

New Unity Movement



December 13

Presidential
Address

2019

The president of the New Unity Movement (NUM), Doctor Basil Brown presents the biennial address at the Livingstone High School Hall that sets the scene for the deliberations at the NUM Conference on 14 & 15 December 2019.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 2019

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this the open session of the 5th BGM and the 30th Elective Conference of the New Unity Movement.

IN MEMORIAM

Before proceeding with this address, I wish to pause in order observe a moments silence in memory of several individuals who were either members of the NUM or who were known members of our predecessor the NEUM or its affiliates. They all passed on since our last BGM.

They are:

Graham Fife in August 2018

Pam Jacobs February 2019

Pavel Hassim March 2019

Sunny Venkathranum March 2019

Joyce Meissenheimer (nee Wilcox) June 2019

Gwendoline Wilcox August 2019

Pamla Giqwa December 2019

INTRODUCTION:

At the outset, I wish to mention three notable events:

1. Our conference that ends on Sunday will be followed by a commemorative event on Monday. This event is the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the death of one of the founding fathers of the UM, comrade BM Kies. He collapsed and died in a courtroom in Hermanus on 19 December 1979 whilst defending 4 people who were charged under the Terrorism Act. This commemoration event, which will be held at the Al Kaaf Human Rights Centre, is being held at the request of the survivors of the trial. I sincerely hope and trust that most of you here this evening will attend this event at the Al Kaaf Human Rights Centre on Monday. We are indeed highly honoured that someone of the stature of Prof Hillel Ticktin from Britain has accepted our invitation to deliver the keynote address on this occasion.
2. Two other highlights of the year for us was the publication of two books that deal with aspects of the history of our organisation and this country.

The two books in question are **STRUGGLE AND HOPE: Reflections on the recent history of the Transkeian people**, [\[1\]](#) and the **Cape Radicals**.

- 2.1 *STRUGGLE AND HOPE* authored by our life member comrade Mda Mda which was published in March this year gives a vivid account of events that took place in that region and which still have an impact on developments there today. The publication of this book is very timely as it helps to increase our understanding of issues that are currently playing themselves out. Comrade Mda's book provides one with some insight and understanding of the dynamics at play here.

2.2. THE CAPE RADICALS [2]

The publication of this work authored by Prof Crain Soudien in August, dealing as it does with the history of the New Era Fellowship (NEF) throws light on the genesis of the ideas that led to the formation of our antecedent, the NEUM. It also throws a spotlight on the person whose life we will be commemorating on Monday, namely comrade BM Kies.

These two publications present one with an opportunity to once again draw attention to the relevance of the arsenal of ideas of the Unity Movement in present-day South Africa. We have decided that the theme for this conference would be based on our strategic objective for advancing working-class power.

The call for advancing working-class power is a logical follow up to our call in 2017 for the “Reawakening of the People” in which we proposed that the current conjuncture calls out for the building an organisation like the All African Convention (AAC).

Just as with the Arab Spring in 2011 events around the world once again prompts one to ask the question: Is the long-awaited uprising against the depredations of Neo-Liberal capitalism at hand?

When one surveys the current conjuncture both nationally and internationally there can be no gainsaying the fact that, to put it mildly, the world is in a mess!

At a time like this, one is reminded of the poem, “The Second Coming” written by WB Yeats in 1919:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again, but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

The line, “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold” is pregnant with meaning at this juncture in the history of this country and the world at large. This phrase also calls to mind the title of the novel by Chinua Achebe, which deals with the negative impact that colonialism, had on traditional tribal society in Ghana.

ASPECTS OF THE NATIONAL SITUATION AND INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

Because the National Situation and the International situation will be covered by special papers at the conference I will confine myself to only addressing those matters which I believe present us with challenges in working through our strategies and tactics going forward. The papers alluded to will be available on our website after the conference.

THE NATIONAL SITUATION

The euphoria, amongst large sections of the population, generated by the Springboks winning the rugby world cup in October has predictably only briefly served to obscure the stark reality of the dire state of crisis that this country finds itself in. Louis Reynolds and David Sanders of the Peoples Health Movement succinctly state this dire state of affairs[3]. Writing in an op-ed piece in the Daily Maverick on the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill published by the government in August they depict South Africa as being in a “profound economic, social and political crisis — a crisis characterised by failure of the democratic state under the paralysed ruling party to improve the living and working conditions of the majority and to reduce the dangerous structural inequalities inherited from (and sustained beyond) apartheid; a crumbling, dysfunctional public health sector after more than two decades of crippling public-sector austerity under neoliberalism; an unsustainable and unregulated private health sector; and rampant, deeply entrenched corruption.”[4]

If these are not the features of a failed state then one wonders what these might be.

1. THE OUTCOME OF THE NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS 2019

The outcome of the national and Provincial Elections in May 2019 turned out much as one expected. The ANC retained its absolute majority. Apart from the manifest decline in support for the ANC and the DA, a modest increase in support for the EFF and the FF Plus was noted.

It is estimated that counting stay-aways from the polls, spoilt ballots and low turnout, only 27% of adult of South Africans voted for the ANC. That the percentage poll was lower than with previous elections is largely a reflection of the widespread dissatisfaction of the oppressed with the lack of service delivery by the ANC government. Nevertheless, the ANC retains its absolute majority in parliament.

A cause for concern, however, is the poor performance of the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP). They received less than 25 000 votes in the national elections, despite the fact that the union that brought it into being, Numsa, claims nearly 400 000 members!

If nothing else this outcome vindicates the scepticism expressed by others and ourselves about the wisdom of Numsa launching the party in the first place. This is so, particularly in the context of the promise of the “Numsa Moment” of 2013. That promise was encapsulated in the idea of the building of a United Front and a Movement for Socialism. These are ideas, which we together with others on the Left enthusiastically endorsed, the prevailing circumstances certainly cry out for the resuscitation of such an initiative.

2. THE STATE OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN THE COUNTRY

With a GINI coefficient of 0.65, inequality remains an ever-present feature of the South African economy. The Stats SA report released in October gives exact details of the various parameters of inequality in the country between 2006 and 2015.^[5] In the conclusion of the report, Stats SA says: “The particular focus of this report has been on benchmarking progress in lowering the many inequalities that hold back South Africa. We have painted this picture of South Africa’s inequality at some level of detail. There have been some areas of progress, but aggregate inequality has remained resiliently high. A major contribution of a focus on inequality is to show how the many dimensions of inequality intersect to reproduce poverty and inequality. This helps highlight the package of interventions and policy coordination that is going to be required for South Africa to make stronger gains in reversing our inequality and achieving a more equal society. “The measures used to estimate inequality included the Gini coefficient, the Lorenz curve, Theil’s and Atkinson indices, and the Palma ratio. These measures assist with assessing trends in inequality over time, as well as the between-groups and within-group inequality levels in the country.”

To get a broader perspective on the problem of inequality in South Africa, I think the extract below from an interview conducted in Columbia with Goran Therborn the eminent Swedish Sociologist on the question of inequality in the world is revealing⁶:

Interviewer: *What are we talking about when we talk about inequality? What is your definition of inequality?*

Göran Therborn (GT): *Inequality is a historical social construction which allocates the possibilities of realizing human capacity unequally. It is a historical social construction; it is not something which is given by nature or by God. There are differences which are given, but the important thing about inequality is the unequal allocation of possibilities to realize your human capability.*

Interviewer: *And which are the most unequal countries according to that definition and why are they so unequal?*

GT: *Well, South Africa is the most unequal of all the countries in the world. Although we have to differentiate here: There are three basic kinds of inequality which interact; they are interdependent, but they don’t always go together. Vital inequality refers to inequality of life and death. It can be measured through infant mortality, or life expectancy, or health expectancy, the number of years you can expect to live without serious health problems. And there is existential inequality, which refers to issues of dignity, humiliation, recognition, respect or ignorance, and marginalization. Important manifestations of existential inequality are racism, sexism, patriarchy. And certainly there is inequality of the sources, income and wealth, of course, the most important ones, but we also talk of inequalities of power or*

social contacts. But on the whole, South Africa is probably, after all, the most unequal of all countries in the world. It is certainly the most unequal with respect to income distribution and wealth distribution. “So the most unequal country in the world is South Africa. Latin America is the most unequal continent in the world, despite the equalization in the first decade of 2000, from 2000 to 2012. And also the vital inequality here in Colombia and Brazil is enormous: the gap in life expectancy or child mortality.” [6] In 2015, Seekings and Natrass concluded that: “Poverty and inequality became more entrenched after Apartheid despite the “pro-poor policies” adopted by the ANC.”[7]

Also, as recently stated by historian Colin Bundy in an op-ed piece in Times Live on 17 June 2019: “In post-apartheid South Africa, affluence has been de-racialised; poverty and inequality have remained stubbornly racialised.” Echoing Seekings and Natrass, he argues that ‘pro-poor’ policies on their own won’t shift inequality in South Africa. Tackling inequality, therefore, involves more than “pro-poor” policies: it needs changing the social processes and relations that underpin it.[8]

The results of the General Household Survey (GHS) released by Stats SA in May 2019, “show how far the country has progressed over the past seventeen years in addressing its developmental challenges. This report outlines some achievements and challenges, as well as disparities in the level of development of the country and its communities[9].”

The results of the survey must be seen against the background of the total population of the country that stood at over 59 million in July, and an official unemployment rate of 29.1% in October, The expanded unemployment rate is estimated at 45.5 %.

Some facts gleaned from the General Household Survey include the following:

- Only 35.3% of local households own a dwelling, and 5.4% own land.
- Despite service delivery and education improving marginally over the last decade, the inequality between provinces remain stark
- Almost nine million people are on social grants; four million RDP houses have been built; five million HIV-affected people are on antiretroviral medication; poor children have access to free basic education, complete with learner-teacher support materials, transportation and a meal; and every citizen is at least guaranteed access to healthcare. However, the quality of these services is the subject of growing concern. Access to government services such as water, education, sanitation and electricity has improved in the country on average.
- Despite nearly doubling access to improved sanitation since 2002, access remains the most limited in Limpopo, with 58.9% of households in the province reporting improved sanitation in 2018, compared to only 26.9% before.

A fact that is perhaps not readily apparent from a reading of this report is that a large percentage of the poor people in this country live in slum-like conditions. This can easily be deduced from the large number of “informal settlements” and “squatter camps” that have become an integral part of every urban and peri-urban area in this country. These settlements constitute a part of what Mike Davis describes in “Planet of Slums” The book highlights the fact that slums are an ever-present feature of

virtually all cities in the global South. He describes people living in the slums of the world as “this century’s surplus humanity” [10]

The exponential growth of slums in the world in recent decades has been a special focus of the United Nations that issued a special report titled “The Challenge of Slums” in 2003. This document gives the definition of a slum household as being one where there is no security of tenure. Poor Structural quality/durability of dwellings. No access to safe water. No Access to sanitation facilities. Insufficient living-area. [11]

According to UN Habitat, these populations are growing at a rate of 27 million per annum and it is estimated that slum growth makes up more than 38% of urban growth and that the world’s slum population will reach 1.4 billion in 2020.

It goes without saying that this phenomenon is one of the consequences of the dominance of Neoliberal Capitalist economics in the world. Certainly here in South Africa, we can say without fear of any contradiction that it is the ANC governments’ slavish adherence to Neoliberal capitalist inspired policies that are the root cause of poverty and the great inequality between rich and poor that exists in this country.

The UN has instituted what amounts to the amelioration of slums as one of its Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) to which South Africa is a signatory. However, the reality is that, as with so many of these goals, the government will not achieve the set targets. Only the eradication of Neoliberal capitalism and its replacement by a democratic socialist dispensation will result in the eradication of slums and so much else of a large number of seemingly insurmountable problems, faced by the majority of people in this country and the world,

So what has been the response of the poor and exploited people of this country to the conditions in which they find themselves? To be honest, whilst organisations such as ours are still considering our options as it were, as far as challenging the hegemony of capitalism, the poor and exploited people on the ground are taking matters into their own hands.

The book *Urban Revolt* edited by Trevor Ngwane et. al. examines the rise of urban social movements (USM's) of the poor and working-class in the slums of the world. Two chapters in the book focus on two such slums in South Africa, namely, Marikana and Tembelihle [12].

The Marikana massacre occurred in the vicinity of the Lonmin mine where the majority of its workers live in one or other of the 24 informal settlements around Rustenburg. Trevor Ngwane describes one of these settlements named Nkaneng which in Sesotho means “by force”, a reference to its establishment by way of a land invasion in 1994. The description of this settlement conforms to the UN’s definition of a slum. The details of the circumstances and the mind-set of the workers, which led to them, going on strike against the wishes of the leadership of their union the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). In this chapter, Ngwane substantiates his assertion that the Marikana massacre should be seen as the beginning of “the resurgence of the working-class movement” in South Africa. He cites the fact that the workers self-organised themselves in the spaces where they lived as an example to others of uniting the

struggles of the community with that of the workplace. Ngwane goes further by invoking what he calls the “spirit of Marikana” inspiring the land occupations, Service delivery protests, # FMF, #RMF all of which arose in the wake of the Marikana massacre

The second chapter alluded to deals with the rise of the Tembilihle Crisis Committee. The Tembilihle informal settlement is part of Lenasia that is a former Indian Group area in the South of Johannesburg. Approximately 16,000 to 17,000 people live here in 8 to 10 thousand shacks. People have been living here on what is state-owned land since the late 1980s. According to the author of this chapter, Nelson Mandela, himself, visited the settlement after 1994 and reportedly promised them “a better life and secure tenure”. However, in 2002 the state attempted to evict the people on the grounds that the land consisted of unsafe dolomite which was prone to developing sinkholes. The Tembilihle Crisis Committee (TCC) that was formed in 2001 led the opposition to the evictions.

In describing the activities of the TCC in successfully preventing the state from evicting the residents from the area the author of this chapter, Luke Sinwell, describes the TCC as being “ the most militant explicitly socialist community-based organisation in the post-Apartheid period”.

It also transpires that the TCC became an active member of the United Front (UF) in Gauteng, which still exists today albeit as the only significant remnant of the UF, which was initiated by Numsa in 2015.

Another organisation that has challenged the inhuman living conditions of its members is Abahlali baseMjondolo^[13]. The Abahlali baseMjondolo (Shack Dwellers) Movement began in early 2005. Although it is overwhelmingly located in and around the large port city of Durban it is, in terms of the numbers of people mobilised, the largest organisation of the militant poor in post-apartheid South Africa. Its originary event was a road blockade organised from the Kennedy Road settlement in protest at the sale to a local industrialist, of a piece of nearby land long promised by the local municipal councillor to shack dwellers for housing.

According to its General Secretary Thapelo Mohapi, the organisation has grown significantly to the extent that by April 2018 their audited membership in KwaZulu-Natal passed 50 000 people. The movement represents the residents of more than 40 new land occupations in the province of KwaZulu Natal. In total, the movement has 47 branches in five provinces countrywide.^[14] Thapelo says, “Today the hypocrites in parliament are talking about the expropriation of land without compensation yet they continue to drive poor people off of the land in the cities. In KwaZulu Natal, the ANC divide people according to their tribe, while people from the Eastern Cape are evicted and told to go back to their province.”

The left in general and we in particular need to decide upon the significance of these movements and work out ways and means to incorporate them into a broader movement to challenge the neoliberal capitalist hegemony represented by the ANC and all the other parties in parliament.

The authors of *Urban Revolt* argue that any movement “ That seeks to build an anti-capitalist alternative to the global neoliberal onslaught is the extent to which it is driven from below by explicitly socialist mass organisations with deep-seated democratic impulses.”

Numsa’s UF, which clearly had the potential to be such a movement, has been a disappointment in that regard.

THE ONSLAUGHT AGAINST NONRACIALISM

According to some academics and political organisations like the BLF and the EFF, non-racialism is an outdated concept and no longer relevant in South Africa. The attacks on the principle and policy of non-racialism have become so pervasive in public discourse that one feels the need for us to reassert the relevance and importance of this cornerstone and founding principle of the Unity Movement in challenging the hegemony of Neoliberal capitalism-imperialism. The publication of “The Cape Radicals” allows one to return to the source of one of the key principles and policies of the Unity Movement namely that of Non-Racialism. Crain Soudien, with particular reference to BM Kies’ ““The Contributions of Non European People to World Civilisation”” gives a brilliant exposition of the historical context which led to the genesis of the ideas contained in this work which he describes as being “magisterial” He goes on to describe this groundbreaking work thus: “The impact of this lecture was profound. It significantly advanced the theoretical discussion of what “race” was and how it could be understood historically and sociologically”. He says further, “The perspicacity of the work as an ontological route-marker for the movement he belonged to was of profound importance”

At this juncture, I must mention the fact that we plan to release a reformatted version of Kies’ monograph on Monday at the memorial event as we believe that this seminal work needs to be made available to a younger generation of students and political activists. The UM has over the years published numerous monographs, as well as articles in our Bulletin dealing with race and racism. In doing so, we explained why a policy of non-racialism was a sine qua non of the struggle in this country. We also at all times emphasised the differences between others and ourselves like the Congress Alliance and the Liberal establishment over what true non-racialism actually meant.

These differences between “Radical non-racialism” as espoused by the UM and “Liberal non-racialism” as espoused by the congress alliance were expanded upon in a debate that took place between two academics at the Mandela University in August this year- Thanks to CANRAD, a DVD of the debate is available. The occasion was the launch of a book titled “Race Otherwise” authored by Prof Zimitri Erasmus of Wits University who made a presentation on the contents of her book. The respondent to her presentation was Dr Mandisi Majavu of Mandela University who in rebuttal of her presentation made a case for the rejection of non-racialism as a legitimate ideology. Prof Erasmus in her presentation referred to the well-known UM writers who first formulated the ideas that she calls radical non-racialism. Amongst the many salient points raised by her, I found two conceptions to be of interest and worthy of further study.

1. Anticolonial non-racialism has limitations. Stuck in a particular notion of modernity sees people first as workers and then as black

2. Sylvia Wynter the Jamaican writer is said to have turned Marx on his head with her assertion that it is the mode of socialisation, not the mode of production that is the driving force for struggle.

In rebuttal, Mandisi challenged the legitimacy of NR on the basis that the issue of race and racism manifested itself historically as anti-black racism. In his view, NR is inadequate for understanding anti-black racism, which has its origins in Liberalism NR in SA reflects blacks needing to come to terms with living in a white-dominated world. Leads them to embrace the discourse of NR. British introduced non-racial politics that was adopted by ANC NR in SA associated with white liberalism including the SACP. The Liberals used NR as a weapon in castigating the ANC for not allowing white's to be members of ANC. Used NR as a leverage tool. Liberals "weaponised" NR used it to blackmail the ANC. He is critical of the Marxist influence in the propagation of the idea of non-racialism, He even rejects Black consciousness criticizing Steve Biko for not recognising the history of anti-black racism. Interestingly I have found the category of anti-Black racism to be part of the discourse about racism, especially in Canada. It is based on the observation that blacks have historically always been seen as inferior to all other groups and that anti-Asian racism is different from anti-black racism for example. This brings me to the subject of identity politics that has become a phenomenon of our times. Here again one finds that it has become a part of serious academic discourse. Leading the pack as it were here in South Africa is Prof Mohammed Adikhari who is regarded as an authority on the Unity Movement adherence to non-racialism, a subject about which he has published a number of books.

In a book titled "Burdened by Race: Coloured Identities in Southern Africa he describes the various theories of group/racial identity as practised by various entities. For example, the UM he says has an "instrumentalist" whereas he has a "constructionist" approach. These two theories are distinguished from the "Essentialist" theory and from "Creolisation".

In the concluding paragraph of an essay titled "[Deconstructing Identity Politics](#),^[15] Emeritus Professor Karim F Hirji of the Tanzania Academy of Sciences has this to say: "Obsession with narrowly construed social identities is driving humanity towards divisiveness and mutual antipathies. As people at the bottom bicker about their grievances in restricted ways, the local and global economic, political and military overlords continue to rule over humanity. Perpetually peddling exclusive identity politics will convert our struggles into a grand illusion. Like the frog that burnt to death as the water in which it floated was heated gradually, humanity will remain unperturbed as the planet burns up politically, socially, economically, militarily and physically. Our narrow-mindedness will render us clueless and powerless to confront the mighty corporations and governments that control the world for the benefit of a few billionaires. This is as true in Africa as it is in Asia, Latin America and the Western nations. Justice and equality for the minorities and the majority will not come from relying on the illusions of liberal democracy. For human liberation, what is needed is a solid grounding in the universal human identity. This identity should be the primary basis for the political and social endeavour. The fight of the rights of the discriminated identity groups, which reflects real problems on the ground, is not to be abandoned but has to be conducted within a universal framework that will unite hitherto conflicting identities. As people work within specific identities, they must also transcend such identities and organise a broad coalition to conduct their struggles.

I believe that we need to engage with the ideas set out above and formulate our responses, if any, to them. Another important text that is relevant in this regard is “Red Racisms” by Prof Ian Law of Liverpool University. The book, which deals with racism in communist and post-communist contexts as in Russia, China, and Cuba, for example, largely debunks one’s belief that racism did not exist in these socialist countries. The book that was published in 2018 is available in electronic format.

3. TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP, CUSTOMARY LAW AND TRADITIONAL COURTS

The recent signing into law of the Traditional and Khoisan Leadership Bill and the Traditional courts Bill comes hot on the heels of the decision taken by parliament to amend section 25 of the Constitution, which deals with Land Expropriation Without Compensation (LEWC). This bill, we are told, will be gazetted on December 10 when it will be released for public comment until January 27. The month of February has been set aside for public hearings.

The significance of this happenstance lies in the fact that traditional affairs, traditional leadership and customary law are intimately linked to the question of land ownership. In addition, the status and rights of the so-called “first peoples” come into the frame. Tied up in all of this is also the question of the ownership of the mineral deposits found inland claimed to be owned by one or other tribal or traditional authority.

For there can be no doubt. that the issue of traditional leadership, group identity and group rights are bound to have an impact upon the resolution of the land and agrarian question but more importantly it has serious implications for the kind of democracy we wish to see in this country.

I believe that these developments hold huge implications for programme and policies that need to be put in place by the nascent new national liberation movement that needs to be built in this country.

The resolution of the Land and Agrarian Question has always been central to the programme of action of the Unity Movement. It is in the context of the developments mentioned above that we are presently applying our minds to formulating a detailed policy on the resolution of the land and the agrarian question. This will hopefully see the light of day sometime next year.

So what is this all about?

The question of traditional and group rights that are entrenched in the constitution makes provision for the following:

- System of Cooperative Government (Chapter 3 of the Constitution)
- Provinces (Chapter 6 of the Constitution)
- Local Government (Chapter 7 of the Constitution)
- Traditional Leaders (Chapter 12 of the Constitution)

All these entities that are interlinked are overseen by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA). As Prof Sonwabile Mnwana of Fort Hare, university explains:

“The ANC government passed legislation that significantly increased the powers of chiefs in rural local governance. The main piece of legislation that did this was the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act 41 of 2003. This act In effect creates traditional (“tribal”) authorities to preside over precisely the same geographic areas that were defined by the apartheid government.”^[16]

The Act 41 Of 2003 recognises 7 kingdoms as opposed to the 13 that existed previously^[17]:

- AmaXhosa (Eastern Cape) King Zwelonke Sigcawu
- The AmaZulu (KwaZulu-Natal) King Goodwill Zwelithini
- The AbaThembu (Eastern Cape) King Buyelekhaya Dalindyebo
- The VhaVenda (Limpopo) King Toni Mphephu Ramabulana
- The AmaNdebele (Mpumalanga) King Makhosonke Enoch Mabena
- The AmaMpondo (Eastern Cape) King Zanozuko Tyelovuyo Sigcau
- The Bapedi ba Maroteng (Limpopo) King Thulare Victor Thulare

The two Bills alluded to above were first introduced in 2015 and 2008 respectively but they had evoked such widespread opposition from civil society that they were both withdrawn. The contents and the chequered history of these two bills are well described by Buthelezi and Yeni^[18] and as reported by Mnwana: “Rural communities and civil society organisations have strongly resisted these laws mainly because they give traditional authorities disproportionate and illegitimate powers and because of the poor consultative and top-down nature with which the state introduces them. However, the government has, in most instances, gone ahead regardless of the limited participation and marginalisation of rural citizens who are directly affected by these laws”^[19]

He says further that, these laws epitomise: “a paradox of a state-led retribalisation” in a democratic dispensation”.

The Traditional Courts Bill has in turn been described as “a problematic piece of legislation” by Anton van Dalsen of the Helen Suzman Foundation^[20]. According to news reports, hundreds of people from around the country marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria on June 5 this year against the signing into law of the two bills

Criticisms of these Bills include:

- “Traditional Courts Bill will enable the concentration of power in one individual – a traditional leader Traditional courts will not be courts in the ordinary sense of the word, but they will have powers to summon and sentence members under their jurisdiction. A major concern is that the Traditional Courts Bill does not have a voluntary opt-out clause, which infringes on people’s right to access other courts. Moreover, the Bill contains a prohibition on legal representation, in contrast to the Constitution, which explicitly provides that every accused person has the right to be represented by a legal practitioner.
- These Bills will disempower women by denying them the right to represent themselves in traditional courts.
- The passing of these Bills will not adhere to the consensual nature of customary law. Instead, they will give power to unelected leaders.

In addition, to quote Mnwana again:

- “Roughly, two processes are often attributed to chiefly control over land and mineral wealth: The first critical process is the attempt by the ruling African National Congress (ANC)-led government to redefine residents in rural areas, through legislation, as subjects of ‘traditional communities’ (or ‘tribes’) under chiefs. The ruling ANC have since the early 2000s introduced and passed laws that not only gave chiefs a secured position in the post-apartheid political scene but significantly enhanced their powers over rural land and local governance”
- “It is becoming increasingly evident that politicians believe that chiefs in post-apartheid South Africa have a significant role in controlling and mobilising rural votes. For Beinart (2014): The ANC has come to see chiefs as able to deliver a block rural vote. The movement has consistently gained its highest percentage vote in rural provinces such as Limpopo and Mpumalanga, as well as parts of the Eastern Cape, not in the cities
- “the post-apartheid government has increased the powers of chiefs and legitimised their mediation of mine-community relationships and control over land (Mnwana, 2016). The Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act of 2003 (Act 41 of 2003, or the TLGFA)¹ re-enacts traditional (tribal) authorities to preside over precisely the same geographic areas that were defined by the apartheid government (Claassens, 2011, p. 14; Mnwana, 2014b)”
- “Power over rural land has become more and more concentrated in the hands of local chiefs in post-apartheid South Africa.” That is particularly so in areas that are earmarked for mining.

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MINING RIGHTS

How is the intersection between traditional or tribal affairs, kingship and the ownership and exploitation of the mineral wealth of the country been playing itself out?

The answer to that question can be obtained by examining developments in the Platinum belt in the North West and Limpopo and the Xolobeni region in the Eastern Cape.

This matters because mining affects the livelihoods of millions of South Africans. That South Africa holds unparalleled reserves of platinum group metals reserves is well known.

However, platinum hasn’t been an economic saviour for the ordinary residents in the mine villages who face grim living conditions. Most are characterised by extreme poverty, severe inequalities and high unemployment.

This is even though some of these communities have been recipients of substantial mining revenues. However, these are controlled and distributed by local traditional authorities, known as chiefs, who have positioned themselves as custodians of rural land and mineral resources. They have done so in collusion with the state and mining companies.

This is not as it should be. Distributive power over land doesn't rest exclusively with chiefs. There are multiple layers of power that rests in different social units, families (and individuals within them). Most importantly, chiefs have never had powers to alienate land rights from ordinary residents.

African land rights are acquired through membership to a group – a productive and social unit such as a family or clan.

Once allocated, land rights were passed from one generation to the next. It is at the level of this unit that, by and large, decisions about the distribution of such rights were taken in pre-colonial times.

However, there's ambiguity around what the powers the act gives chiefs. It has been interpreted as giving them and their traditional councils powers over the administration and control of communal land and natural resources, economic development, health, and welfare, and to administer justice.

In fact, the law doesn't directly grant chiefs power and control over communal land and landed resources. However, it's been interpreted that way.

The case of the chiefs' control over mining revenues on the platinum belt epitomises the contradiction.

CHIEFS GAIN THE UPPER HAND

Over the last 30 years, a new trend began to evolve. Local chiefs began to enter into deals with mining companies on behalf of rural communities on the platinum belt. Chiefs, as assumed custodians of communal resources, became mediators of mineral-led development and mining deals.

This trend can be traced back to the Bafokeng community's momentous court victory over mining royalties in 1999. The Bafokeng chieftaincy secured enormous mineral royalties – ostensibly on behalf of the entire community.

Such a victory ushered this rural community, which some have labelled “the richest tribe in Africa”, into a new era of platinum revenues and corporate assets worth billions of rand.

Several rural communities on platinum rich land in the North West and Limpopo provinces have followed the Bafokeng example.

However, these developments haven't been without problems. The mediation and control of mining revenues by local chiefs has generated significant tensions and conflict in the villages that host vast mining operations.

Lack of transparency and accountability and serious allegations of corruption have been levelled against chiefs. For instance, Kgosi (chief) Nyalala Pilane of the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela community – perhaps even more than any other chief in South Africa – has been the subject of a litany of maladministration and corruption allegations.

The combined value of the assets of the largely SeTswana-speaking Bakgatla community, who reside in 32 impoverished villages scattered all over the north eastern foothills of the Pilanesburg Mountains, are estimated at R25 billion. Yet the members of the community have yet to realise the benefits.

Mining expansion has also produced significant resistance to Kgosi Pilane's control over land. Groups of villagers have made strong claims over some of the mineral-rich farms, where some of the largest mining operations are situated. They assert that these farms were bought by their forefathers as private property and so never should have been designated "tribal" land.

Many of these land disputes have been fought in the courts. So far, the chief has been able to hire top lawyers. He has successfully interdicted and pressed charges against activists who have called him to account.

RESISTANCE

The assumption that chiefs are custodians of rural land and mineral wealth – and as such can distribute and alienate land rights and sign complex mining deals on behalf of rural residents – has no pre-colonial precedent. It's no surprise that ordinary people are resisting chiefly power over their property.

It's even more crucial to closely examine and understand the character of power over land and landed resources as rural land increasingly becomes a target for large scale resource extraction. What needs attention is how ordinary rural residents articulate what leading land academic Ben Cousins calls the "socially legitimate" and historical "processes through which power over land is conferred" to different groups and individuals.

The ruthless exploitation of the mineral wealth of this country by foreign multinational companies with the acquiescence of the government which has shown itself indifferent to any objections from rural communities the working in cahoots with has brought to the fore a number of serious challenges which have the potential to cause a replay of the Marikana massacre in 2012.

Developments in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo are instructive in this regard.

The question of mining rights in South Africa has been very effectively brought to our attention through the activities of the Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC) which has been embroiled in a near life and death struggle with the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) and an Australian mining company on the one hand and on the other hand the ACC has conducting a campaign in opposition to the building of the N2 toll road through two villages in the area.

Apart from a struggle related to the exploitation of mining rights by foreign entities it also brings to the fore issues related to the question of the role of traditional leadership, customary law and the manner in which the government tramples on the rights of rural communities.

I will examine two illustrative examples

THE AMADIBA CRISIS COMMITTEE (ACC)

Sam Sole of the [amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism](#) gives a detailed account of developments in Xolobeni that was published online this year^[21].

Xolobeni is the name of the region across the Eastern Cape border from the town of Port Edward, southern KwaZulu-Natal. The community of rural Umgungundlovu, a small cluster of villages that fall

under the Amadiba traditional authority on the largely undeveloped coast of the Eastern Cape Province. The place is also known as [Xolobeni](#).

The villagers have been resisting plans by the Australian mining company, Transworld Energy and Mineral Resources, to mine their land for titanium and other heavy minerals for [at least a decade](#). The ACC was founded as a vehicle to contest the seemingly inevitable award of a mining licence.

Sole says :”The Amadiba Crisis Committee has led the struggle between mining and conservation, between local autonomy and the determination of distant politicians and bureaucrats that they know better - than stripping the dunes at Xolobeni for heavy minerals will mean "development", which justifies ignoring local pleas for a gentler path based on agriculture and tourism.”

They have resisted “the relentless pressure of a state allied with capital - for more than a decade they have resisted bids to grant a mining license at Xolobeni.”

The struggle of the ACC against the issuing of a mining licence to Transworld has gone through a long line of physical and legal confrontations which after more than 10 years has culminated in a victory of sorts when in November 2018 the community's lawyers, led by advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, achieved a remarkable triumph in persuading the North Gauteng High Court that customary law and the Interim Protection of Informal Right to Land Act trumped mining legislation.

In short, the court ruled that the Xolobeni community had the right to say no to mining on their land - a conclusion that Mantashe dramatically warned would be a death knell for the industry.

The seriousness of the struggle taking place in Xolobeni came to our attention when the chairman of ACC Bazooka Radebe was assassinated in June 2016

The key facts in developments in Xolobeni are:

- MRC Resources, the South African entity arm of an Australian Mining company that controls two local prospects: The Tormin mineral sands project on the West Coast, where mining operations began controversially in 2014, and the Xolobeni project.
- MRC Resources plans to mine a 22km long and 1.5km wide stretch of the

Xolobeni coastline, mainly for titanium-related minerals such as ilmenite, which is used as a white pigment, and zircon, used in ceramics.

- The proposed mine encroaches on five villages and some 200 households of the Amadiba area known as Umgungundlovu.
- The various individuals and entities involved in the process of obtaining a mining licence for the “Xolobeni prospect” are a number of individuals have links to the ANC and /or the royal house headed by amaMpondo king Zanozuko Sigcau who, before he died in last month November is an outspoken supporter of this mining venture..
- Attorney Richard Spoor working with the Legal Resources Centre has been providing legal assistance

The role of Sigcau (whose kingship is contested)

Nonhle Mbuthuma, who would become the face of the ACC after Bazooka's murder, was one of the original guides trained under the auspices of the EU-funded project. Has kept us informed us of developments with regular press releases

On 30 March 2007, Transworld and Xolco announced that a mining application had been lodged. In June 2007 the application required public consultation which provided a platform for local anti-mining leaders to take on the claims of the pro-mining lobby. It also led to sharpened conflict and suspicion.

An important factor was that under the old mineral rights regime, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) had to grant approvals independently from DME - and it emerged that DEAT had "grave concerns" about the case for mining.

The DME delayed its decision but in July 2008 Nogxina, using his delegated authority as director-general of the department, awarded mining rights to Transworld for one-third of the requested area.

In August 2008, then - DME minister Buyelwa Sonjica set up a well-funded jamboree at Xolobeni to celebrate the award and convince residents that government had ruled in their interest.

Spoor and the Legal Resources Centre had by then prepared court papers to challenge the legality of the process. It was a time when anti-mining interests appeared to have fought off the threat. At the beginning of February 2007, Zamble Qunya and Boqwana resigned as directors of Xolco, though the new board included Qunya's neighbour Mavis Denge and his brother Basheen.

Then, in March 2015, Transworld applied for a new mining licence and the cycle of conflict escalated again.

A well-attended community meeting in April decided to block access to the area so that Transworld would not be able to source the required environmental impact assessment. Four months later MRC announced it would divest its majority interest in the dune-mining venture because of "ongoing violence and threats to the peace and harmony of the Xolobeni community".

That deal was never consummated due, the company says, to the uncertainty created by an 18-month moratorium imposed by then mining Minister Mosebenzi Zwane in September 2016.

Zwane cited "the significant social disintegration and highly volatile nature of the current situation in the area" as the reason for suspending the licensing process once again.

In February 2018, President Cyril Ramaphosa appointed Gwede Mantashe as the new mining minister.

On 3 August 2018, Mantashe announced his intention to extend Zwane's mining moratorium by a further 24 months or "or until the Minister is satisfied that the community conflict and unrest have been resolved and that the application can continue".

However, in an investor presentation released on 24 August 2018, MRC suggested things were looking up for Xolobeni, noting in one bullet point: "New South African Government Leadership is pro-development of Project."

Then, on 29 August 2018, Mantashe addressed the 16th Africa Down Under mining conference in Perth, Western Australia, where he also met with MRC.

In January 2019, the crisis committee approached amaBhungane to consider taking up where Salgado had left off.

Three issues made that request compelling:

Firstly, the fact that Bazooka's murder was still unsolved and that there were indications of a cover-up (more of which is a second article, perhaps).

Thirdly, when Mantashe went back to Xolobeni for a second time on January 16 - a sortie that began with a pop-up youth group claiming to support mining and ended with police stun grenades and chaos - the question arose as to why Mantashe was investing enormous political capital on a project that was certifiably politically toxic, while being economically marginal.

Why indeed?

In her judgment on the right of traditional communities to say no, judge Annali Basson noted: "The community [is] strongly opposed to the proposed mining activities... on the basis that it will not only bring about a physical displacement from their homes but will lead to an economic displacement of the community and bring about the destruction of their cultural way of life... Their fears are not without merit."

She noted that the proposals had already created enormous divisions within the community.

"The community thereafter got word that drilling would commence on 22 February and that if access was not allowed, the force would be used..."

"In March 2016 word got out that there was a hit list of mining opponents. That same evening a certain Mr Radebe was shot and killed by two unknown assassins that gave rise to speculation amongst the community about the motives for the killing."

Despite this background, Mantashe wants to build a shining city on a rural Mpondo hill.

Perhaps he too believes that, for development, it may be necessary to spill blood.

Bazooka was not the first victim - it seems likely he will not be the last.

In a statement the ACC says:

"The community has fought open cast mining for titanium in five villages of the Wild Coast for 15 years. In November last year, the community won the "Right to Say No" to mining in the Pretoria High Court. The Department of Minerals and Energy announced in December they are appealing the landmark judgment but has not filed the necessary court papers.

The ACC IN OPPOSITION TO the N2 Wild Coast Toll Road

The ACC is opposed to and declares that N2 will not pass through Sigidi and Mdatya villages on the Wild Coast.

McLachlan and Sanral ignore Pondo customary law recognised by the Constitution.

CONFLICT AROUND THE ROYAL SUCCESSION IN XOLOBENI

Xolobeni is in Pondoland which is under the control of a tribal king. It so happens that a succession battle has come to overshadow the battle between the ACC and the government over mining rights and the N2 Toll road.

At the time of writing, the ACC was planning to picket outside the DMR in Pretoria. In a statement, they say, “Tomorrow, Friday 22 November, marks the first anniversary of the so-called Baleni Judgement. The Judgement means that it would be unlawful of DMR to grant a license for the “Xolobeni Mining Project” if the affected informal land rights holders and the coastal Umgungundlovu community have not given their “Free, prior and informed **consent**” to the project in accordance with the customary law of the community.”

The second example relates to developments in Limpopo and the North West

A series of articles that appeared in the Sunday Times this year drew one's attention to developments related to the question of tribal land ownership, highlighting a number of controversies that exist in Limpopo around traditional leadership and mining rights.

For example, a report written by Ernest Mabuza gives details of “Chieftainship dispute among platinum rich Mapela Community [\[22\]](#)

The Mapela Traditional Community is located about 30km north of Mokopane in Limpopo. The community is made up of 42 villages and surrounds Anglo American Platinum's Mogalakwena mine, the largest opencast platinum mine in the world. Here a dispute between members of the Mapela traditional authority over who is the rightful leader of the area has come to the fore.

In 2016, Anglo American Platinum subsidiary Rustenburg Platinum paid the Mapela traditional authority, then led by Kgoshi (Chief) David Kgabagare Langa, R175-million to settle several legacy issues unrelated to the leases.

These funds were expected to provide seed capital for creating sustainable, long-term and diversified growth for the community.

However, the community, , were up in arms, saying they knew nothing about the agreement, the trust or the cash.

In April last year, Limpopo Premier Stan Mathabatha removed David Kgabagare Langa as the senior traditional leader of the Mapela traditional community and recognised Hans Malesela Langa as the new leader.

When Hans Langa was due to be inaugurated as a traditional leader in a ceremony in Mokopane David disputed Hans's appointment in court.

Now Lesiba Langa is accusing his half-brother Hans of stealing the chieftaincy with the help of the provincial government.

Lesiba Langa said he was the rightful heir to the Langa-Masibe chieftaincy as he was from the first senior family of their great-grandfather Kgoshi Masibe Madimetja Ramahlaswana Langa.

“The problems illustrated by the case of Mapela are symptomatic of the failures of the broader legal and political context in which mining communities find themselves. The lack of transparency and accountability in Mapela arises out of, among other things, an inadequate legislative framework and the increasing abuse of power by the chief. Until these issues are properly addressed by the state, we can

expect frustrations in mining communities to continue to grow, making sustainable mining impossible to achieve.”[\[23\]](#)

What one has attempted to highlight here are matters that have a bearing on the kind of democracy we have here with special reference to challenges we face in dealing with the land and agrarian question. The experiences in this country of the ruthless exploitation of the country’s mineral wealth ,brings to mind Arundhati Roy’s “Broken Republic” published in 2011 which has an essay written in 2009 in which she describes graphically the role being played by companies like Vedanta which has been devastating the rural areas in the state of Orissa in India which is very rich in bauxite, the source of Aluminium. She describes how the Indian government is literally conducting war against the Adivasi people (“Tribals”) who are against the mining operations that are destroying their environment and badly affecting their health. [\[24\]](#)

In conclusion, to this section, I think this quote taken from comrade Mda’s book is relevant here.

“An elementary lesson reinforced by the ongoing history of royal houses, kings, queens chieftainships and all their associated trappings are that the institution of traditional (tribal leadership) is not anywhere on its last legs. It has proven resilient over time because of its penchant for hunting with the hounds and running with the hares as the power balance swings hither and thither over time. This has been the case in colonial times, the Apartheid era, the Bantustan era and the present.”

The dismal picture of the state of education will be set out in a special monograph to be published by us next year.

ASPECTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

Since the International situation will be dealt with in a separate paper prepared for the conference, I will confine myself to some general observations concerning the state of the balance of forces at play in trying to discern what the prospects of overturning the hegemony of Capitalism-Imperialism are.

Developments on the international scene are taking place against the background of a possible worldwide recession that might be influenced by a de facto trade war between the two largest economies in the world (the USA and China) as well as the probable negative fallout from Brexit. At the same time, we are witnessing the ascendancy of populist, overtly racist and xenophobic right-wing movements and parties not only in the majority of European countries but also in countries of the global South like the Philippines and Brazil. In addition, when one adds in the ascendancy of Donald Trump in the USA then these developments on the international scene can only have very serious repercussions for us here.

Then there is the ever-present challenge of the devastating impact Climate Change on the earth’s living environment.

We also need to take account of the near-collapse of Venezuela as a socialist country, and more recent developments in Bolivia where it is not hard to discern the evil hand of imperialism in facilitating the overthrow of Evo Morales. Cuba is also facing serious challenges.

On the other hand, how should we characterise China and Vietnam in the light of their promoting themselves as being Socialist with Chinese or Vietnamese characteristics?

How should we see this phenomenon? The late Samir Amin provides an interesting perspective on China's role in the global financial system.[\[25\]](#)

What are the implications of this phenomenon in terms of our own declared objective of the building of a socialist alternative to capitalism?

Is this a model to be followed?

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

We consider ourselves to be part of the Left in this country

It has become something of a cliché to hear an expression like "this is the most propitious time for the Left to intervene" or a "call for the building of the unity of the left" is made.

Sadly, utterances like these have up to now largely been ignored and no consistent initiative has come to light. As I said earlier the promise of the "Numsa Moment" has failed to materialise!

To be honest the left in this country has achieved precious little in enabling it to make a telling intervention in the body politic of this country.

For example, the APDUSA website in a report of its annual conference in April this year quotes the presidential address as having "focused on the dynamics involved in the construction of a radical left alternative in South Africa. Given initiatives in the past – the Radical Left Network and the Democratic Left Front, and more recently, the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party(SRWP) – the urgent need for the coalescence of radical left groups into a substantive left party is being felt more keenly."⁵

By way of response to the above let me remind you that in my Presidential Address in 2017 I said the following: "And the current conjuncture is again characterised by calls for the unity of the Left and the formation of a "Left Bloc" from various individuals and groups."

"However, given our own experience of such previous initiatives we remain sceptical of the success of such initiatives. Our feelings of scepticism have been strengthened by the tone and content of views expressed by participants in the debates that have largely occurred on –line and which suggest that there is some way to go before any consensus is reached amongst the participants."

Therefore, in relation to this matter, one must again pose the question of where to from here?

During September this year we issued a statement dealing with the crisis in the country in which we said the following:

"We must demand the people-centric transformation of our economy, away from one which secures the prosperity of a capitalist elite, to one which is caring and all-inclusive; one which delivers jobs, houses, services, community facilities and crime-free neighbourhoods. Under the current dispensation, it is a fact that most South Africans live lives of unrelenting hardship. Violent crime, overcrowded shack- and backyard dwelling, lack of services: these are the daily realities for most South Africans.

There should be an immediate allocation of adequate levels of state resources – human and material – to the urgent task of ridding society of all forms of crime - NOW.

Transformation of the educational system must be an ongoing high priority. More than 50 per cent of children who enrolled for grade 1 in 2007 did NOT make it through to matric in 2018. Youth unemployment (that is, unemployment in the age category 15 to 24) EXCEEDS 55%. What a damning statistic!!!

We are the same nation that defeated apartheid. We can defeat neoliberalism as well.” In terms of adding to our programme of minimum transitional demands as a platform for challenging the hegemony of Capitalism-imperialism, we could consider advocating for the implementation of economic policies such as: The re-imposition of exchange controls, lower interest rates, audit “odious debt”, control illicit capital flows adopt industrial policy aimed at import substitution, sectoral rebalancing, social needs, and eco-sustainability Increase state social spending (NHI. Increased social grants, higher education paid for from higher corporate taxes, cross-subsidisation, more domestic borrowing and loose money “quantitative easing”. There have also been calls from other quarters in this regard. For example, Michael Probsting: of the Revolutionary CIT in recent posting says: ”The current global wave of mass struggles is indeed exceptional. The only parallel in recent history is the first phase of the Great Arab Revolution in 2011. However, as the name already indicates, this revolutionary process was limited to only a single region. Today we have a truly global process of the mass uprising “

“Of course, it would be naïve and silly to believe that we have entered now a period of the never-ending upswing of global class struggle. The lack of revolutionary leadership, the inexperience of the masses, the influence of various petty-bourgeois forces – all this makes it nearly inevitable that the workers and oppressed will suffer setbacks or even outright defeats. This is the real-life of class struggle that might be uncomfortable for reformist routines or sectarian phrasemongers. However, masses learn only in such struggles and vanguard forces are only tested in such experiences. Revolutionary organizations themselves are forged in such historical moments. Authentic revolutionaries look towards such upsurges of the global class struggle full of joy and are prepared to throw themselves fully into such movements. The unavoidable defeats don’t frighten Marxists as they know that this will help them and all other activists to learn and to mature so that they can prepare the victories of the future!”

“The current global wave of class struggles offers a huge opportunity to advance the construction of a revolutionary party – nationally and internationally. It makes the advance of such a project imperative because the crucial factor which will finally decide if those revolutionary upheavals will be crushed or not is the question whether the politically most advanced working-class activists will learn the lessons of these struggle and succeed in building a revolutionary party in time.”

True, a new revolutionary party nationally and internationally cannot be established in a single stroke. It must be politically tested in the struggles of the workers and oppressed. However, the *organizing of a nucleus* – irrespective of its current size – to build such a party *can* and *must* start immediately. Hence, we repeat our call to all authentic revolutionaries to *immediately start coming together* and discuss a concrete platform for the class struggle and for advancing **the building of a party**.

It is of utmost importance that socialist activists around the world understand the nature of this process, draw the necessary lessons and jointly organize and fight for a consistent revolutionary program. The Marxist worker's leader Wilhelm Liebknecht stated that the task of revolutionaries is “*study, propagate, and organize!*” This slogan remains highly valid!

Probsting says, “We are in the midst of a massive upsurge of the global class struggle. In the past weeks, several countries have experienced heightened class struggles which often resulted in the emergence of pre-revolutionary or even revolutionary situation.”

He then names them as:

- Ecuador: A popular upsurge against the austerity package
- Chile: A youth-led revolt against drastic subway fare hike and right-wing President Piñera
- Haiti: A popular uprising against the neoliberal pro-US regime of Jovenel Moïse
- Honduras: Mass protests against the reactionary government of President Hernandez
- Iraq: A revolutionary upsurge against the corrupt government of Adel Abdul-Mahdi
- Lebanon: A popular upheaval against the government of Prime Minister Hariri and its tax hikes
- Egypt: A new upsurge of mass protests against the military dictatorship of General Sisi
- Algeria: ongoing mass protests against the “old guard” of the army which tries to keep power
- Hong Kong: A popular revolt against the Beijing-imposed regime of Carry Lam
- Kashmir: A looming intifada and a general strike against the evocation of autonomy rights by the right-wing Hindu chauvinist government of Narendra Modi
- Catalunya / Spanish State: A mass upsurge in reaction to the draconic prison sentences against nine leaders of the Catalan independence movement
- In addition, there is an ongoing global mass movement led by youth against climate change

In a later release, the RCIT says:’ “all these popular uprisings for freedom and social justice must be united into a *single Intifada!* The RCIT calls for international solidarity based on the support for all these struggles of the workers and oppressed as well as on the anti-imperialist opposition against all Great Powers (U.S., China, EU, Russia and Japan).

FINDING THE WAY OUT FROM THE NEO-LIBERAL CATASTROPHE: THE WAY FORWARD

The hegemony of Neoliberal Capitalism has been in existence for the past 40 years having been ushered in by the claim by Francis Fukuyama that the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 signalled the end of history.

I think it a worthwhile exercise to review some perspectives on the nature of Neoliberalism and on our methods of bringing it to an end.

“After Neoliberalism: The Kilburn Manifesto.” Edited by Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey and Michael Rustin (2015)

Joseph Stiglitz: “The End of Neoliberalism and the rebirth of history” xx

“The only way forward, the only way to save our planet and our civilisation, is a rebirth of history. We must revitalise the Enlightenment and recommit to honouring its values of freedom, respect for knowledge, and democracy” [\[26\]](#)

“Neo-liberalization has not been very effective in revitalizing global capital accumulation, but it has succeeded remarkably well in restoring, or in some instances (as in Russia and China) creating, the power of an economic elite. The theoretical utopianism of neoliberal argument has, I conclude, primarily worked as a system of justification and legitimation for whatever needed to be done to achieve this goal.”[\[27\]](#)

“ Neo-liberalization has meant, in short, the financialisation of everything. There was unquestionably a power shift away from production to the world of finance.”[\[28\]](#)

Peter Waterman in his critique of SIGTUR has this to say about Neoliberalism, which he sees as different from capitalism;

“One has to further stress that, like the Northern union hegemons, the Futures Report is, with the mentioned exception, as opposed to neoliberalism rather than capitalism. So far, however, the only alternative to neoliberalism that does not have at least one foot in a post-capitalist utopia, has to be some kind of global Neo-Keynesianism – and one which does not recall Keynesianism’s dark side (industrialism, racism, sexism, pollution, nuclearisation, Big Pharma, the possessive individualism symbolised by the family car, the redefinition of the citizen as a consumer, a strictly instrumental rationality, a growing arms industry and imperial warfare – hot or cold, against Communism or Radical-Nationalism).

Michael Lebowitz's "The Socialist Alternative: Real Human Development"

The Cuban scholar **Olga Fernández Ríos** at the launch of the Cuban edition of Michael Lebowitz' *The Socialist Alternative: Real Human Development* at the Havana International Book Fair, February 15, 2015, presented a succinct review of the book in which she highlights the following:

1. the pertinence and existing possibilities for the development of socialism with a correct understanding of the process of socialist transition.
2. reflections about the unsuccessful experiences of so-called “real socialism” as it existed in the USSR and the factors that led to its collapse.
3. He argues the case for the socialist alternative in contemporary conditions and does so with an argued defence of socialism as the necessary, valid and possible way out from contradictory and predatory capitalism. This is combined with a Marxist perspective present throughout the book that breaks with stereotypes and dogmas around socialism and with schemas that distort the conceptions of original Marxism and the contributions of Lenin and other revolutionary thinkers.
4. He provides an analysis of socialist transition, viewed as an integral and contradictory process
5. He emphasises the complexity of socialist transition and the validity of looking for answers that avoid the errors that brought about the collapse of socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe.
6. he backs a process of socialist transition in which people achieve human development, including the development of individuality through the role that workers play, and meet social necessities within the framework of the community that is prioritised in its analysis, together with other factors.
7. the book focuses itself on human development, in the development of human capacities, linking it with social practice... The focus is on human development as a second product: the construction of the capacities of the working class.
8. The importance of the protagonism of workers... it is not possible to look at the socialist transition without considering the factors that affect or influence the development of the abilities of the human beings involved in that process... It is a very intelligent and timely form

of analysing matters related to the correlation between the individual and the social in a society that advances towards socialism.

9. An underlying theme in the book has to do with the questions: why did socialism collapse???... Why didn't the working-class struggle to avoid this collapse? In addition, the author invites us to reflect on these subjects and provides some guidelines for an analysis of the necessity of the protagonism of workers in their workplaces, of the necessary decentralisation in every space of development in society.

10. It contributes some interesting points of view about new concepts, like for example those set out by Hugo Chávez in 2007 regarding what he called the "socialist triangle" composed of three factors that he considers key in the attainment of that society:

- the social ownership of the means of production
- the management and control of production by the producers, by the workers that have to reach their development
- the orientation of production towards the ends and necessities of the community.

11. These factors are not simplified in Lebowitz' analysis; they are dealt with taking into account their complexities and contradictions.

12. The book is written in clear and direct language... its publication contributes positively to the defence of the socialist ideal and the necessary contemporary debate around the construction of the new society.

13. In our country, that debate is being carried out on the basis of the conviction that the process of rectification that the VI Congress of the Cuban Communist Party opened up should lead to a perfecting of the socialist transition and greater clarity about the concepts around which such a complex process is sustained.

14. It is logical that the thesis displayed in this book will provoke new reflections for or against it. But above all, it will contribute to the advance of the necessary conceptualisation around socialism to which we aspire and about the process for its achievement. I think that there are many reasons to go back to Lebowitz' reflections in a moment in which it is necessary to deepen that conceptualisation.

One has on many previous occasions made the following observations:

- i All the problems that confront us are due to the ongoing crisis of capitalism-imperialism and that as a result the world is confronted by making the choice between Socialism or Barbarism
- ii Our commitment to striving for the realisation of a Socialist alternative is reiterated.
- iii In line with that belief, we have considered forming alliances with like-minded organisations of the Left with the view to building a movement for Socialism in this country.

In the PA of 2017, I observed that the current conjuncture cries out for the building of organisations like the AAC and the NEUM. The founding fathers and mothers of the NEUM sought to build the unity of the oppressed and exploited based on adherence of all to a programme of non-negotiable demands and

the acceptance of a policy of non-racialism and non-collaboration. The oppressed and exploited masses than had to confront the system of Apartheid. Today, the unity of the oppressed and exploited is needed to challenge the hegemony of Neo-liberal Capitalism.”

Having united ourselves based on a programme akin to our own TPP of minimum Transitional Demands we need to engage upon a course of action directed against the system of Neoliberal capitalism

TOWARDS A PROGRAMME OF ACTION: some ideas

Hillel Ticktin in an editorial in Critique^[29] talks of the period post-1991 as being a period of the transition to Socialism and observes that the Left has not succeeded in formulating a clear strategy for achieving this end. He says that there are several phases which this process of getting the Left back on track, has to go through, the first one is making a total break with Stalinism.

What is the role of a policy of quantitative easing which according to Ticktin has come to an end?

The booklet “Challenging Corporate Capital: Creating an Alternative to Neoliberalism” serves as a reference to a campaign launched by SIGTUR (Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights)

They have identified a number of what sounds like transitional demands in this regard.

(They identify 6 areas of action:

1. Confronting tax abuse in all its forms- eliminating tax havens, preventing pricing and asset transfers. Introducing reform measures to strengthen the financial capacities of the state
2. Struggle against the concentration and centralisation of corporate power- Turning around the processes of privatisation in public services and placing them back in the hands of the state and the communities involved, with workers’ participation in the management of those services
3. Challenging the notion and practice of free trade and replacing it with fair trade, which places the wellbeing of workers and communities at the centre of development.
4. Fight against all forms of precarious labour which affects workers’ rights for decent wages working conditions and the right to organise and strike
5. The promotion of a universal guaranteed income in every one of the affiliated countries, an income that satisfies the basic needs of our populations independently of their position in the labour market.
6. Putting forward alternative development models that incorporate the concept and practice of a just transition, including worker and community participation in energy production, distribution and consumption

The above statement of SIGTUR was issued in June 2016

Patrick Bond has published a book and several essays focusing on the BRICS. He draws attention to the coming into being of a movement called “Brics from below” and discusses the role of the BTUF (Brics trade union forum) that invites further study.

STATISTICS IN BRICS

China: 240 million; 90% of workforce • India: 87 million; 33% of workforce • Russia: 24 million; 32% of workforce • • Brazil: 17 million; 17% of the workforce

Patrick Bond writing in Monthly Review Jan 2019: “South Africa Suffers Capitalist Crisis Déjà Vu”.

With reference to the coming into being of movements like #RMF, #FMF, he says, “The difficulty, as ever, is tying together threads of potential leftist organizing into a political movement that can capture majority support.”

“Given how South Africa’s pot keeps boiling, whatever left-black-youth-feminist-ecologist regroupment emerges from the political and economic turmoil that is inevitable in 2019, it cannot come quickly enough.”

Moreover, from another perspective, the question of what is necessary for revolution is answered by Raju Das writing in Links International thus:

“Many things are necessary for a revolution. There has to be a numerically large mass of workers who are suffering, who are class conscious and who are engaged in trade union and political struggle. Revolution also needs “a correct revolutionary theory” (Lenin, 1968). In addition, theory — or more broadly, revolutionary intellectual work — has to be consciously produced. Then the question is: what is the role of the academic world in this production, in relation to the world of political revolutionaries (e.g. party-based intellectuals), and what is the connection between intellectual work and political program.”

Making use of the above statement in the South African context must take into account the following statistics regarding the trade union movement in this country:

In South Africa, the three main federations work together in the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac). The membership of the three main federations is Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu): 1.8 million, Federation of Unions of South African (Fedusa): 0.6 million, National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu): 0.4 million, South African Federation of Trade unions (SAFTU):

This is the total number of organised workers in South Africa of 3.3 million that accounts for only 30% of the total workforce.

From an international perspective

In some countries, the labour movement is extremely weak, e.g. China

As stated by MP Giyose our vice president, speaking in his capacity as chairperson of Jubilee 2000 in 2005: “We, therefore, come to the conclusion that the reorganisation of the world has to occur based on new social foundations – the foundations of a post-capitalist society. This is a society where the forces of equality are universal; they have become the very life force of economics, of the ecology and politics. Historically a society of this kind has been classified under the generic term of socialism. “

Hillel Ticktin

Makes the following salient points:

1. Even as the base for socialism is being formed, the superstructure appears to be blocked.
2. The world appears to be mired in a never-ending transition
3. The demise of soviet-style socialism and Stalinism has not been taken advantage of by the Left that has very limited support in the world.

4. The majority of people in the world cannot distinguish between the left, the far left and the pseudo-left.
5. The elections saw the ANC garner 58% of the vote whereas the emergent far left got less than 1 % (This is a reference to WASP in the last election)
6. The transition the left has to pass through a number of phases before returning to its path
7. The first phase involves a total break with Stalinism whose full damage has not been widely understood
8. The second phase involves the left turning itself into a believable fully socialist alternative to capitalism

CONCLUSION:

In this address, I have tried to touch on matters that I believe are relevant to us engaging further on how to deal with the seemingly insurmountable challenges we face in this country. Some of the challenges we face are indeed daunting but with the necessary help, support and dedication we the support and dedication of a new generation of political activists they can be overcome.

However, one has to warn that overcoming the challenges we face cannot all be overcome on a purely national basis. International solidarity and cooperation are also required. So for example, a movement for socialism in this country will not succeed unless it is part of a global movement.

At this point, it seems that the seedbed for such a movement lies in the global South of which we are a part.

I would like to have said more, but time does not permit one to do so. I trust that I have, if only to a limited extent succeeded in stimulating you to engage with some of what I've had to say.

I have attempted herein to lay the groundwork for what we need to take into consideration as we set about developing our tactics and strategies for challenging the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism-imperialism. I have done so from the perspective of building on the arsenal of ideas bequeathed to us by the founding mothers and fathers of the UM in 1943.

I would like to believe that the method of analysis and the policies that were elaborated by them still have some traction in the 21st century.

Let our watchwords be: **Organise, Rebuild, Mobilise**

Forward to the building of an anti-imperialist movement for socialism.

A Luta Continua

I thank you for your attention and look forward to any comments on what I've said here tonight

Basil Brown
President

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