast majority of the volunteers in the Solidarity Movement and the self-managed solidarity health structures that are trying to deal with the human crisis and the collapse of health services.

The mass participation of women in the resistance movements against the demolition of the welfare state and against the politics of austerity, is not surprising and it did not happen by accident. First of all, we all know very well, that women find themselves at the eye of the austerity storm. The dismantling of the welfare state and of their public services, is damaging their lives; forming the majority of the civil servants and of the main users of public services, women are doubly hit by all cuts. They have therefore one thousand reasons not to accept this historic deterioration of their living standards, akin to a return to the 19th century.

It is true that at the beginning women were not differentiated as "women - political subjects", participating as they were in the same demands and the same forms of action with the men within the various movements. They were simply participating in large numbers.

However, already within the framework of the pioneering struggle against gold extraction at SCOURIES in Chalkidiki, taking on the Canadian multi-national ELDORADO GOLD, the women were rapidly being differentiated through their specific forms of action and their radicalism. And, despite the fact that the press and popular perceptions were ignoring the significance of their gender identity in the way they were fighting, the police did not ignore it. Indeed the opposite, with the MATs (Greece's special riot control police units) targeting mainly women, using savage and selective measures in order to terrorise the whole population through them and eradicate any form of disobedience and any resistance movement.

Women were imprisoned, legally persecuted, and subjected to violence and humiliation, even "sexual" degradations specifically adjusted to their bodies and their gender.

In the following year women took more initiatives and developing their own forms of action.

It all started when, in order to implement the harshest part of the austerity programme and comply with the terms imposed on it by the "lend-

ers", the government targeted, in advance of anybody else, the cleaners at the Ministry of Economic Development, the Inland Revenue and the Customs offices. It placed them on "reserve lists" since last August (which means that for 8 months they would be paid only three-quarters of their salary of 550 Euros per month, and then sacked).

The government followed the same tactics as in SCOURIES. It started with targeting first the weakest and those with the least chance of getting support, i.e. the cleaners, to be followed at the next step by the bulk of the employees, the 25,000 civil servants to be made redundant. And it was timed at the moment when the resistance movement was getting exhausted after the relentless austerity measures, with many activists getting demoralised, depleted and forced to try and solve their own problems individually.

The government believed that, with this group of workers, i.e. poor women, of "lower class", pay levels around 500 euros per month and, as they assumed, not very intelligent (which explains the origin of the cleaners' slogan "we are cleaners, not idiots"), they could sort them out quickly, squashing them like worms.

The target was to privatise cleaning work as a gift to the private cleaning contractors. These mafia-like contractors, known as tax-evasion champions, would then re-employ them at around 200euros per month (ie 2 Euros an hour), with almost non-existent security and no employment protection rights, practically equivalent to slave labour.

These women, sacked from their jobs, sacrificed to the man-eating tendencies of the TROIKA, these women of 45 to 57 years of age, many mothers in single parent households, divorcees, widows, over-indebted, with children, unemployed husbands, or caring for disabled dependants, with no access to "early" pensions after 20 years, and without a chance of finding another job, decided not to give in. They decided to take control of their lives in their own hands.

And so we've got a handful of women who decided to change the established forms of action adopted by the traditional trade unions. Some have taken the initiative and organise themselves for themselves, with a group of cleaners at their core, who had already fought battles 10 years ago and won significant victories. They have worked hard like the proverbial ant and they

have weaved a web that has acquired national dimensions.

And since these workers of the ministry of economic development had been thrown on the dole and there was no point in going on strike, they decided to build with their bodies a human wall on the street, in front of the main entrance of the ministry's offices in Syntagma Square, the most emblematic location for the establishment.

It is not by chance that these imaginative forms of action were created by women.

Since these women were being ignored because of their gender and social class, they were marginalised within the unions and had minimal links with the traditional Left organisations, they were forced to make a lot of noise so that they could be noticed and heard.

Instead of reactive strikes and short-lived ineffectual days of action, they chose direct collective action, based on non-violence, humour and shock tactics. Wearing crowns of thorns on their heads during Easter, nooses around their necks outside (Conservative Party) New Democracy's offices, with music and with dance, they are demanding the immediate reinstatement of each and everyone.

These are novel actions in Greece. They occupy the entrance of the Ministry and obstruct access, especially to the TROIKA officials, chasing them and surrounding them, forcing them to run and enter through the back door with their bodyguards. They are engaging in physical skirmishes with the special police units. Every day they are devising new forms of action, that are reported through the mass media and attract the attention of the wider population. In short, they are breaking through the isolation.

This way, things that are usually presented as soul-less statistics, all these numbers describing record levels of unemployment and poverty, all those abstract concepts, are acquiring a human dimension, they have a human face, become real women in flesh and blood, and, what's more, women with strong personalities and their own political volition. They have names like Litsa, Despina, Georgia, Foteini, Demetra ... And with their example, their courage, their persistence and their dogged determination to win, they are giving back hope to all the victims of the austerity regime.

But, it is important to be aware that the forces of law and order are almost daily bullying these women to make an example of them, because their bosses

are worried that the phenomenon would spread. The whole country is watching this sad spectacle of women, many of advanced age, being daily trampled upon, manhandled and injured by the police "Rambos", who could have been their sons. And why?

The simple reason is that the TROICA itself wants to fight them, because they are an example, a model to be adopted by all those oppressed; because they are at the front line of the rejection of the austerity politics not just in Greece, but the whole of Europe; because their

fighting spirit is infectious. More than ever, the struggle of these 595 heroic cleaners, is also our struggle. Let's not leave them fighting on their own. They are fighting for us, let us fight for them too. Let's organise pan-European and international solidarity.

Appeal

For an international day of solidarity with the 595 cleaners of the Greek Ministry of Economics

We, the 595 cleaners of the Economics Ministry, who had our jobs taken away from us on the 17th of September 2013, so that they can be given to private sub-contractors, have been fighting the last 11 months against the politics of austerity and against those who are imposing it, i.e. the Samaras government and the TROIKA. Every day we are on the street demanding our jobs and our rights, resisting police intimidation and government propaganda. Although we have been vindicated by the Greek judiciary system, the government is refusing to implement the courts' decision.

We are appealing to all residents associations, social movements, trade unions, women's organisations, political parties and citizens of the world, all of you who don't condone injustice and empathise with its victims, to express your solidarity with our struggle for survival and dignity, which is also your struggle.

We are calling on you to join forces with us and to organise together an International Day of Solidarity

It is proposed that mobilisation takes place between the 15th and 22nd of September, ie the week before the court's final decision on the 595 cleaners, which is set for the 23rd of September. A possible joint Day of Action could be the 20th of September.

The target could be various solidarity activities, like public meetings and mass rallies, mobilisations outside Greek Embassies, the IMF offices in Washington, the Central European Bank headquarters in Frankfurt and anywhere else you choose. We are already preparing for a delegation of the fighting cleaners to join a demonstration at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, either on the 16th or the 17th of September.

If you are willing to join this initiative, please let us know by the 30th of



August, so that we can have a picture of which cities and countries are going to participate.

Please also look at:
<http://595katharistries.wordpress.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/595katharistries>
Contact: Sonia Mitralia,
sonia.mitralia@gmail.com
Tel: 0030 210 9420681, 0030 6932295118

Don't expect us to bow down!

We are 595 women cleaners of the Greek Ministry of Finance and since September 17, 2013, we have been unemployed. The Government laid us off and chose to give our jobs to sub-contractors, with absolutely no financial benefit to the state. Our wages ranged from 300 to 650 euro a month. We are not numbers, we are human beings!

We haven't bowed our heads in submission. Since September 17th, we have been in the streets every day, claiming back our jobs, claiming back our lives. [photo protests]

The Government has employed every means available to try to suppress our just fight. Pictures of defense-

less 50 or 60-year-old women beaten up by riot police have spread around the world. Many of us were taken to hospital after barbaric and unjustifiable police attacks against us.

We have opted for dignity. Ten months of struggle, ten months of poverty and problems! But we continue to fight. We continue our struggle. We demand the self-evident: our right to a decent life.

A wave of support is sweeping across the country. Workers, laid off workers, unemployed people, students, pensioners, and artists are all showing their support in every way imaginable.

The Greek courts have vindicated us, but the Government refuses to comply with the courts' decision. Instead, the government wants revenge because we have opted for dignity.

SOLIDARITY IS THE PEOPLES' WEAPON. We call on you to express your solidarity with our struggle for life and dignity. We call on you to sign the support petition and help collect signatures, which will force the Government to execute the court decision – something that will cost nothing to the Greek state.

Together we can stop these barbaric policies!