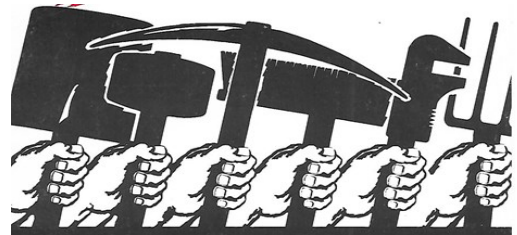




An official
publication of the
**New Unity
Movement**

The Worker

MAYDAY



***Inside this
issue***

Workers at a cross-roads	1
1994 - The Aftermath	3
The Precarity	5
Pamphlet - May Day	6
In Remembrance - Ursula Fataar	7

MAY 2020: THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE AT A CROSS-ROADS OF HISTORY

THE CORONAVIRUS THREAT

Labour Day 2020 finds the entire world and particularly the international working class perilously affected in terms of their lives, livelihoods and liberty. The convergence of the economic meltdown and a public health calamity sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic has cracked open the fault-lines of the unsustainable capitalist order. The situation has reached a crisis point that many think is likely to re-enact the disaster, death and destruction which occurred in the Great Depression of the 1930s, the two World Wars of the first half of the twentieth-century, and the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic (which is estimated to have killed at least 50 million people worldwide.)

Despite humanity's best efforts in the form of mutual aid, it is clear that we have yet to see the worst effects of COVID-19 as people face increased impoverishment through more joblessness, homelessness, hunger and ill-health. Food riots are increasing as the locked down working class is hunted, huddled and herded in shacks, townships and ghettos where they resort to desperate measures to secure access to food. This is met with a violent, militarised and authoritarian state response. It is no exaggeration to say that the Coronavirus is likely to fundamentally change the course of history and will have profound political and economic consequences.

It is a bitter irony that even within the current system had workers been paid fair wages over the years, populations the world over would have been less ill-equipped - health-wise - to withstand the challenges of COVID-19, because then, populations would have been better fed, clothed, housed - essential services such as education, health-care, clean water and sanitation would have been affordable to them. Austerity

measures and disinvestment in the public sector have led to an inability of governments to protect workers from the ravages of the health and economic crises. Instead—aided and abetted by governments (such as ours!)—the capitalist owners of the means of production went all out to exploit their workers by paying starvation wages. In addition, because the capitalists avoided paying of taxes, governments were always under pressure to provide minimal essential services to their populations. So, in the first quarter of the twenty-first century we have unparalleled deprivation on a planetary scale. According to a 2015 UN estimate: nearly half the world's population (more than 3 billion people) live on less than \$2.50 a day, with more than 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty, on less than \$1.25 a day.

The result? Mass global vulnerability! And because COVID-19 threatens everyone, regardless of wealth, governments and capitalists are suddenly "finding" the money needed to fight the pandemic—the rich are terrified that the working

money that could have reduced vulnerability, that could have prevented so many deaths from poverty-related causes over the years, is magically suddenly available albeit too little and too late to contain the disease. Of course, this money comes in the form of debt, which will have to be repaid (probably at usurious rates of interest), adding to the burdens of the working classes now and in the future, more so from poor countries.

This raises an important question: What are our tasks in the present crises and what needs to be done to transition to an end to exploitation and this ongoing human misery? When this pandemic is eventually brought under control, can the working class allow the world to go back to “business as usual?”—to a “normality” in which workers are exploited, underpaid, abused, laid off - the victims of the capitalist market—and in which governments “are unable to find the money” to provide essential services to the poor?

WHAT IS TO BE DONE? This is *THE* critical question that should be engaging working people the world over. How do we create, strengthen and unite working people’s movements and organisations across the world to break the power of the capitalist class and their hangers-on?

The history of capitalism is the history of class struggle. There is no capitalism without class struggle, which takes many forms.

THREE FORMS/LEVELS OF CLASS STRUGGLE

At the level of the workplace: At this level the crux of the struggle is about wages and working conditions, including job security. This level of struggle is about “bread-and-butter” issues, it is not about rebelling against or overthrowing the capitalist system.

At the institutional level: This is about the “kind of capitalism” that exists. Is it a harsh, autocratic capitalism? Is it fascistic in nature? Is it liberal something like our capitalism in South Africa at the moment, which is underpinned by a relatively enlightened labour relations ethic? But, this level, too, is not about overthrowing the system.

At the systemic level: This is the level at which the working class seeks to overthrow the capitalist system in favour of socialism.

From time to time, workers and their organisations have been accused of being “too economic” in

their focus—that is, too bogged down with securing their “levels one and two” interests, at the expense of “level three.” However, this is not to say that those struggles are or have been less important. These struggles have sometimes been referred to as “defensive” or “non-transformational.”

Not only because of the historical deprivations caused by capitalism, but also in the light of the irreversible ecological damage that the system is causing our planet, and now, of course, in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic (also widely-regarded as caused by capitalist over-farming), it has become necessary for working class people to join hands and wage struggle at the level of the system. In short, we must overthrow the capitalist system. This is the broader historical implication of Coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19.

ARE WE UP FOR THE TASK?

The strategic task of the next period – a prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization – consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard (the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation). It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, (italics in the original)

stemming from today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

The above quote is from the great revolutionary, Leon Trotsky, addressed to the working class leadership of his time. It was written more than 80 years ago, yet seems as fresh as if it was written yesterday!

The message is as true today as it was then.

On this Worker’s Day, 1 May 2020, let us once more be stirred to action by the words of the Internationale:

Arise ye prisoners of starvation
Arise ye wretched of the earth
For justice thunders condemnation
A better world’s in birth!



1994 - The Aftermath

On the compromise/negotiations

The only compromise possible between a wolf and a lamb must be at the expense of some vital limb. And that is not the end of it. The lamb, thus incapacitated, lies helpless before the inevitable onslaught that must follow. For, with his appetite whetted by the first morsel, the wolf will not be satisfied till he has swallowed the whole of his victim .

IB Tabata - Awakening of a People. March 1950

Leading up to the Settlement

Pressure had been mounting both internally and externally after '76 to engage in a negotiated settlement. In 1985, the world was told that PW Botha would announce major reforms including the abolition of apartheid and the release of Mandela. Instead, he merely reiterated stated government policy. Capitalism-Imperialism fearing a backlash from militants instituted immediate and far-reaching sanctions that, 1) removed PW Botha, installed the more favourable FW De Klerk as president, and 2) Set the scene for a negotiated settlement by releasing Mandela and all political prisoners.

In 1982, Mandela imprisoned on Robben Island for 18 years was relocated to Pollsmoor prison and later to more luxurious prison quarters at Victor Verster. This was done to enable the negotiation process to be held in more conducive surroundings. More than that, it was also to get away from those in the ANC opposed to negotiations.

At the CODESA talks after an attack by De Klerk on Mandela and the ANC, Mandela in response retorted, *"It is the ANC, not the National Party or De Klerk that started this process (CODESA). I have been discussing with Kobie Coetzee and top government officials since July 1986 when I was still in prison"*. Thus, indicating that the ANC was deceived into believing that they had initiated the negotiation process.

CODESA was a creature of the NPs "Risk Management Strategy". As a sop, ANC officials were guaranteed high government jobs including the presidency. Pik Botha said in a statement to his electorate in 1986 that he would be prepared to serve under a "Black" president as long as there were

guarantees for minority rights – this in preparation for what he foresaw was to come.

CODESA was a conspiracy hatched by the Capitalist-imperialists of the USA, Britain, Germany and Japan, in collaboration with the ANC/SACP/COSATU Alliance.



India became independent in 1947 via negotiations between British Imperialism and the representatives of Indian capitalists. The *Indian National Congress* (INC) being the most popular and ostensibly mouthing radical and socialist rhetoric won the support of the workers and peasants. Power was transferred from Mountbatten to Nehru and the celebrations began. After a time, with the honeymoon over, people began to realise that all that happened was a change of rulers.

Similarly, ever since Ghana in 1957, most African countries opting for independence did so after negotiating with their colonial masters. A similar situation has developed in SA. Developments leading up to and including the installation of Mandela as president are similar to that of India. And, as president, Mandela was fêted all over the world.

This was the most shameful betrayal of an entire nation by those who were supposed to be the liberators – that claim, at the best of times to be in the mould of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

After the '94 Elections

After apartheid and segregatory laws were repealed and banished to the dustbin of history, implementation of policies was initiated.

The ruling party has over the past 25 years adopted a number of economic strategies meant to counteract the inequalities created by

Apartheid. This has merely resulted in a society that is wracked by poverty and made SA the most unequal country in the world. In 1994, we saw the introduction of the *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP), followed by *Growth, Employment and Redistribution* (GEAR), that was replaced by the *Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for SA* (ASGISA). ASGISA envisioned that poverty reduction would be achieved by 2010 and that unemployment would be cut to 14% by 2014. After that, we had the New Growth Plan (NGP), the 9- and 14-point plans were meant to eliminate poverty and inequalities by 2030. These plans were also geared to limit risks posed by State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) like ESKOM and SAA and their reliance on state bailouts.

What does the future hold in store for us?

At the Job Summit, Ramaphosa promised that 275 thousand jobs were to be created per year. The only increase resulting from that exercise was in the unemployment rate. Since the *Investor Conference* and the *Medium Term Budget Policy Statement* of 2018, the National Treasury had to revise the Gross Domestic Product growth rate from 1.7% to 1.5%. This is attributed to negative recovery in employment and Investment. This, on the back of the growth rate, has slowed from 1.3% to an estimated 0.7% in 2017. After COVID-19 the South African economy is expected to retract by an estimated 6%. At the same time, unemployment is unconscionably high, at 29.9%.

Let's just take the promise of eradicating unemployment; Dr Azar Jammie, Director and Chief Economist of Econometrics, stated in a TV interview on *Morning Live* (2019/05/15) that the scourge of unemployment can be addressed by improved educational outcomes, less confrontational labour relations and creating jobs in the informal sector. There's a massive housing shortage, crime and gender-based violence have reached epidemic proportions, sanitary problems, massive pollution, food sovereignty we need more parks, better schools, clinics, upgrading of infrastructure. We need thousands of plumbers, masons and carpenters.

COVID-19 has exposed a crisis that is inherent in capitalism. Can it be business as usual in SA? **Of course not.** COVID-19 has also exposed SA as a

country with two health systems, two education systems, in fact, a country with two nations. One system for the rich and the other for the poor. The inequality bears testimony to the huge chasm in society.

What do we do?

SA is facing a coronavirus initiated crisis in health that has exacerbated the financial crisis amidst the crises in housing, sanitation, education and service delivery. Capitalism-imperialism has already launched its fight-back strategy with the G-20 countries injecting \$5 trillion into the global economy – SA, with Ramaphosa's R500 billion mini-Marshall Plan, is but a part of the world economic- and SAs recovery plan.

The seismic waves of socialism are being stirred and can be felt in the atmosphere. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated a crisis in capitalism that is going to be difficult to stop. State and private capital are being used to stem the haemorrhaging that is taking place in capitalism. We believe that the workers who produce the wealth must be in government, or we will continue to live in a world of barbarism that is slowly responsible for the destruction of our world.



WORKER PRECARITY

"Precarity" or "precariousness" has become a standard term within the global labour context. To quote from the website of the International Labour Rights Forum: "Companies worldwide are shirking their legal obligations to workers by replacing permanent jobs with contract and temporary work."

This is known as "precarious work."

Precarious workers are those who fill permanent job needs but are denied permanent employee rights. Globally, these workers are subject to unstable employment, lower wages and more dangerous working conditions. They rarely receive social benefits and are often denied the right to join a union. Even when they have the right to unionize, workers are scared to organize if they know they are easily replaceable. Women, minorities and migrant workers are much more likely to fill these kinds of jobs. Permanent employment across a number of sectors has shifted to precarious jobs through outsourcing, use of employment agencies, and inappropriate classification of workers as "short-term" or "independent contractors."

South Africa has not been spared the scourge of precarity. Large-scale retrenchments and downsizing by SA companies over the last twenty-or-so years have taken their toll on the organised labour movement. It is estimated that just over 3 million workers (out of a total of about 13 million) are unionized, representing some 25 percent of the total labour force in the country. (In 1997, this percentage was 45 percent.)

Thus, the vast mass of SA's citizenry is living in a state of permanent instability, with little certainty about where the next meal will be coming from. At the other extreme, we have the wealthiest one percent of South Africans (350000 people) owning more than half the country's wealth.

There is a debate currently raging about whether the traditional union movement is "fit for purpose" going forward. Some argue that large scale "bureaucratic" labour organisations were suited to an environment in which large scale organized production took place; now—since the world is shifting away from mega-size industrial plants, maybe the way workers organise themselves to

counter exploitation in the era of the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" is in need of re-thinking. There is a view that, increasingly, workers and their communities should build inseparable vehicles of struggle. At the end of the day, there is no difference between "workers" and "communities" - they are the same people in varied contexts: precarious workers mean precarious communities.

And so, as workers celebrate (or at least, contemplate) Workers' Day on 1 May 2020, there is much food for thought. While the coronavirus pandemic casts its huge shadow over humanity, and while the ongoing degradation of our natural environment remains an ever-growing threat, workers and the working class the world-over continue to face the challenge bequeathed them by history: how to be the driving force - the agency - that liberates us from capitalism, and that points the way to the new dawn of socialism.

FROM BACK PAGE (7) Ursula Fataar

Her resoluteness in continuing the struggle served as an inspiration to those of struggle! us who might have thought it time to retire from the Her adherence to the policies of non-racism, non-collaboration and anti-imperialism as enshrined in the Ten Point Programme of Minimum Transitional Demands of the New Unity Movement, was exemplary.

We will remember comrade Ursula for all those years of dedicated and loyal service. We trust that the story of her life will serve as an inspiration to newer generations of young men and women to take up the struggle for a progressive, free and compulsory education system and to rid this country of the racial oppression and economic exploitation that still blight the lives of millions of our compatriots.

This is the cause that we in the New Unity Movement are dedicated to, inspired by the example set for us by comrade Ursula Fataar.

Sincerely

Basil Brown

FREEDOM DAY – A REMINDER THAT WE ARE STILL UN-FREE

27 April is Freedom Day in South Africa, the day we are supposed to celebrate our freedom.

BUT WE ARE NOT FREE!

How can we be free when millions of South Africans continue to live in abject poverty?

How can we be free when millions of our workers remain jobless with no prospect of finding work now or in the future?

How can we be free when millions of our citizens live in housing conditions not fit for animals?

How can we be free when millions of our children continue to suffer life-threatening illnesses that are totally preventable, and when millions of our children continue to be victims of gutter education?

How can we be free when millions of votes cast in our parliamentary so-called democracy do nothing to change the lot of the working poor?



WE CANNOT CELEBRATE OUR FREEDOM ON FREEDOM DAY!

We must use Freedom Day to rally our masses for real freedom!

We must use Freedom Day to stand up and say, "NO MORE!"

We must use Freedom Day to UNITE AS ONE in the struggle for socialism and REAL democracy in a new South Africa that CARES FOR ALL ITS PEOPLE!

We must use Freedom Day to **BUILD A UNITED PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR REAL FREEDOM!**

FORWARD TO WORKING CLASS FREEDOM, FORWARD!!



In Remembrance of Ursula Fataar

We are deeply saddened by the death of our dear friend and comrade Ursula Fataar (Nee Wolhuter) on 22 April 2020 at the age of 89 years. At this time of reflection and mourning, we extend our heartfelt sympathies and condolences to her sons Ashley and Sedick, the grandchildren and the Wolhuter family.

As a young teacher, she was involved in the formation of Cape Peninsula Student Union (CPSU) branches at the High Schools of the oppressed where she taught. The CPSU played a leading role among students in opposing the segregatory policies of the Apartheid government. Similarly, she supported the activities of the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) in fighting the debased education dished out by the Apartheid education authorities to the children of the oppressed.

She was a true stalwart, a loyal and dedicated member of the Unity Movement; first in the form of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) founded in 1943, then of the African Peoples Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA) of which she was among the founding members in 1961 and now of the New Unity Movement (NUM) founded in 1985.

Through her work in the Unity Movement, she has devoted the greater part of her life to the service of the oppressed and exploited people of this country. She did this at the side of her late husband, comrade Ali Fataar who died in 2005 as an honorary life member of the New Unity Movement.

When the organisations that she was involved in were forced to operate underground due to the crackdown on progressive political activity, she went into exile with her husband in 1965 accompanied by their son Ashley who was 6 months old at the time. They returned to South Africa in 1993 where the couple joined the New Unity Movement

soon after returning.

She has always been active at branch level, first in our Cape Town Branch, then in the Southern Suburbs Branch. At the time of her death, she was a member of the South Peninsula Branch.



Ursula Fataar, the committed activist

Despite her advanced age Comrade Ursula continued to be a very active member of the New Unity Movement until a few years ago when illness made this difficult. She could best be described as being an ever willing workhorse, who could be called upon to represent the NUM at initiatives like the Radical Left

Network, the Conference of the Democratic Left, the Truth Conference and the United Front. Her participation in these initiatives was a reflection of her being a very active proponent of the need to establish fraternal bonds and solidarity with like-minded organisations in the country.

More recently, with the intended closure of many schools of the oppressed by the Western Cape Education Department, a move which she labelled as fascist, she joined the campaign of the Concerned Education Forum (CEF), initiated by the Gleemoor Civic Association, to fight for keeping the schools open. The battle involved taking the Education Department to court. Comrade Ursula saw her involvement in the fight for the non-closure of the schools of the oppressed as part of the struggle against the exploitation of the workers and the denial of the human rights of the poor in South Africa.

Despite personal misfortune including being mugged a year or two before her 80th birthday, she was not deterred from venturing out, often on her own, to attend functions even at night.

She was very passionate about her political work and remained very loyal and dedicated to the principles and policies of the UM.

THIS WORKER WAS PRODUCED BY THE PUBLICATIONS COLLECTIVE OF THE NEW UNITY MOVEMENT

Address all correspondence to the secretariat PO Box 27561 Greenacres 6057

083 225 6329/071 645 1590

michaeltitus@vodamail.co.za/mikesteenveld2020@gmail.com