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We Fight Ideas with Ideas

SHARPEVILLE MASSACRE: SIXTY TWO YEARS ON

On 21 March 1960, the apartheid police violently suppressed a peaceful demonstration of some 7 000 people who were protesting the pass laws, by firing into the crowd, killing 69 and injuring 180. The event has become known as the *Sharpeville Massacre*, and is commemorated today as Human Rights Day.

The United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) adopted in 1948 is generally regarded as the standard to aspire to, incorporating as it does a comprehensive, unambiguous range of human rights which would appear to be unsurpassable in its comprehensiveness.

The current SA bill of rights enshrined in the country's constitution is equally comprehensive, and, ironically (but not surprisingly) is more honoured in the breach than the observance. A cursory glance around the world will show that this is the case in virtually every country on the planet, which prompts the question: WHY? Why do governments and ruling classes the world over pay lip service to what are implementable values which will result in a healthy and prosperous life for all?

The short answer is: If human rights threaten capitalism and the preferences of the ruling classes, then they will be denied or suppressed. Take the following examples:

- ♦ According to article 14 of the UDHR, "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."



This is a right that is selectively (in other words, racially) implemented by the countries of Europe, UK, America and Australia.

Refugees fleeing wars in places like North Africa, Syria and Iraq are blatantly denied entry while, as we are currently seeing, refugees from Ukraine are being welcomed with open arms. In

South Africa, we are seeing the disturbing growth of a strong xenophobic sentiment against so-called "illegal immigrants." This plays into the hands of government and other agencies who need someone to scapegoat for their service- and job-delivery failures.

- ♦ The apartheid state of Israel, since its formation in 1948, has been openly aided and abetted by the so-called western powers in their cynical and murderous expropriation of Palestinian land

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and the oppression of the Palestinian people. Zionism is the very antithesis of human rights.

- ♦ In South Africa, our much-lauded bill of rights did not prevent police from shooting down striking mine workers at Marikana in 2012, killing 34 and injuring 78.
- ♦ While Founding Father Thomas Jefferson was careful to insert clauses guaranteeing personal liberties in the American bill of rights in 1789, he had a dilemma: as a slave owner, how could he simultaneously be a champion of human rights – unless slaves were deemed to be non-human or less-than-human! And so, the bill made reference to “persons and *other* persons” (this category of “other persons” also included indigenous Americans).

Arguably one of the most cynically exploited “rights” is that which relates to *private* property. Respect for property rights is a mandatory clause in every human rights bill that exists. Was this meant to protect vulnerable citizens from eviction from their homes? Was this meant to safeguard personal property? Perhaps it was meant as a way of asserting the rights of indigenous people to traditional and historical land occupation rights? Whatever the case, it has proven most useful to profit-hungry capitalists.

Article 17 of the UDHR says, “Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others,” and “No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.”

Similarly, the SA bill of rights says, “No one may be deprived of property except in terms of law of general application.”

Capital accumulation is nothing other than “property accumulation.” Thus, under the various bills of rights, the licence is provided for the unlimited enrichment of the few through the exploitation of the many. And so we have a world in which the gap between rich and poor continues to widen, personal and public debt levels continue to escalate, and the planet’s rush towards extinction continues to accelerate.

The global economy is firmly in the hands of a privileged elite who are motivated solely by self-interest. Property in their hands is the means to perpetuating their wealth beyond obscene levels, regardless of how the rest of society is impacted.

There is no other way than that the anti-capitalist forces of the world unite against this tyranny of capital. Historically, we are in a gestational period. As Trotsky

famously put it in the 1930s: “The strategic task of the next period – a prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda, and organisation – consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard ...”

Part of the process of “agitation, propaganda and organisation” would include the framing of a powerful set of demands encapsulating the real needs of the working masses – going beyond human rights to social rights. It’s not enough that we have individual freedoms, we have to embrace the whole of society within our purview. It would not be wrong to say that “human rights,” as conceived by the UDHR and all the other bills of rights are ideals to be realised within a capitalist reality. Our struggle has to be to extend the meaning of human rights to the overarching right to freedom.

To quote from a 2004 article by Nakjung Kim:

Marx says that freedom in the arena of material production can be achieved through freely associated producers' collective and rational control of nature with the minimum expenditure of human mental physical energy and the maximum satisfaction of human needs.

[However] Marx furthers his concept of freedom by transcending this sphere of necessity of a basic condition of human civilization. He claims that genuine freedom can be acquired only in the condition in which we can develop human potentials as an end in itself.

This moves us beyond a narrow “human rights” concept of freedom, and provides left wing activists with the direction we should be aiming at, where “*the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all*” as so stridently asserted in the Communist Manifesto.

The massacre at Sharpeville was an assault on the working class by a fascist state on behalf of the apartheid bourgeoisie. That fascist state was not overthrown in 1994. It was taken over and transformed into a neoliberal state by a new elite which – similar to their 1960 forebears – had no hesitation in mowing down workers as at Marikana in 2012 when their “property rights” were threatened.

PHILANTHROCAPITALISM – A WEAPON IN THE ARMOURY OF THE WEALTHY

“Tax the rich!” is an ongoing demand by millions across the world as we see the gap between rich and poor continue to soar. According to a January 2022 report by Oxfam, “The world’s ten richest men more than doubled their fortunes from \$700 billion to \$1.5 trillion – at a rate of \$15,000 per second or \$1.3 billion a day – during the first two years of a pandemic that has seen the incomes of 99 percent of humanity fall and over 160 million more people forced into poverty.”

Of course, the rich have always rejected calls for a fairer tax regime, and have not hesitated to use bogus arguments such as “higher (corporate) taxes will discourage investment.”

In the US in 2017, Donald Trump’s government cut the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21%, where it still stands. In President Cyril Ramaphosa’s state of the nation address, he sneaked in a little detail about reducing the SA rate from 28 percent to 27 percent. There was not a murmur of disapproval – not even from Cosatu (which shouldn’t surprise one, as Cosatu is part of the ruling alliance). As SAFTU’s secretary-general, Zwelinzima Vavi reminded us in a recent radio interview, SA’s corporate tax rate stood at 58 percent in 1991. We can safely conclude that 28 years of ANC-style neoliberal democracy has been exceedingly kind (philanthropic?) towards corporate big business!

In response to the Oxfam report mentioned above, a group of millionaires issued a call for higher taxes to be imposed on the wealthy elite (including themselves). In an open letter (according to the Cape Times on 20 January) “102 millionaires said the current tax system is unfair and deliberately designed to make the rich richer.” The letter added, “The world – every country in it – must demand the rich pay their fair share. Tax us, the rich, and tax us now.”

Does this mean there are “good millionaires” out there? That capitalism is not the problem, but that greed is?

Charity on the part of the rich is not something new. In 2021, Bill Gates’s foundation donated \$15 billion to various charities. (In 2021, his personal net worth was estimated at \$139 billion.) Jeff Bezos’s charitable fund donated almost \$100 million to groups working to provide

food, shelter and support to homeless families across the U.S. (In 2021, his net worth was around \$195 billion.) And richest-of-the-rich, Pretoria-born Elon Musk, with a net worth of \$229 billion, in November 2021 donated \$5.7 billion worth of shares to charity. What is noteworthy in all these cases is that the actual amounts donated did nothing

to dent the net worth of the donors – they were mere drops in the ocean. In addition, there would more than likely have been tax-deductible benefits for the donors, fuelling suspicions of self-interest underlying their philanthropy.

But perhaps of greatest importance is that they get to keep as well as grow their wealth in a

global order tailor-made to their needs for accumulation. On their terms they can sprinkle a few dollars here and a few dollars there, creating the perception that they are good, kind-hearted people, and that the system to which they owe their wealth is a good system. But bourgeois philanthropy always comes with strings attached – it is not given in good spirit – rather, its fundamental two-fold purpose is to calm the troubled waters of rebellion by the impoverished masses, and to grease the wheels of governmental influence for multi-national corporations. Always, the underlying motive is retention of the status quo.

This is the light in which one has to view the crocodile tears shed by the World Bank in its recent report highlighting the fact that South Africa’s wealth gap between rich and poor is (and for a long time has been) the largest in the world. This is Mandela’s SA we are talking about, the same SA which was promised “A better life for all” if it accepted the imperialist-brokered New Order in the 1990s. The World Bank is not concerned about overthrowing the noxious system responsible for SA and the world’s growing poverty levels; it is concerned about saving that system, and finding ways *within* that system to



ameliorate its more extreme effects. This is where the World Bank and other Western-oriented agencies and NGOs, together with the gang of high-profile philanthrocapitalists come full circle in their bid to forestall revolutionary change.

Meanwhile, as the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, the planet is facing the real prospect of catastrophic breakdown; it is hurtling towards the point of no-return while the wealthy elites continue to exploit its limited resources beyond its breaking point.

So much for philanthrocapitalism, which as Wikipedia defines it, is “a way of doing philanthropy, which mirrors the way that business is done in the for-profit world.” In other words, it is not so much about helping the poor as it is about retaining (and strengthening) the status quo.

It is the so-called billionaire philanthropists who create the need for charity, by engineering economic wastelands through their ‘purchasing’ of government policy influence.

Registered charities are proxies for corporate exploitation of the poor. Take the case of KFC, which makes a big song-and-dance of its support for the development of youth cricket in South Africa. Their charitable arm entitled “Give Hope,” solicited some R2 billion in a drive centred on feeding the hungry. Its principal – KFC – contributed a measly R30 million, that is, 0.33 percent of its turnover.

Marx and Engels, in the Communist Manifesto, referred to “philanthropists” and “humanitarians” (that is, “organisers of charity”) as “representatives of a conservative bourgeois type of socialism.”

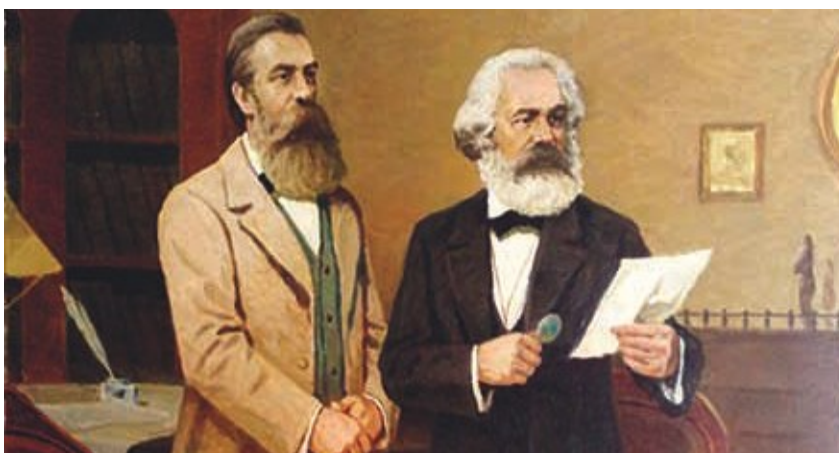
In an enlightening 2016 article, Dimitrios Theodossopoulos, endorses Marx and Engels on the notion of philanthropy – as an apolitical “bourgeois initiative which has the effect of exonerating state (and ruling class) inaction without challenging the inequalities.”

He goes on to dissociate “humanitarianism” from “philanthropy,” and situates it alongside “solidarity,” where solidarity refers to communities uniting in struggle, where sharing, supporting caring become the predominant underpinning values. Thus, “from each according to their

means to each according to their needs” becomes the driving force.

Left-wing activists engaged in grassroots struggles need to ensure that their well-meaning interventions to mitigate the harshness of suffering in communities does not reflect a philanthropic mind-set which is limited to “charity,” but builds and broadens consciousness around the causes of suffering. In short, we must *politicise* suffering. This will ensure that we avoid the inherent hypocrisy of (bourgeois) philanthropy.

If we understand the philanthropy practiced by the billionaire-class as part of their strategy to retain the status-quo, then we will avoid it – *not to avoid it* will amount to collaboration with it.



Marx and Engels: demands of the Communist Party

So, when millionaires and billionaires say “please tax us,” they are essentially hoping to avert a level of solidarity and class consciousness arising in the ranks of the oppressed which would sweep away the established capitalist order. They are well aware that in a post-capitalist world such oddities as millionaires and billionaires will not exist. Even in a transitional world, tax

rates for the rich will see a sudden sharp escalation. (In 1935, to fight the Great Depression, America introduced a wealth tax of up to 75 percent of the highest incomes – and that wasn’t a socialist move!). If we are going to tax the rich, we will do so on our terms, not theirs. Meanwhile they will keep praying that the power to set tax rates remains in the hands of compliant, neoliberal governments the world over. In fact, if current trends in their behaviour are anything to go by, they would rather destroy the planet than cede power to a socialist order.

Zabalaza Socialist Forum - Eastern Cape

THE ERHINI DECLARATION

A CALL FOR UNITY AND SOLIDARITY AND DEMOCRATIC ORGANISATION AGAINST BACKWARD CAPITALISM, EXPLOITATION AND OPPRESSION, IN THE STRUGGLE FOR ANOTHER EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA AND THE WORLD

Recognising that

1. 28 years after the advent of democracy in 1994, the Eastern Cape and South Africa are not the places of our dreams
2. Africa and the world are beset by structural crises which continually impact us
3. We face multiple, interconnected crises of survival affecting the masses of oppressed and dispossessed people
4. These crises include economic stagnation and collapse, growing inequality and uneven development, land hunger, raging unemployment, widespread poverty, homelessness, hunger, widespread child stunting, health and education failures, crime and violence, women's oppression, corruption, xenophobia, environmental collapse and continuing denial of democratic rights to rural people
5. The state has become a virtual crime scene, characterised by corruption and widespread collapse of governance. State failure and rapid institutional collapse threaten to neutralise even the limited gains made since 1994. Failure to maintain state infrastructure now poses a serious threat to living standards and inhibits economic growth and employment creation
6. A heightened threat of imperialist war that will affect us all
7. Although this country has all the resources and wealth to end poverty and oppression and provide a better life for all, moribund capitalism denies this to most of our people, particularly the youth
8. Life is even worse in this province which is little better than an untransformed Bantustan. Here, while politicians, 'kings' and capitalists continued to profit, months of brutal lockdown saw 54 000 dead of covid-19, hospitals provided grossly inadequate treatment, our vaccination programme was largely a failure, already weak government transformation programmes ground to

a total halt and available state budgets were cut to the bone by National Treasury. Poverty and unemployment grew worse

9. The ruling ANC has, because of its own narrow interests and limited political outlook, consistently refused to confront big capital. It is neither capable, nor interested in meeting the challenges confronting our people

10. In the absence of practical political alternatives, popular demoralisation and depoliticisation are growing

11. The old left faces multiple crises of demoralisation, loss of direction and collapse

12. A number of inspiring local struggles, anti-poverty projects and campaigns against oppression however continue to show the way forward in the fight for a better society and world. We need a vibrant, province-wide campaign for properly-functioning municipalities and decent livelihoods!

We therefore resolve to initiate the building of a new and progressive struggle platform for democratic people's politics. This will

1. Establish an interim, representative organising team to take forward the project of encouraging and developing local affiliated structures
2. Supported by such structures, assist local communities to build opposition in all cases of oppression, state failure, exploitation and abuse and encourage mass solidarity
3. Supported by such structures, focus on campaigns around municipal failure
4. Supported by such structures, assist local communities to replicate successful campaigns and project models
5. *Supported by* such structures, build a province-

wide campaign against Afrophobia which is basically self-hatred and xenophobic hatred directed at migrants born in other African countries

- o Develop an urgent discussion document
 - o Undertake political education
 - o Organise to oppose xenophobic and violent attacks
 - o Promote a common fight for jobs and services
 - o Call on government to address popular demands
 - o Encourage the organisation/unionisation of workers from other countries
 - o Encourage use of the term “Afrophobia”
6. Develop and resource campaigns dealing with the above issues
 7. Build a network to link local, national and international structures and struggles
 8. Develop a knowledge resource base rooted in local experience, to assist local in campaigns and projects
 9. Develop popular propaganda and educational material for regular dissemination across the province
 10. Initiate and resource a popular education campaign to support emerging locals and their campaigns and projects
 11. Advance the rebuilding of popular power
 12. Advance a vision for renewing and rebuilding mass-based and struggle-based left/socialist politics and web of life.

... ENDS ...

WAY FORWARD

1. March to May 2022 – taking the political process of dialogues on rebuilding popular power and mass-based left renewal to local activists, movements and socialists across the province
2. Consolidating unity, solidarity and action on existing popular struggles
3. Reconvening of a second provincial left dialogue by the end of June 2022 – to adopt a programme of action

PARTICIPANTS

1. Afesis Corplan
2. Amadiba Crisis Committee
3. Azanian People’s Organisation
4. Cala University Students’ Association
5. Children’s Resource Centre
6. Chosi-Chosi Creative Academy
7. Eastern Cape Environmental Network
8. Eastern Cape Water Caucus
9. Equal Education Campaign
10. Independent Komani Residents’ Association
11. nda National Land Movement
12. Khanyisa Educational Project
13. Labour-Community Media Forum
14. Makana Citizens’ Front
15. Makukhanye Rural Movement
16. New Unity Movement
17. Pathways Institute
18. Treatment Action Campaign
19. Unemployed People’s Movement

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The Unity Movement has been a staunch supporter of the

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THE RIVER CLUB COURT RULING – AN IMPORTANT INTERIM VICTORY

In what can be considered a victory for the rights of indigenous Khoi and San people, Western Cape Deputy Judge President Patricia Goliath has interdicted the Liesbeek Leisure Properties Trust (LLPT) from further construction earmarked for among other things, offices for multinational giant Amazon.com, at the River Club site in Observatory, Cape Town.

The Unity Movement has been a staunch supporter of the groups who have been struggling resolutely in what is not unlike a David vs Goliath battle to prevent an out-and-out capitalist exploitation of land which has significant heritage, cultural and environmental value. Needless to say, the developers have ridden roughshod over these sensitivities, and have offered some token gesture to try to allay concerns.



In typical style, the developers have attempted to legitimise their plans by co-opting a group of opportunists among the ranks of the affected groups who pose as “representatives of the people.” This group, styling itself the “First Nations Collective” (FNC) has tried to position itself as the true representatives of the people, but have convinced nobody.

But the struggle is far from over. The interdict does not call for the dismantling of work done so far. It does not require that the tons of concrete already cast on the site be demolished. It requires a review to be done of the relevant environmental and land-use authorisations by the City of Cape Town and the Provincial Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning. And it requires “meaningful consultation with all affected First Nations people.”

The groupings engaged in the progressive struggle to pre-

vent the development from going ahead include, among others, the Goringhaicona Khoi Khoi Indigenous Traditional Council and the Observatory Civic Association. Their court action has held up, at least for the moment, what is intended to be a R4.6 billion capitalist development.

As the Unity Movement, we welcome all victories, large and small, and are well aware that in this case, the battle will be a long and hard one. Something we should not lose sight of is that this is a victory-by-court-case, hardly a working class means of struggle! So we should see it only as a moral victory of sorts, since the court has ordered the capitalists to go and consult with the aggrieved parties. Who's to know what the consultation process will yield? It is extremely doubtful that everything will end with the tons of concrete so far laid being broken down and the land restored to its former state. Thus, there is a strong possibility of a compromise solution. We might see some selling-out happening. The only way this could be prevented is through the determined efforts of a strong, united people's movement, something like we saw at Xolobeni.

The Unity Movement will continue to support the struggle to prevent the capitalist desecration of this important piece of land.

Below is a section of a statement by the Unity Movement on 17 January 2022, in which Movement president Dr Basil Brown lambasts minister Lindiwe Sisulu for her hypocrisy on, among other things, the River Club property.

And then there is the matter of her heart bleeding for the indigenous people of this country. She says, “When it comes to crucial economic issues and property matters, the same African (her “House Negro”) cosies up with their elitist colleagues to sing from the same hymn book, spouting the Roman-Dutch law of property.” Yet, this is EXACTLY what she did when she was minister of water affairs and sanitation!

She occupied this post in the cabinet from May 2019 to August 2021. In this period, she disregarded the interests of the indigenous Khoi and San communities by uplifting the suspension of a Water Use License in favour of the developers of the highly contentious River Club development at the confluence of the Liesbeek and Black rivers in Observatory, Cape

Town. She exercised ministerial discretion in favouring the applicants over the appellants, at least one of whom was an Indigenous Khoi council for whom the site is a reminder of indigenous resistance against colonial intrusion at the Cape, and one that is sacred for all South Africans for that reason.

The development of the River Club property began with the sale of the land in 2015 and resulted in approval of the rezoning of the property and the granting of an Environmental Authorisation for the development in 2020. A number of interested and affected parties, including organisations of Khoi/San Indigenous groups opposed the development on the basis of the harm the development would cause to the environment, the adverse impacts on heritage and the consequences of the development for our country's climate change resilience. The site is part of an environmentally sensitive floodplain and an area sacred to the Khoi/San in terms of intangible heritage and memory. For someone who is attempting to pose as a fierce critic of "robbery of other people's land," and "the co-option and invitation of political powerbrokers to the dinner table ... while they dine caviar with colonised capital," the contradiction that "8% of the population control 80% of the land and its resources," how is it that she hands the keys to a bunch of rich "white boys" (all 5 development's directors are white men) who will house the headquarters of one of the biggest if not the biggest transnational corporation set up by the wealthiest billionaire in the world, to pursue private profiteering?

If she truly believes "land is where it all begins", why did she uplift the suspension of a license which allows sacred land to be consolidated as a private benefit to rich capitalists?

And, most bizarrely, if she is really concerned about "where is the indigenous law?" why does she trample the rights of indigenous Khoi and San peoples who have appealed to stop this development?

Sisulu's contradictions on the River Club, cosying up to what looks like the clearest example of "white monopoly capital" in her exercising of ministerial discretion on the matter are unambiguous examples of her hypocrisy.

MARCH 2022



Continuation from P.9

CONCLUSION OF TRIBUTE TO JOE SLINGERS

Joe's warmth, humanity and his unique charm will forever remain fresh in our minds. We shall forever be inspired by this example of a comrade, a political figure and a friend. Rest assured that we and the millions of our oppressed and exploited people shall not relent, nor waver, but shall continue to work unendingly, as he did, for the complete victory of the noble cause of destroying once and for all the vestiges of apartheid and of creating a South Africa free from all forms of discrimination and exploitation.

May we all be encouraged by Joe's resoluteness in continuing the struggle he was so loyally engaged in.

May the happy memories that particularly the immediate family, his three children and their families as well as the extended family, and his comrades and friends have and treasure be a source of comfort and solace in this time of reflection and mourning

JOE SLINGERS: A TRIBUTE

Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
and, in departing leave behind us,
footprints on the sands of time.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

One such great man who has left indelible footprints on “the sands of time” is Joseph William McCarthy Slingers. In the late seventies, Joe Slingers became a member of the underground Teachers’ League of South Africa (TLSA).

It was with the deepest sadness that members of the New Unity Movement and the former Teachers’ League of South Africa (TLSA) learnt of the passing away of our comrade and friend, Joe Slingers on 25 February 2022. We extend our sympathies and condolences to the daughter, Ilse, his sons Stefaan and Joseph and their families, as well as the extended Slingers family.

We wish them strength and fortitude during this sad period of mourning.

Cde Joe became a dedicated and courageous member of the TLSA and the NUM. For a time, until its demise, he was the chairperson of the TLSA branch in the PE/Uit. area. He became a committed fighter against racism in education and society and against class exploitation and social discrimination. He was unrelenting in the struggle for fundamental changes, to build a new society based on social justice and full political rights as encompassed in the NUM’s Ten Point Programme.

For Cde Joe, the full implementation of the ideals of the TPP was non- negotiable. And, allied to this was his unshakeable belief in the principles of non-racialism, non-collaboration, anti-imperialism, a single undivided South African nation, free compulsory education for all and most importantly a resolution of the land question in favour of the black majority.

Cde Joe firmly believed that whilst apartheid had been officially abolished, the racist capitalist system endorsed by the ANC is responsible for the crisis-ridden education and health systems that continue to be a blight on the majority of the oppressed.



From all over the world messages of condolences were received from former students/pupils mentioning Joe’s success as a teacher. Isabelle Godden (a former learner) in a tribute to Joe Slingers said,

“He would teach us Die Swart Pelgrim and make us understand the deep pain and suffering of black migrant labourers and the harsh disintegration of African families under apartheid. We hung on his lips as he analysed and explained what our hungry minds needed. Much later, after high school and entering into the tertiary experience, we could hear his song on the breeze of our experience. Driven by his voice and the whispers of his teachings we took in our place in the struggle for justice and removal of the harsh system of apartheid. Today we can proudly say that we stood on the shoulders of a giant”. What a legacy he has left to those that follow. It is quite evident that Joe lived by the TLSA motto of “Let us live for our children”.

As Sports Administrator, Joe fitted in excellently with the nationally and internationally known administrators such as Harry Hendricks, Reg Feldman, and Rathas Rathinasamy. They were indeed revolutionary visionaries of the non-racial sports movement and took organised national school sport to new heights. Joe first served as assistant secretary under Harry Hendricks for two terms and then in the eighties again this time as secretary, under Raymond Uren for two terms.

(Conclusion on previous page)

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