

TAKING POWER SERIOUSLY

Amandla!

South Africa's new progressive magazine standing for social justice.

ISSUE NO. 17/18 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2010

**Patel's crooked
growth path**

**BANKER PUPPETS
NOWHERE² HIDE**

SPECIAL FEATURE

Global Crisis deepens

The conference that
outraged the ANC

SA's first factory occupation

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Amandla! Alternative Media is produced by the Alternative Information Development Centre (AIDC) in partnership with the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF)

For more information about Amandla! Alternative Media or to provide feedback and suggestions contact Mark Weinberg on 021 447 2525 or email mark@aidc.org.za.

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We welcome feedback

Email us your comments to feedback@amandla.org.za.

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be followed by COP 17 which will take place in Durban in December 2011.

And, yet, the major governments of the world – including our own – fiddle while the earth burns. Other than jetting around the world since 1992, at great expense and damage to the environment, little, if any, progress has been made.

Indeed, while the talking has been incessant and the finger pointing more violent, progress has probably gone backwards. Why? This is not because they are stupid or badly informed but rather because they are trapped. The only remedy -perceived by all in different ways and to different degrees – is seen to be worse than the disease. The end of the world is more palatable to them than the end of capitalism, and it is the capitalist system which is, unavoidably, the fundamental cause of climate change.

South Africa is due to host the next international Climate Summit – COP 17 – in Durban in December 2011. Progressive forces in South Africa have a year to shape the agenda of this Summit. It must be used to overcome the idea that dealing with climate is at the expense of overcoming underdevelopment and inequality.

So while we need to tackle underdevelopment and provide all our people with decent livelihoods and access to basic services – which means developing our industries – we have to do this in ways that stop climate change.

In some countries progressive forces have considered strategies by which the climate crisis and the economic crisis can be tackled simultaneously and in mutually reinforcing ways. So in Britain a campaign has been initiated for a million climate jobs. The idea would be to set up a National Climate Service similar to a National Health Service and would employ thousands of workers to build the renewable energy plants that are immediately needed. Thousands of others would be employed in initiatives to save energy. All of this has been carefully researched to add up to 1 million jobs.

As we debate the government's new economic growth path and as we consider COSATU's alternative we must ask can we not do better. Hundreds of thousands are needed to protest in defence of Mother Earth and in defence of jobs during COP 17. Let's make climate change relevant for all by showing that we can create jobs and overcome underdevelopment by fighting climate change. ■

Disclaimer

The views expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect those of the Alternative Information & Development Centre, or the Amandla! Editorial Collective.

Climate jobs for SA?

SOUTH AFRICA, ESPECIALLY its transition from apartheid, faces many challenges. It is impossible to build a united and cohesive society with current obscene levels of inequality so firmly in place. Two worlds separate township and suburban life and an even greater divide separate life in the former Bantustans from the major urban centres. We face extreme difficulties in dealing with mass unemployment and poverty. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is still devastating in its spread and impact, even if the age of AIDS denialism is over. Nor can we stay aloof from the crises in our education, health, water and housing systems. No wonder that crime and violence continues to shake our society.

We do not need climate change to intrude into this vortex of social disasters. We already have more than enough challenges on which to concentrate our attention and limited resources. Yet the earth's rising temperature poses a serious threat to our planet. The emission into the atmosphere of gases, including carbon dioxide from petrol or the burning of coal and oil to make electricity, act as a blanket around our planet, trapping in heat. It is this greenhouse effect which has led to global warming with the average temperature constantly rising.

South Africa is no small contributor to greenhouse gas pollution. According to a United Nations report of 2008, South Africa was the 13th biggest emitter of carbon dioxide with 433,527 tones in 2007.

According to a report from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, June 2010 was the hottest month in recorded history. Scientists warn that if current trends continue the world's average temperature will increase by four degrees centigrade within 50 years – and it will cause mass devastation.

Even with a two-degree rise, most of the world's coral reefs will be lost, large portions of the ocean will become dead zones, mountain glaciers will largely vanish and many other ecosystems will be at risk. There is the danger of reaching a tipping point whereafter the warming rapidly accelerates.

With a four degree increase in temperature one to two billion people will not have access to adequate fresh water because of the major shift in rainfall patterns. 40 percent of existing or potential cropland in Africa will become too dry and too hot for food production.

Flooding will affect at least 500 million people because sea levels will rise more than one metre by 2100. Places like Cape Town, especially low lying areas like Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain will mostly be under water. In the dry areas of our country, farming will be impossible.

Ever since the 1992 Rio Summit countries have come together under the auspices of the United Nations Climate Change Conference to seek international agreements to address the danger of climate change. The sixteenth Conference of the Parties (COP 16) is to be held in Cancun, Mexico, from 29 November to 10 December 2010 and will

Living Dangerously

I am an expat living and working in Beijing and I am at the coal-face (pardon the pun) of China's industrial expansion, aka pollution. We have had two days of extreme pollution here and we could probably only see about 20 metres in front of us. The American embassy here has a pollution meter and over these two days it broke the meters. It actually reached the maximum limit where it could no longer register the pollution. All meters said was DANGEROUS LEVELS whether you are outside or inside. So we stayed inside, put up the air purifiers to maximum and hoped for the best. Can you in South Africa imagine your homes with air-purifiers? I still can't get used to it after so many years in this city. The morning after a few days of heavy pollution feels like a night on the town, without the fun. At least the levels returned to normal, at least to a 'new normal' where pollution meters tell you if a day is safe or not. So we don't have blue skies so much, but it's better than the foggy plumes of China's expansion. ●

Kaapse Klong

COSATU: Opium of the workers

For over a century trade unions have been widely accepted as legitimate defenders of workers against capitalist exploitation. Their ability to mobilise labour around common objectives is unmatched and after the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent crisis of the labour movements, the workers had only the unions to turn to wage their daily struggles.

However, ever since the global economic crisis this legitimacy is under serious threat. The reactionary roles unions played have brought them into direct collision with the workers. This is a global phenomenon. Reading through the left media, one is confronted with countless articles by leading leftists condemning union leaders on the treacherous roles they have assumed.

Instead of mobilizing the workers against the austerity measures the bourgeois regimes impose on them, they have sought to suppress the anger from an increasingly radicalised work force. The workers are starting to realise that those they've trusted to defend and advance their needs are unwilling, in fact incapable, of protecting even their most basic of interests.

When Cosatu called off the wage strike by the public sector workers they were treading the same path chosen by their international counterparts. After workers heard the radical rhetoric adopted by the union bureaucracy, they were shocked to find out union leaders were willing to sign an agreement they, the workers, never approved. In fact, the agreement they (Cosatu) were willing to sign was peanuts compared to demands the workers had tabled. It was clear they were working on a mandate from government and the corporate elite rather than from those they claim to stand for. This hasn't gone unnoticed by South African workers; there is growing disillusionment which will, in the long run, pit the working class against these reactionary tendencies. With the economy haemorrhaging jobs and the cost of living rising at an unprecedented rate, it is only a matter of time before workers reject the leadership of Cosatu for a revolutionary alternative. And with the SACP bankrupt as it is, it will most likely be a labour party not aligned with the ANC. It is time workers asked if Cosatu has done enough to safeguard their interests? ●

Loyiso Velo Malobola

Camouflage for bad practice?

When do good intentions become bad? When does the practice become so distant from the promise that repeating the promise ends up being little more than a propaganda cloak that serves as a cynical camouflage for bad practice? LABOUR needs to ask these questions of our

government (and it is our government not only because it is democratically elected or because of COSATU's alliance with the ANC but because most LABOUR members voted for it). Our government has been in power since 1994. Amongst its many promises is the principle of participatory democracy; the idea that all decisions at all three levels of the state will be made with the direct participation, cooperation and consent of the broadest possible representatives of civil society. Ours is supposed to be a democracy in which leaders – the government – don't just tell us – the citizens – what to do in a top-down manner but are required to engage with us so that decisions always reflect our inputs. After 16 years of the practice of these noble intentions, it is a good time to assess their reality.

The assessment is not encouraging. LABOUR engages with the state in multiple ways and at all levels, from the workplace up to Parliament itself. Whilst it would be nice if our views were always accepted and acted on, this is too greedy an expectation. The challenge we face is of a very different order, however. The reality is that our views and submissions are invariably ignored along with promises to us being unmet. Exceptions do exist but they are so rare as not to disturb the general conclusion. What distinguishes one instance of being ignored from another is the degree of politeness with which LABOUR is disregarded: in some cases it is done most courteously; in others with rudeness. Where does all this leave LABOUR? Do we stop participating in these exercises because we know we are most likely to be ignored? What would be the political implications of such a boycott? Alternatively, do we continue to legitimise what we know has become a cynical manipulation of good intentions? If there's a third option to either boycotting or participating, what is it? The answers are not simple ones. But they are needed. Urgently. ●

Jeff Rudin



Facebook & Twitter commentary

On the Media and Right 2 Know Campaign

Amandla! Media: MDDA's Lumko Mtimde challenges South Africans media monopolies as a threat to media diversity but supports an investigation into setting up a Media Appeals Tribunal #MAT in his "personal capacity"

Phillip Newmarch: I think Mr. Mtimde would do well to concentrate on broadening his concept of "diversity". Surely, what counts is how large organisations are CONTROLLED, not how they are OWNED. Who makes the DECISIONS?

The Arms Deal

Amandla! Media: "Arms deal probe (2000-2010): The arms deal investigation is dead. After a decade of investigators' blood, sweat and tears ... Hawks boss Anwa Dramat has effectively buried the probe"

Shaka Shanofeyo: Corruption at its best.

The ANC Youth League

Amandla! Media: "The ANC Youth League does not want academic research on the nationalisation of mines, and it does not want the research to be independent of the ANC."

Fatima Renita Barends: And what does that tell you about the youth in the ANC youth league?

Suntosh Pillay: the Dumbing down of decision-making in SA.

Safety and Security

Amandla! Media: "Today's Cape Times reports that Mayoral Committee Member for Community Safety JP Smith refuses to deploy additional metro police units in Khayelitsha, as residents there 'do not pay rates'."

Yunus Omar: So we have a new pencil test for safety...

HIV/Aids

Amandla! Media: "29% of pregnant women in South Africa are HIV+"

Tlotlo Seipato Lobelo: if we could triumph ova segregation, if we could build/rebuild close 2 ten stadiums in less than a decade, with enough political will we could half these alarming stats

Pick 'n Pay Boycott

Amandla! Media: will you Boycott Pick 'n Pay today?

Duduzile Radebe: Hard but I have been doing so.

Pheello Radebe: If Pick 'n Pay goes on strike and they are arguably the most paid in the industry...I wonder how are workers at Shoprite, Spar and the likes are feeling?

COSATU Civil Society Conference

Amandla! Media: AIDC Statement on ANC response to COSATU/Civil Society Conference

Frank Julie: The ANC has always seen any organisation or movement as a threat when NOT under their direct control! It started way back in the 1920's with the ICU then the ACC and the Unity Movement, later BPC. The UDF was disbanded for the same reason. The ANC elite is fully aware of an upsurge in mass discontent and knows that all that is needed is a leadership and structure that must mobilise this energy which could spell the final death knell for ANC PTY LTD and their investors!!

Jared Sacks: and why did AIDC keep quiet when these reformist NGOs like TAC and COSATU (still ANC aligned), unfairly attacked Abahlali baseMjondolo? Hypocritical for AIDC to not support the independent social movements.

Frank Julie: @Jared...good point! Vavi made it clear that they are the "soldiers" of the ANC!

The left must be careful not to alienate the social movements in its attempts to woo the Cosatu leadership with its mass base...it can backfire! Vavi's role is to do damage control...controlling the anger on the ground...he still sees the ANC as part of the solution and NOT part of the problem!

On Hout Bay and Hangberg

Amandla! Media: Yesterday over 1000 people joined the march organised by residents of Hangberg in Hout Bay calling for an investigation into police brutality and for an immediate moratorium on all evictions and demolitions – "Build before you break" was just one of the slogans

Glen Arendse:...wat my aandag getrek het is "zille is kak violent"...some seriously narrow party political slogans (although the crowd was much more representative) came from the stage at the official handing over of the list of demands

Edwin Ntjana: Helen Zille is not the answer to the Western Cape's problems. She must be isolated totally. She is a poison to this Province.

Crisis of Civilisation Conference

Amandla! Media: Conference discussing the multi-dimensional crisis which exists with a focus on the interrelatedness between the economic and climate crisis. Read the conference statement – "The Crises of Civilisation – Towards a Post-Carbon Economy"

Pastor Ray Mac Oily: The title of this conference is almost a half a page. Did Blade Nzimande write the title page?



Visit our facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/amandlamedia> and make your comment on the world you live in.

south africa

Pushing Pause on Media Bill

A FORTNIGHT AFTER TAKING OVER THE Communications portfolio in president Jacob Zuma's cabinet reshuffle, recently appointed Communications minister, Roy Padayachee, has withdrawn the draft Public Service Broadcasting Bill pending further consultation. This follows complaints from civil society groups at public hearings held in Johannesburg in mid-November. The Bill calls for an amendment to the Income Tax Act and the scrapping of TV licences. This would have seen up to one percent of personal income tax being set aside for public broadcasting.

Padayachee's Chief of Staff, Raymond Reddy, said that the decisions stemmed from the Portfolio wanting a complete policy review. "The Minister wants to engage with as many of our stakeholders as possible"

Padayachee said in a statement that the Department would consider the "Developmental and democratic goals of the public" in its redrafting of the Bill. He recognises that the advancement of technology and believes that for the goals to be accomplished, "It is imperative that our broadcasting policy is at the cutting edge of our digital age."

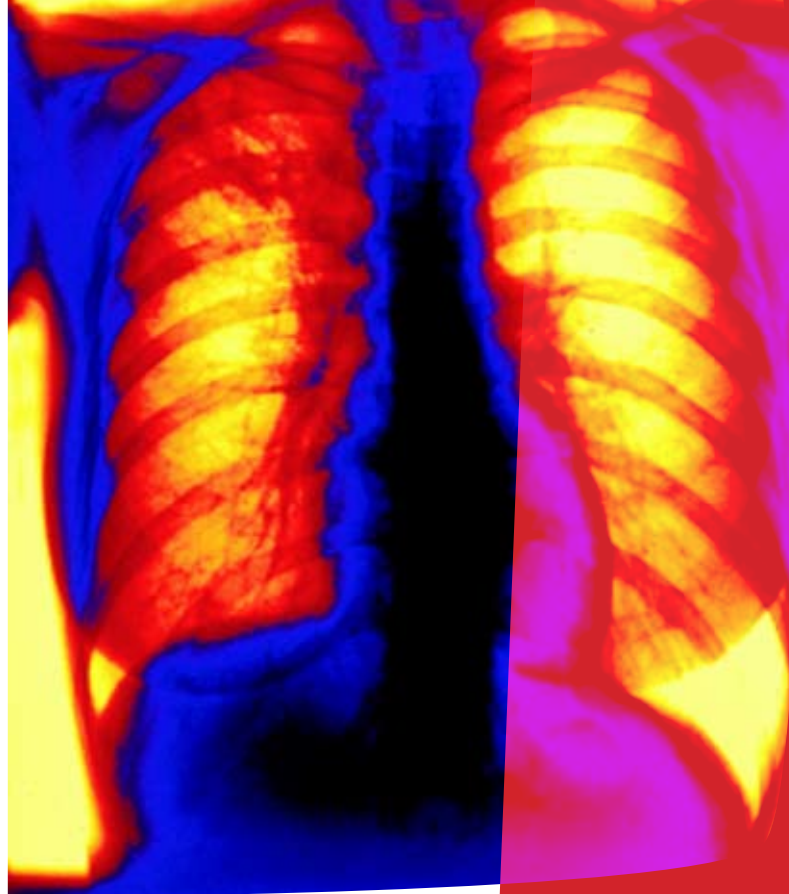
We at Amandla feel that the public and international outcry against the ANC's plans to curb media freedom, and the recent successes of the Right to Know Campaign are closer to the reason for Minister Padayachee's decision. ●

africa

Protesting TB Profits

AIDS ACTIVISTS STAND UNITED IN the call for the price of a machine which drastically cuts the diagnosis of drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB) to be reduced so that it is affordable to the regions where the epidemic is most prevalent, including South Africa.

Where current tests take up to six weeks to produce results (in this time, the patient receives no treatment) the Gene Xpert is able to detect active TB resistance within 90 minutes. TB experts everywhere hail the machine as one of the greatest breakthroughs in TB control. A world renowned TB expert and senior advisor at the International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, Professor Anthony Harries, says: "The development of the Gene Xpert is the real advance of TB in 20 years. It is a real milestone." He believes that the electricity-dependent machine could be made more affordable,



and hopes that the manufacturers would do their bit for social good rather than profit. The price of the machine currently stands at US\$30,000 and uses four [?] non-reusable cartridges at a time. Each cartridge costs between US\$20 and US\$[?].

On 10 November 2010, activists handed a letter to the company which manufactures the Gene Xpert, CEPHEID, at the 41st Union Conference on Lung Health in Berlin, Germany. They were calling for the price of the machine to be reduced. Among the signatures contained in it were those of Section 27, The Treatment Action Group, the European Aids Treatment Group, the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society and the Treatment Action Campaign. ●

Dodging taxes in Africa

THE INTERNATIONAL CHARITY coalition ActionAid has published a research report on how SABMiller, the world's second largest beer company, is dodging taxes in Africa and India. The company owns brands like Grolsch, Peroni, Miller as well as the African beers Castle and Stone Lager and the soft drink Appletiser. SABMiller started off in Africa and the company dominates Africa's brewing industry. Yet, SABMiller has more tax haven companies – 65 of them – than it has breweries and bottling plants on the continent. Clever accounting allows SABMiller to siphon off profits from African and Indian companies to tax havens like Mauritius. ActionAid estimates that this practice reduces SABMiller's corporation tax bill in Africa with 20%. The cost

news briefs

to the governments in Africa and India of SABMiller's unwillingness to pay taxes is estimated to the equivalent of over 220 million rand. ●



Visit www.actionaid.org.uk for the full report.

international

Celtic tiger's final purr.

IN 2007 IRELAND WAS THE CELEBRATED "Celtic Tiger", which had enticed companies like Dell, Hewlett-Packard and Microsoft to its 12.5% company tax paradise. Three years later Irish banks are bankrupt, having lost billions in real estate speculation. Today, the only thing the Irish government is not considering is lowering company tax when forced to accept a gigantic EU loan of 95 billion euro (R905bn). Stakeholding French, German and Luxembourgian banks would also fall, should the Irish banks be allowed to fail. Next to go would be the euro itself, something which is still possible.

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news briefs



Hewlett Packard and other multinationals are shaking their fists and threatening to relocate if taxes are raised.

The French and the German government had first declared that the Irish company tax had to be increased before transferring the loan. The demand was dropped.

In November the Irish government resigned, but first it approved an austerity package in the parliament in late November.

The Irish government previously cut salaries in the public sector by 20%. With this “package” the financial community

will get 15 billion euro (R140bn) from the Irish working population. Ten billion euro will be gathered from cuts in social spending, while 5 billion will be raised through taxes. Company taxes however will not be contributing to this. Thirty-thousand public sector workers will be fired. Water costs will increase, social grants will be slashed by 10%, and the minimum wage will be lowered to R400 per week.

A clear break with profit-maximizing finance is needed in Europe. Critical social liberals say: let the insolvent banks crash, wealthy clients and private finance take the loss, and then reintroduce the Irish pound. Argentina chose this route in 2001 and was not reduced to chaos. The left argues that if banks are too big to fail, then they are too big to be private. An All-European non-profit bank could keep interest rates low and also regulate or forbid speculation in securities, food and raw material.

The old political wing of the Irish Republican Army, Sinn Fein, is the only major party opposing the crackdown on the working class community in those terms.

China's economic wonder of pollution

CHINA IS THE WORLD'S MOST prodigious emitter of greenhouse gas, and that country continues to suffer the downside of unbridled economic growth despite a raft of new environmental initiatives.

The quality of air in Chinese cities is increasingly tainted by coal-burning power plants, grit from construction sites and exhaust from millions of new cars squeezing onto crowded roads. A new state report shows a jump in industrial accidents and an epidemic of pollution in waterways.

The report's most unexpected findings pointed to an increase in inhalable particulates in cities like Beijing, where officials have struggled to improve air quality by shutting down noxious factories and tightening auto emission standards. Despite such efforts, including an ambitious program aimed at reducing the use of coal for home heating, the average concentration of particulates in the capital's air violated the World Health Organization's standards more than 80 percent of the time during the last quarter of 2008.

Two weeks ago, the state media reported on thousands of residents in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region who clashed with the police as they protested unregulated emissions from an aluminum plant.

In Beijing, driving restrictions that removed a fifth of private cars from roads each weekday have been offset by 250,000 new cars that hit the city streets in the first four months of 2010.



Woman and child wearing masks – Living in polluted industrialized Chinese cities has meant adapting to a ‘new normal’.

Even if they are fond of griping about bad air, Beijing residents have learned to take it all in stride. Looking wilted amid the heat and haze on Wednesday, Wang Dong, 34, a livery-cab driver, said he tried to counteract the smog by eating more vegetables and drinking more water. Annie Chen, 26, a sales clerk, revealed a tactic she had learned on television: apply an extra layer of makeup to protect skin from contaminated air.

[Source: NY Times, additional research by Lim Xin Hui and Xiyun Yang.]

UK Students take on the Tory coalition

I CAN SEE IT NOW. LOADS OF BEARDED, sandled blokes in corduroy jackets, a thin dog on a string at their side, a paper cup in front of them with some loose change in it, holding up signs saying: “WILL ANALYSE DECONSTRUCTION METHODOLOGY OF HERMENEUTIC IN TERMS OF EVOLUTIONARY EPISTEMOLOGY FOR FOOD” (ukcommentators.blogspot.com/2010/11/those-student-fee-increases.htm)

Tens of thousands of students marched through London in early November against plans to triple university tuition fees. Organizers say 50,000 students, lecturers and supporters demonstrated against plans to raise the cost of studying at a university to 9,000 pounds (R104 081) a year — three times the current rate — in the largest street protest yet against the government's sweeping austerity measures.

“We are destroying the building just like they are destroying our chances of affording higher education,”

said Corin Parkin, 20, a student at London's City University.

Protesters standing atop the Conservative Party HQ building released a statement which said: "We oppose all cuts and we stand in solidarity with public sector workers, and all poor, disabled, elderly and working people."

Credit: Matthew Lloyd



UK police and student face-off.

Don't shoot the Wikileaks messengers

COMPARED TO THE KIND OF SECRET cables that WikiLeaks has just shared with the world, everyday public statements from government officials are exercises in make-believe. In a democracy, people have a right to know what their government is actually doing. In a pseudo-democracy, a bunch of fairy tales from high places will do the trick. Diplomatic facades routinely masquerade as realities. But sometimes the mask slips – for all the world to see – and that's what just happened with the humongous leak of State Department cables. "Every government is run by liars," independent journalist I.F. Stone observed, "and nothing they say should be believed." The extent and gravity of the lying varies from one government to another – but no pronouncements from world capitals should be taken on faith.

By its own account, the U.S. government has been at war for more than nine years now and there's no end in sight. Like the Pentagon, the State Department is serving the overall priorities of the warfare state. The nation's military and diplomacy are moving parts of the same vast war machinery.

Such a contraption requires a muscular bodyguard of partial truths, deceptions and outright lies. With the USA's ongoing war efforts at full throttle, the contradictions between public rationales and hidden goals – or between lofty rhetoric and grisly human consequences – cannot stand the light of day.

The recent mega-leaks are especially jarring because of the extreme contrasts between the U.S. government's public pretenses and real-life actions. But the standard official response is to blame the leaking messengers. "We condemn in the strongest terms the unauthorized disclosure of classified documents and sensitive national security information," the White House said on November 28. Meanwhile, Sen. Joseph Lieberman denounced "WikiLeaks' deliberate disclosure of these diplomatic cables (as) nothing less than an attack on our national security."

But what kind of "national security" can be built on duplicity from a government that is discredited and refuted by its own documents?

The writer, *Norman Solomon* is co-chair of the Healthcare Not Warfare campaign, launched by Progressive Democrats of America.

[Source: www.zcommunications.org/zspace/normansolomon]

A Right Royal Dumbing

THE FERVOUR SURROUNDING THE engagement of Prince William to Kate Middleton has kept the tabloids abuzz with projections of what the souvenir plate will look like to the fairy tale

romance of the "The Prince and the Commoner". That's how much media attention has been bestowed on the couple popularised as "destined" to revive the ailing monarchy.

Let's not forget the frenzy of reports on the engagement ring that was once worn by the late Princess Diana. So much attention, in fact, that across the



world replicas of the ring

has been sold at retail prices, with a growing demand. News teams have been reporting from outside Buckingham palace since the announcement and one can only wonder at the timing of this wedding, distracting the citizenry from the ever-growing pressures of the economic recession across Europe.

Already there have been reports of citizens wondering who will fit the royal bill for the royal wedding...the taxpayers? This question has been easily resolved with the Royal Family and the Middletons going "dutch"...stranger things have happened...but none as peculiar as the Royals sharing the costs of a wedding with "commoners". The impact of the recession on such decisions by the monarchy is indicative too of the escapist value of this news story. The press has managed to dumb down the populace by distracting them with stories of the potential of a royal renaissance.

our strange world

Kabul 'safer than London or Glasgow'

AS THOUSANDS OF LONDONERS protested the war in Afghanistan in that city in late November 2010 and NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) reported the killing and capturing of key Taliban leaders in eastern Afghanistan and south of Kabul, NATO's top civilian representative in Afghanistan claimed that the war-torn country's capital was safer for children than London, Glasgow or New York.

Senior civilian representative for NATO in Afghanistan Mark Sedwill said that despite the danger of unexploded bombs Kabul was less dangerous than some of its counterparts in the West.

He told CBBC Newsround: "Here and in Kabul and the other big cities (in Afghanistan) actually there are very few of those bombs."

"The children are probably safer here than they would be in London, New York or Glasgow or many other cities."

"Most children can go about their lives in safety. It's a very family-orientated society. So it is a little bit like a city of villages."

On the other hand, however, Kabul has borne the brunt of the long-running "war on terror" and, although the security situation there has improved of late, it is still deemed a dangerous place to live.

Justin Forsyth, chief executive of Save the Children, said: "It is wrong and misleading to say that children in Kabul are safer than those living in Glasgow, London or New York."

"Afghanistan is the worst place on earth to be born ... – one in four children living there will die before they reach the age of five. Last year was the deadliest for children since late 2001, with more than 1,000 killed because of the conflict."

It would seem that NATO's view of the world is one in which war creates a safe space for children.

[Source: www.independent.uk]



Q&A

with Imraahn Ismail-Mukaddam

Bread producers – food gangsters of the price fixing kind.

IMRAAHN ISMAIL-MUKADDAM IS A part of the independent bread distributors in the Western Cape who are launching a class action against the large bread producers who were recently fined millions of rands when they were caught in a bread price fixing scam. Ismail-Mukaddam, together with a civil society-based class action suite is seeking unprecedented damages against the producers. This is the first class action suite of its kind in South Africa.

01. | Why did you blow the whistle on the bread price fixing collusion in the bread producing sector, when you are a bread distributor yourself?

I realised that if my suppliers were colluding my business would be ruined as I depended on negotiated discounts to sustain my business. I also realised that I would not be able to bargain with alternative suppliers for better prices if the prices had been fixed. I became

even more frustrated when I realised that the actions of the bread producers would have severe impact on the poor .

02. | Why are you launching a class action suite against Pioneer Foods, Tiger Brands and Premier Foods when the competition tribunal has already made them pay penalties?

To claim for damages because we believe that the real victims of price fixing have the right to redress. The Competition Act makes provision for affected parties to claim for damages. The Administrative Penalties imposed by the Competition Tribunal goes to the Treasury and does not impact on the poorer sectors in Society. This Class Action intends to create a trust fund to finance poverty alleviation as its desired outcome. In the Class Action of the Bread

Distributors we are asking for direct compensation for Bread Distributors negatively affected by the Price Fixing. This Action has important ramifications for the power relations between small businesses and corporate monopolies.

03. | Do you think the large supermarket chains are part of this collusion?

The Corporate Retailers are most definitely involved in what is called a complex monopoly where there is conduct that could be seen as uncompetitive due to the concentration in the Sector. The Competition Commissions investigation into the Retail Sector is ongoing but a 2009 report by the Agricultural Marketing Research Council identified a number of practices that would constitute abuse of dominance and predatory marketing.

04. | How long has the collusion in price fixing in the bread industry been going on?

The culture of collusion was inherited from the previous Regime where each Agricultural sector was regulated. After the advent of Democracy many of these Control Boards continued behind closed doors and in church halls and backstreet hotels. It is this culture of collusion that persisted and continued with the Food and Bread Cartel. According to the evidence from the Competition Tribunal it suggests that these Actions had been carrying on since 1995.

05. | Is there enough price regulation and government oversight for staple foods such as bread, milk and maize?

It is exactly the lack of interventions under the Neo Liberal framework of Trevor Manuel and Mbeki that these Cartels flourished. At present the only intervention is through the Competition Commission but this is of no real benefit to the consumer as all they do is slap fines onto the perpetrators and the companies push up prices to pay for the fines so the Consumer gets screwed firstly through price fixing and then again when they are forced to pay the fine. We need progressive intervention that calls for regulated profit margins throughout the value chain. From seed to fertilizer right through every stage of production profit margins need to be regulated so that no one can make excessive profits on basic foods.

06. | During the apartheid-era, state-supported cooperatives regulated the pricing of staple foods, fruit and vegetables – is there a lesson to be learnt from this kind of state regulation?

The Apartheid Regime had to ensure that food was affordable to keep the oppressed masses fed and content. They understood that hunger is a catalyst for revolt and they used price controls to have state sponsored price fixing as a means to keep certain foods affordable and make more money on luxury goods. The apartheid-era Control Boards would not necessarily be a solution to our present context because of the concentrated monopolistic nature of our economy. There would be even greater abuse of dominance. All the Control Boards did was to regulate cartel activity. Furthermore Control Boards did a lot of damage in that whenever there was a surplus, they would buy out the surplus and dump it in order to maintain higher prices artificially. We need to take lessons from Socialist Countries such as Cuba if we want to address the issues of Food Security. The nationalisation of the food industry would be a much better option.

07. | How are consumers paying the price for their penalties?

Pioneer substantially increased their bread prices on the same day as the announcement of the recent settlement. We have seen this trend in other

settlement agreements where, for instance in the case of Tiger Brands, the price range of the entire range of their products increased substantially immediately after the fine was imposed by the Competition Tribunal. The fact that the share price of Pioneer Foods increased when the latest agreement and the previous agreements was announced illustrates the fact that provision for paying of these penalties had already been made at the expense of over exploited consumers.

08. | What compensation are you demanding?

In the case of the distributors we are asking for direct compensation for damages suffered and in the case of the consumers we are asking for all the monies that was overcharged through price fixing should be paid into a trust fund that will be utilized in poverty alleviation projects in all affected indigent communities.

09. | What is an alternative punishment for price fixing in the food industry, given that government through the competition tribunal, have yet to go beyond monetary fines?

We have seen with the amendments to the Competition Act that company directors can be held liable in their personal capacity. The amendments also criminalises the conduct of individuals involved. Unfortunately these amendments have not become effective yet and we need to see what the real implications will be and how our Courts respond to the criminalisation of the Competition Act.

10. | How afraid should the bread cartels be?

They are not really afraid and probably pushing up prices as we speak in anticipation of a Ruling in favour of Consumers. We have a strong Prima Facie case if we consider the overwhelming self incriminating evidence that came out in the Competition Tribunal Hearings. There are however no guarantees of success as illustrated in the dismissal of our application for Class Certification. We must remember this is all new Law and there is no precedent for what we are doing. What the Bread Cartel should be afraid of is that the poor and the working class are becoming frustrated and exhausted by the continued exploitation. ■

Occupying the economy

By Vishwas Satgar

WORKER STRUGGLES IN SOUTH Africa have entailed strikes, go-slows, pickets, sit ins, and in the 1980s unions also utilised worker cooperatives in the context of retrenchments. However, the Mine-Line factory occupation in the West Rand (of Gauteng) is a new tactic on the frontline of worker struggles. It is a direct response to the job losses. South Africa's unemployment rate (over 25%) has inflicted a social crisis, which in other contexts have brought down governments. In Argentina, in 2001, an unemployment rate of 20% contributed to bringing down four governments through mass pressure and gave rise to a factory occupation movement involving over 200 enterprises contributing close to 10% to national Gross Domestic Product. These worker take-overs have recovered production levels to pre-crisis levels and have transformed property relations from below through worker cooperatives. This movement is gaining strength in the context of the current (2010) global capitalist crisis. The Mine-Line workers' occupation of their factory, a metal engineering and fabrication plant, holds out the potential for a similar movement to emerge in South Africa and for the renewal of worker control in labour politics.

A Flawed Insolvency Process

THE MINE-LINE FACTORY IS LOCATED just behind Soweto, the largely black working class townships of Johannesburg. It employed 110 workers as part of its operations. As a niche manufacturer it produced valves, underground trains for mines, and other customised metal products. In August 2010 Mine-Line factory experienced a tragedy. Three workers were killed when a boiler machine exploded. The threats to sue the company by the Metal Electrical Workers Union of South Africa (MEWUSA) and the financial crisis precipitated by the owner led to a unilateral closure of the factory by the employer. According to the liquidator the employer created the financial crisis by borrowing R35 million from ABSA bank and then siphoned off R15 million from the business.

The unfair dismissal of the workers and the failure to pay death benefits to the families of the dead workers have enraged the workers. In response the union brought in a liquidator to wind down the company and secure benefits (wage and non-wage) for the workers. However, over the past few months the liquidator has sold off finished products and has allowed the employer

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Diary of a factory occupation

As recorded by Vishwas Satgar

The occupation of the Mine-Line factory in October 2010 is both defensive and offensive in character. It is defensive in trying to ensure benefits like pension funds and wages owed are secured for workers from the liquidation process. It is offensive in that it is trying to create a different form of factory, one run by the workers. Such a worker-run enterprise would be a worker cooperative in which workers

collectively own the enterprise and democratically manage it to ensure they realise common benefits. It is defensive because it seeks to protect workers' rights.

Monday, October 11th – MEWUSA, member of the national convening committee of the CDL and COPAC meet at MEWUSA's head office to discuss situation with retrenched Mine-Line workers. Worker cooperative and take-over option discussed to secure



Mine-line workers meet to discuss the occupation of their factory.

Credit: COPAC

workers jobs. It is then agreed to host a workshop to develop a worker factory occupation campaign. CDL and MEWUSA make a call to left forces to join workshop in solidarity

Sunday, October 17th – Planning workshop is hosted with Mine-Line workers to discuss possibilities of worker take over and finalise campaign strategy. Various left organisations and individuals heed the CDL and MEWUSA call and contribute to the campaign planning. It is also agreed to mobilise more Mine-Line workers and to have a meeting with the Liquidator at the factory to assess the assets register.

Wednesday, October 20th – Meeting with Liquidator takes place at factory. He cannot provide convincing answers about machinery and finished products that have left the factory. The workers do their own inventory which confirms asset stripping. A truck sent by the owner to pick up machinery is asked to leave. All retrenched Mine-Line factory workers declare a commitment to the campaign strategy including occupation to defend jobs and secure their benefits. A decision is made to change factory locks and to start a volunteer system for the factory occupation.

Thursday, October 21st – MEWUSA and CDL issue a public

call for solidarity with the Mine-Line factory occupation. All left forces and the media are invited to the factory for the occupation on Friday October 22nd. A forceful attempt is made to remove machines. This is thwarted by the workers guarding the factory.

Friday, October 22nd – Occupation of Factory takes place: Locks are broken and changed, graffiti, banners, barricade and guarding shifts are more tightly organised through the workers' assembly. Workers declare all bosses are fired and that their alternative from below is about advancing worker control and socialised ownership.

Saturday, October 23rd – Striking Famous Brand workers come and join occupation in solidarity.

Monday, October 25th – Meeting with representative from Liquidator's company. Meeting discusses the possibility of a worker buy-out of enterprise in the context of liquidation. Liquidator's company also asked to verify assets register. A deadline is given to the Liquidator.

Thursday October 28th – COPAC facilitates workshop with workers' assembly. Progress on campaign demands related to the return of machines, UIF, Death Benefits, Lay-off Scheme, IDC

Stress fund, DTI cooperative incentive scheme and cooperative development process assessed. MEWUSA agrees to pursue the IDC Stress Fund and Lay-off Scheme immediately. Workers' assembly also restructured placing it at the centre of decision-making. Factory visited by high-level delegation from NUMSA, which pledges support for the factory occupation. COPAC initiates process to set up worker cooperative.

Sunday, October 31st – CDL and MEWUSA call for a broad solidarity meeting involving a wide array of left forces. Meeting decides to constitute a solidarity committee of various organisations, produce a common solidarity pamphlet and host a rally. The committee includes CDL, MEWUSA, NACTU, DSM, KEEP LEFT, ZABALAZA COMMUNIST FRONT and COPAC.

Monday, November 1st – COPAC has first worker cooperative capacitation workshop with workers.

Wednesday, November 3rd – the Liquidator fails to verify the assets register. Workers continue their occupation and their campaign strategy to secure their benefits and jobs. ■

a new grassroots transformative movement is emerging from below: a solidarity economy movement.

to remove machinery from the factory without consulting the union and the workers. This prejudicial action by the liquidator came to a head on Wednesday 20 October when Mine-Line workers gathered at their factory to demand an explanation from the liquidator about machinery and proceeds from finished products taken. With the liquidator failing to provide proper verification of assets taken and explanations for why asset stripping was taking place, the workers decided to secure their benefits and jobs by occupying the factory.

Implications

THERE ARE SEVERAL IMPORTANT implications which highlight the wider significance of the Mine-Line factory occupation.

Challenging the Responsiveness of the State

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL economic crisis the ANC-led government placed on the national agenda an initiative called *Framework for South Africa's Response to the International Economic Crisis*. This framework committed the state to support stressed sectors of the South African economy through financial support for turn around strategies through the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and through training linked to layoff schemes. Engineering is a key sector prioritised in this framework and provides an opportunity for the retrenched Mine-Line workers. However, the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC), assisting the Mine-Line workers to set up a worker cooperative, has verified that both the IDC Stress Fund and the Training Layoff Scheme have not supported insolvent enterprises and have not come in to assist with worker takeovers of distressed enterprises. As it stands, the Mine-Line option to convert their factory into a worker cooperative is outside these frameworks. A stressed enterprise is different from one that has stopped production. However, the insolvency laws do provide for an option for the workers to buy out the company. This will require state support and will require a political struggle to ensure the state is responsive to the needs of the Mine-Line workers through the IDC and the Training Layoff Scheme. It will be critical for these state support programs to go beyond bailing out capital to support the needs of workers.

Shifting the Property Relations Debate

POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA HAS not developed a transformative approach to property relations. Land reform has been mired in the muck of a market driven approach, Black Economic Empowerment has emphasised deracialising existing capitalist structures to engender a black elite and the more recent debate on nationalisation has merely degenerated into another front for the factional battles inside the ANC. On the one hand, the SACP has rejected nationalisation of mines, calling it 'state capitalist', and on the other the ANC Youth League is arguing for nationalisation as a necessary and strategic intervention by the so-called 'developmental state'. The Mine-Line Factory occupation takes us beyond the polemics of the ANC-led alliance and gives primacy to the voices of workers. Through debates and deliberations as part of the build up to the factory occupation two approaches have emerged to secure ownership of the factory (as part of defending workers jobs).

The first approach is partial socialisation which requires the state to step in and pay out creditors so that the machines are secured for the Mine-Line workers. The machines and the factory would then be run by the workers through a worker cooperative. State ownership combined with worker control has thus been mooted as one way forward.

A second approach is full socialisation in which the removed machinery is returned, the state pays out creditors (their proportionate share as per the liquidation) and provides working capital to the workers to re-start production through a worker cooperative. Eventually the worker cooperative reaches an agreement with the state and the assets are placed in the hands of the worker cooperative. Worker ownership and control prevails over the means of production. These transformed property relations, either partial or full socialisation, are the key to achieving the objectives of the factory occupation.

Advancing the Solidarity Economy Movement from Below

A BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT approach to cooperatives has not worked. A 2009 baseline study by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) confirms

The tactic of worker occupations to defend jobs and advance new socialised property relations brings back worker control to the centre of union politics.

this. In 2009 the national Cooperative Registrar's office officially had 22,030 active cooperatives on its list, the baseline study shows that only 2,644 were operational, confirming a survival rate of 12% for the country. Moreover, state control of the emerging cooperative movement has undermined the transformative role cooperatives can play in structural transformation. To address this, a new grassroots transformative movement is emerging from below: a solidarity economy movement. This movement is not yet institutionalised but is a loose activist current advancing member driven, values based and horizontal solidarity links between cooperatives and other socialised economic forms. The Mine-Line factory occupation and take-over to establish a worker cooperative joins various community based worker cooperatives trying to build a solidarity economy movement from below amongst the unemployed. Many of these community based worker cooperatives support the Mine-Line occupation. Moreover, if Mine-Line succeeds in inspiring a factory occupation movement this would be a crucial pillar to strengthen solidarity amongst the employed and unemployed as social relations are transformed through a solidarity economy movement.

A Transformative Option for Trade Union Strategy

TRADE UNIONISM IN POST-APARTHEID South Africa has increasingly lost a commitment to worker control, both as a principle of internal union practice and as a strategy for transformation. Business unionism and democratic corporatist deal-making (through NEDLAC) have become the main pre-occupations of mainstream unions. The current ANC government's call for an incomes policy negotiated through NEDLAC further widens the gulf between workplace trade unionism and union bureaucracy at the top. Generally union practice in the mainstream has not stemmed the tide of job losses. Instead worsening unemployment rates are reflected in shrinking membership and declining member dues. The tactic of worker occupations to defend jobs and advance new socialised property relations brings back worker control to the centre of union politics. It gives unions and workers a new option to advance transformation from below beyond narrow wage-based collective bargaining. It also has the potential to build active civil and community solidarity with workers trying to defend their jobs and transform property relations from below. ■

Vishwas Satgar is a member of the national convening committee of the Conference of the Democratic Left. He is actively involved in assisting the Mine-Line factory workers organise and defend their factory occupation.

I have to hustle to survive

By Crystal Orderson



Credit: Yasser Booley

THE THEME OF POVERTY and exclusion should prompt us to re-think the widespread notion that these scourges can be overcome through individual effort in South Africa, or anywhere else for that matter.

We need to confront the reality that poverty and exclusion do not relate to a marginal minority, but rather to the living conditions and experiences of the majority of the South African population. In poor working class communities across the country the burden of care kicks in when unemployment and poverty settle to stay. In many instances it is women who take on the burden of caring for the young and vulnerable. Mitchell's Plain is a poor township on the edges of the beautiful city of Cape Town. Despite poverty and unemployment, the young women of Mitchell's Plain have a clear sense of responsibility and resilience. In carrying out their responsibilities they are supported by a network of older women – grandmothers, mothers, aunts and sisters.

“Ek moet skarrel om te liewe” (I have to hustle to survive) is how a mother and recipient of a child grant responds to the question how she survives on the monthly R250 which the State allocates to needy children.

There are seven cash grants that constitute social protection and over twelve million South Africans receive some sort of social grant from the State.

Of these, the child support grant takes the largest part of the State's “social protection” budget, and is currently the single largest programme for alleviating child poverty in the country. It was designed by the Lund Commission thirteen years ago and consists of a cash transfer for children under the age of 16. Since its introduction in 1997 the amount has more than doubled from R100 to R250 and more than 8,5 million

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children survive on the grant today. The most prevalent perception – one reinforced by the mainstream media – is that the nameless and faceless twelve million social grant recipients are a burden to the State and to society.

But who are these nameless citizens and what do they do with the cash grants? I want to take you into the lives of young and poor working class mothers living in East Ridge, Mitchell's Plain, a township on the periphery of Cape Town. An apartheid township, it was created in 1977 as a hold-all location for the thousands of coloured families forcibly removed through the Group Areas Act from places such as District Six, Claremont, Simonstown, and Constantia. A classic apartheid township, Mitchell's Plain stands as testimony to the success of apartheid and the failures of post-apartheid South Africa. Mitchell's Plain, is a place where young women *skarrel* (hustle) to survive while being excluded from mainstream society.

The twenty- five women whose story I researched are single poor working class women from Eastridge, Mitchell's Plain between the ages of 18-30, each with one or two children. The resistance and resilience of these young women challenge the stereotypes and bias of young coloured unemployed woman living on welfare grants. The extreme social and economic poverty also exposes the network of care inside poor communities, and the socio-economic burden placed on women. The support networks are largely matriarchal, with men glaringly absent.

Socio-economic positioning of coloured women in the Western Cape

DURING THE 1970S UP UNTIL THE mid-1990s the majority of 'coloured' women were employed in the clothing factories of the Western Cape. According to the main clothing union, the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU), 40% of people in the Western Cape were employed in this sector, the majority being women. In 1990 there were about 40,000 women employed in the clothing sector. This excludes the women who were working in the "informal" and un-unionised cut and trim industry.

In many households on the Cape Flats, women were the main breadwinners, which gave them a measure of power over men. Women made the key decisions in terms of the choice of schooling for their children, specific household priorities and, more importantly, neighbours and younger people depended on them for advice on important decisions. For many years, I saw this interaction play itself out with my mother and several aunts who were employed in the clothing sector.

These historical and political leanings have to be contextualized

in the status that 'coloured' people were afforded under apartheid.

Before 1994, 'coloured' women had access to child support grants of around R850 per month, although this amount was far less than what was granted to white and Indian communities. Black African communities did not receive these grants at all.

However, the narratives of the young women I interviewed in Mitchell's Plain represent everything but the "power brokers" scholars like Elaine Salo refer to. Ironically, in post-apartheid South Africa, it is poverty which is the great social equalizer.

In January 1990, 40,000 women were employed in this sector in the Western Cape. In 2010, it is less than half with only about 17,600 women employed. According to data provided by the SACTWU, more than 80,000 jobs were lost between 1990 and 1999. During the first 11 months of 2009, an estimated 13,400 jobs were shed.

Poverty in a city of plenty

CAPE TOWN IS A CITY WHERE POVERTY exists cheek by jowl with the excesses of wealth. It is a city still divided by apartheid era class and racial lines. Black people still live in Langa (the oldest township in Cape Town), coloured people still live in Mitchell's Plain (the largest coloured township). While class migration to white areas is steady, working class communities still remain in their apartheid spaces.

Today, Mitchell's Plain is home to an estimated million plus people with close to 220,000 receiving grants totaling some R140 million. There are close to 28,000 direct beneficiaries of the child social grant. For many mothers in Mitchell's Plain, the R240 child support grant they receive is their only source of income if one excludes the social support they receive from friends and family.

Giving a Name to the Silent Voices

YOUNG WOMEN RECEIVING CHILD social grants are viewed as opportunistic, lazy and desperate. They are seen as worthless, and therefore discarded and left to fend for themselves. It is assumed that they prefer this lifestyle.

However, these women are in fact battling to survive and trying to make ends meet by using every opportunity they can access to give their children a better chance in life. Still, without the matriarchal networks in the community like their grandmothers, sisters, mothers and aunts, they would be unable to make ends meet. They form part of the 75,4% of South Africa's population that is defined as poor.

Contrary to popular belief they did not fall pregnant to simply access this cash grant. In fact, most of them only applied for the grant when their babies

Mitchell's Plain, is a place where young women *skarrel* (hustle) to survive while being excluded from mainstream society.

were about six months old. Some of the young women felt that there were social stigmas attached to applying for the grant. As one young woman told me, "It took some encouragement and support from my parents to apply for the grant." Research released by Human Research Council in 2006 concluded that there was "no relationship between teenage fertility and the grant".

Tanya and Edwina Abrahams, respectively 20 and 17, are sisters. Their only means of survival is the social grant. Small of stature, they could be mistaken for 15-year-old twin girls –possibly due to malnourishment. The two sisters live off the R250 (minus the R10 and bank charges) per month they receive from the State for each of their two children.

The R240 is spent on "nappies, milk, food and something for the pot". They live with their foster mother and during the month do "odd" jobs such as domestic work to supplement their income to buy basic foodstuffs. These young women find themselves scrambling to survive, are underweight and use whatever money they have to support their children.

Only twenty-six, Rihanna Johnson is the mother of an 11-year old son. She is unemployed and homeless. Unable to afford the rent, she lives on the goodwill of strangers.

The child support grant is her only income for the month. With this money she has to buy food for her son and pay her debts. "I borrow R50 from the money lender and then have to repay this debt plus interest. *Ek moet skarrel om te lieue.*" (I have to hustle to survive").

The women's survival stories, offer a window into their lives; the exclusions they face and the simple hard choices they make. "We have opted for the free government 3-month contraceptive injection. In the women's case it is a cheaper option and saves much needed cash".

Simply put, they cannot afford to buy sanitary towels and this form of contraception is cheaper and saves them about R20 a month, even though the long-term impact of this form of contraceptive on their bodies could spell disaster for their health. This is simply a cheaper option, which saves them money that could instead be used to buy much needed food.

As the young women relate their stories, they are clear that their children are their priorities but admit that it is a struggle to survive. When they do collect their grant, for a brief moment they imagine having money and enjoy



Olga Jonker(center) provides much needed support to her daughter and grand-daughter.

Credit: Yasser Booley

a brief luxury such as eating fish and chips and doing window shopping, dreaming of the day when they can afford to buy clothes for the children without having to count the cents.

The Tik Monster

DRUGS HAVE PLAYED A DEVASTATING role and have ironically proved to be a turning point in many of the women's lives. Most of the young women were at some point addicted to a cheap, highly addictive drug commonly referred to as 'tik' (crystal meth).

The Abrahams sisters know all too well about the toxic mix of drugs and violence.

As one young woman called Candice told me, "It made me forget about my problems of not having any money to buy food for my children."

But the good times, as some of them referred to the drug induced haze, had to eventually come to an end. The neglect of their children could no longer continue and they realised that hunger and starvation was a reality drugs would never take away.

Social and Community Networks

IN MOST CASES THE WOMEN ARE penniless a few days after receiving their grant. The rest of the month they live from "hand to mouth", as they put it. They get angry at their situations and feel that they are missing out on life. *"I feel junk, there is no future without a job"*

Margaret Edwards has three children and she admits that it is a struggle to

survive, "I feel stressed, down, and cannot cope". A few days after queuing for the grant at the local community centre you have to ask the neighbor for sugar and some bread. "It is usually the auntie next door who will share her last with us".

During the month they also buy food and nappies "op die boekie" (on credit). "The auntie sells everything including single nappies and baby milk, it is more expensive than the shops, but what can we do?" They say they do not have much of a choice in doing this: "Either we eat and pay later or we go sleep hungry".

Going to bed hungry is something many of the women know all too well. It's their daily reality – begging for food and depending on the goodwill of neighbors and women in the area. In most cases it is the informal social networks of older women that come to their rescue when there is no more food.

The state and social Grants

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS THERE have been several debates about the effectiveness of the child support grant and its intended or unintended usage. Reflecting on the recent service delivery protests, a senior government official pointed out: it "could reflect a culture of dependency on the State we have unwittingly created since 1994".

Academic researcher, Shireen Hassim has pointed out that "South Africa is regularly described as the developing world's largest and most generous welfare state, yet the country's Human Development index rating,

which measures life expectancy and education, has not significantly improved since the ANC assumed power".

Nigerian scholar Adebayo Adedeji's analysis of African states' failure to acknowledge the plight and poverty of their citizens is instructive in this regard.

He argues that political elites compete fiercely for power, resource control and economic spoils. This makes inevitable their neglect of social conflicts. Rather than being primarily concerned with the promotion of the interest of the masses by putting in place a holistic human development strategy with the overarching goals of the eradication of poverty and socio-economic justice, they scurry for the spoils, often making their pacts with neo-liberalism.

One guise in which neo-liberalism insinuated itself into South Africa was a pact with government to prioritise the building of stadiums instead of houses or allocating better child grants for that matter. This has perpetuated the existence of two parallel worlds in South Africa – one rich with a living standard likened to some European countries and the other poor, with a standard of living of Congo-Brazzaville, as is the case of child grant recipients in Mitchell's Plain. ■

Crystal Orderson is a journalist and researcher who previously reported from West Africa for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). The recipient of a Ruth First Fellowship in 2010, she recently delivered her lecture on the experiences and voices of socially marginalized women in Mitchell's Plain at the University of the Witwatersrand.

**SPECIAL
FEATURE**



The crooked growth path: the debate lingers

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Minister Patel has just published government's new economic growth path. This comes in the wake of COSATU's economic policy alternative, *A Growth Path Towards Full Employment*. It also follows Finance Minister Gordhan's Medium Term Budget that commits government spending for the next three years and which confirmed a conservative macro-economic policy framework.

The timing of these documents is very important. At an international level, and as we analyse in this issue of *Amandla!*, we are experiencing the worst capitalist crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. There will be no quick recovery. What happens internationally has a powerful impact on SA. Recall, that following the financial crisis of 2007, South Africa's economy went into recession in October 2008, 1.5 million jobs were lost and the government lost approximately R80 billion in revenue. More turbulence can be expected over the next years.

Minister Patel is correct to suggest that the "Global economic turmoil has also opened up new policy space for developing economies to go beyond conventional policy prescription." The minister may well be referring to *Bucking the Washington Consensus*, i.e. neoliberalism should always have been a priority given both where the liberation movement comes from politically and the challenges of overcoming the legacy of racial capitalism.

We believe that Government's Growth Plan breaks with a number of the non-negotiables of the GEAR strategy but it does not go nearly far enough. It contains a number of dangers for the labour movement, not least the idea of wage and productivity pacts. And so it becomes clear that for some in government an even mildly social democratic economic policy is unacceptable. In the articles that follow our contributors attempt to stimulate the debate by providing a critical overview of these documents. It is clearly not the last word in the debate but we hope an opening of a rich debate that goes beyond sterile formulae and in the process empower our readers to enter the debate on their own terms. We look forward to your inputs.

NGP: Failing the political test

By Radhika Desai and Alan Freeman

THE ANC PAID A RANSOM for the freedom of black South Africans: neo-liberalism. Amid the present crisis that model lies in ruins. In proposing the New Growth Path (NGP) Minister Patel rightly recognizes that the 'global economic turmoil has ... opened up a new policy space for developing economies to go beyond conventional [that is, neoliberal] policy prescriptions'. He is clear that the NPG must be the work of a 'developmental state' for 'creating decent work, reducing inequality, and defeating poverty'.

The NGP charts a path away from neoliberalism in many important ways. It invokes developmental states, direct employment schemes, industrial policy, and recognizes that social equity is not only the foundation of development but benefits, rather than obstructs, competitiveness. It identifies critical shortcomings of the South African economy, including its dependence on the minerals value chain, misuse of revenues and rent-seeking.

The document correctly emphasizes employment creation and domestic market deepening as critical needs. Of course, this is a document still in development, and as yet, does not conjure with the actual sums it will involve. Nevertheless, we argue that it betrays the extent to which the NGP remains captive of the old policy paradigm and how this captivity will ensure that the rest of this otherwise inspiring document risks remaining a dead letter and will



not grasp the opportunities afforded by the current crisis of neoliberalism.

Amid the crisis of neoliberalism the catchphrase is often heard that 'the state is back'. In reality, it had never gone away. For neoliberalism did not mean a reduction of the state's economic involvement, only a reorientation towards serving the interests of capital in general, and financial capital in particular, even more exclusively and

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If the ANC really wishes to emancipate the country's Black majority it must forge a movement which can counter White capital, say the authors.

unabashedly than before. And today, in all too many countries it continues to serve the very financial capital that it served under neoliberalism over the past three decades. This should tell us that ending neoliberalism is as much a political as a policy matter.

Two tell-tale signs of the state's continuing service to financial capital are the massive bailouts of banks and financial institutions and fiscal austerity that are witnessed in one country after another. South Africa has not witnessed bank bailouts as elsewhere. Moreover, the NPG recognises the dangers associated with the short term capital inflows that finance South Africa's balance of payments deficits. However, it makes no mention of capital controls to keep out unproductive and dangerous short term capital, to ensure that capital inflows take the forms of long term productive investment, nor indeed to retain the substantial savings that South Africa generates from within, due to its rich endowments and capable workforce. It speaks instead of '[a]dditional and larger purchases of foreign currency flowing into South Africa ... in order to counter appreciation of the rand as required,' proposing to use some of these towards an 'African development fund' And in the same section it also speaks of '[g]reater restraint in fiscal policy to slow inflation' with 'real growth in expenditure

of just over 2% a year for the next few years'. This is meant to counteract easy monetary policy.

These two policies make nonsense of much of the rest of the document. While all the rest of its bold proposals conjure up a vast state and social effort to ensure that the South African economy actually works for its people, that project will remain hostage to the whims of capital thanks to the lack of capital controls and the commitment to fiscal moderation. Capital is to remain free to enter and leave South Africa at will. Moreover, South Africa it to engage in the costly policy of defending itself against the appreciation of the rand, and of course, the possibility of large and sudden outflows, by building up its reserves – essentially piles of idle capital which could otherwise be usefully invested in its economy. This policy is also likely to make nonsense of all the talk

of a 'competitive' value for the Rand given that typically inflows of capital will require a considerable overvaluation of the country's currency. Finally, of course, inflows of capital will also require fiscal austerity when, in fact, what South Africans need is a considerable expansion of state spending. Thus NPG promises to limit expenditure growth at 2 per cent per year for the foreseeable future when it should plan massive investments to reduce unemployment and increase economic activity and productivity.

With the freedom and privileges granted to capital by these policies, it will retain the whip hand in negotiations with labour and will ensure that NPG's call for wage moderation and equity to control prices will actually amount to wage restraint. The NPG still seeks to resolve development's basic requirement – investment – by asking people to decrease their aspirations or living standards. The hope that investment will come if belts are tightened sufficiently usually remains vain.

Instead, the NPG needs other means to ensure that capital invests in the nation. Very traditional developmental instruments, visible in the policies of all the fastest growing nations, are available to achieve this. These include capital controls, state-led investment, a national public utility banking system under clear state and popular

control with a regulatory requirement to invest in the nation and in local communities, preferential treatment for national investors, and compulsory retention of resource rents under pain of nationalization. They work!

What will not work is a social compact, or some kind of self-restraint of workers, in order to secure investment. No experience of this nature has worked. The British social contract of the 1970s led to stagnation and an ignominious IMF bailout, Italy's social compact has left its economy crippled. The 1960s onslaught on US wages signaled the beginning of its decline. In countless third world countries under the dreaded Structural Adjustment Programmes of the 1980s and 1990s, wage reductions not only alienated the working population but depressed vital domestic demand and did nothing to help growth. No wonder they are known as the 'lost decades' of development. There is no guarantee whatsoever that because capital can make profit at the expense of its employees, it will be invested productively. Those who think so confuse the profit motive with the investment motive. The investment motive requires long-term confidence in, and a readiness to subject ones resources to the growth of the nation, which only a vigorous state-led national policy can secure. Contrary to the idea that state investment 'crowds out' private investment, in reality, private investment usually 'crowds in' around public investment.

A *high* wage economy will create the basis for high value added industry as the leader of growth – as was the case in America in its heyday. A *low* wage economy leads to the humiliation of the nation and the destruction of its primary wealth-creating resource, namely, its people.

What South Africa requires is not wage restraint but a living wage: a recognized income based on social justice below which nobody should fall. The best industries will willingly pay this because they will make their profits by harnessing the skills and talent of the workforce. The worst will go the wall, which is where they belong. A business that cannot secure the living standards of its workers is not a viable business and should not be expected to survive.

John Maynard Keynes long recognized that the day would come when a more or less comprehensive socialization of investment would be the only way to ensure it in requisite amounts. In the context of the crisis of neoliberalism, this recognition is now dawning in the most unexpected quarters. In a statement of November 15th in the face of unrelenting transport chaos in London, the city's Conservative Mayor's office stated that the Mayor had 'put an end to the Public Private Partnership that has

caused huge disruption and has been able to secure unprecedented levels of investment, despite the toughest of economic backgrounds, which will remedy these problems, add 30% capacity to the Tube and protect the economic prosperity of the capital.' Even the Conservative government of London recognizes that a partnership with capital requires capital to toe the line. That is what is missing from Mr Patel's otherwise inspiring proposals.

The real challenge is political. If the ANC really wishes to take the next step in the emancipation of South Africa's Black majority it must forge a mass movement capable of acting as a counterweight to the power South Africa's still predominantly White capitalist class which, moreover, unsatisfied with the ANC government's loyal pursuit of neoliberalism at the expense of South Africa's people, has also turned itself into a foreign capitalist class by moving company headquarters to London and New York since Apartheid ended. The goals of the NPG are certainly laudable but they cannot be achieved by surrendering all freedoms to capital. As Mr Patel himself points out, the end of Apartheid took the share of wages in national income from 50% in 1994 to just over 45% in 2009, while the share of profits increased correspondingly. One would have expected the opposite. A reversal is long overdue.

The government can only counter the political power of capital in South Africa if it mobilizes the myriad discontents that daily register their presence in assorted demonstrations and actions across the country into a coherent political force. It is not clear whether the ANC is capable of doing this, but Mr Patel belongs to that historic organization and to its government and they are as well placed to achieve this than any other political force. The first task is to enter a proper dialogue with a movement that has been driven into civil opposition by the insatiable demands of capital, with the aim of a partnership for national transformation that starts from human development and the needs of the poorest and most deprived sections of South African society. This will be the beginning of the democratic developmental state which is the only solution to South Africa's increasingly urgent developmental needs. Waiting for capital to bring development will only prolong the gathering crisis which is everyday making the ANC less capable of rising to the real political challenge it faces. ■

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Firing up the alternate economy!

In October 2010 civil society and labor federation, COSATU met in a long anticipated meeting. One of the important discussions was the economic policy document put forward by Cosatu. The following is an edited version of an introductory reflection made by Amandla! Editorial Collective member Mazibuko Jara attended the meeting and facilitated the economic policy commission.

THE COSATU "GROWTH PATH" document provides us with a useful critique of neoliberalism, its failures and how it continues to be hegemonic.

However, first and foremost this is a Cosatu challenge to economic policy of the ANC-government and *this* is long overdue. Ever since 1994 we have seen

the consolidation of class power and this cannot continue unchallenged any longer.

Key in such a challenge must be redistribution. For this reason, I'm not happy with the document being called a growth path document as this fails to question the growth logic capitalism. Perhaps a redistribution path document is more accurate, thus removing it from the logic of neo-liberalism.

Ecology?

THE 13 ECONOMIC SECTORS THAT Cosatu identifies in its proposal will inevitably perpetuate the energy-driven nature of the current economy. Yes, we need jobs and growth is inevitable. But can we continue assuming that there is an endless flow of natural resources at our disposal? The sectors proposed in

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The shift in the balances of forces in economic terms in the last 10 years have meant that that workers have lost R412 billion to the bosses says the author.

the document are energy intensive and have a high propensity for environmental destruction. Ecological activists have to step in here and give us an economic assessment, on the viability and possibility of organic farming and many other issues and alternatives, all of them having to do with the protection of life.

What COSATU is putting forward, and if it is implemented without any changes, will in my view be successful insofar as job creation and development are concerned. It will have a blind spot when it comes to ecology and the flow of natural resource though, and the proposals made still exist within the logic and assumptions of capitalism. If implemented, this programme

would be a step forward in breaking away from neoliberalism, but it wouldn't break away from the capitalist system and that system's reliance on endless flows of natural resources.

Bolder

IN ANY CASE, THE COSATU POLICY proposals would not even be implemented as things stand. The shift in the balances of forces in economic terms in the last 10 years have meant that that workers have lost R412 billion to the bosses. There have been higher profit levels for the bosses, without any benefits to the workers. Given this situation, perhaps the document sets the bar too low on the need to reverse these wealth

and income patterns through stronger proposals on taxation and redirection of profits to productive investment and a living wage. I think we should emphasize the need for the document to be much bolder in this regard.

On forms of ownership for example: We do not just need a corporatised state corporation. Such outfits are still driven by, precisely, a corporate logic. We are already seeing this. How do those state enterprises extract and distribute surplus? Do they follow the logic of capitalist organisation of labour? What about worker and public control? What about enhanced and effective accountability to immediate local communities and the broader public?

We have not seen worker take-overs of factories in South Africa [but see this issue of *Amandla!*]. Such things are not possible without mobilisation. We would need a new element in this economic program that focuses on occupying or taking over factories that aren't working, but we also need financing and support from a state in such cases.

Organise the unemployed

AT THE HEART OF THE DEBATE ON economic policy is employment. We need urgently a mass campaign focusing on unemployment. The right to work should be a right inscribed in the constitution. We must mobilise for this and we need COSATU and civil society to bring their weight to bear in building such a mass campaign.

This campaign must also be linked to working with advice centres and other community based organisations, in ways that can both mobilise unemployed people politically and provide services to people (advice and other services), training on cooperatives as well as other such alternatives. We need servicing and organising of the unemployed. We need a network across the country functioning in a way that also gives unemployed access to services.

Class independent finance

TO BREAK THE DOMINANCE OF FINANCE capital there must be a stronger focus on the extensive public/state financial resources, on the importance of workers' savings and the building of new financial power through cooperatives, workers' banks and other such financial institutions. This will lessen dependence on finance capital.

Again on ownership: If COSATU is pushing forward a change in industrial policy, staying within capitalism when doing so, what is its approach to who these industrial capitalists will be. Will it be just the traditional entrepreneurs or the producers themselves as well? ■

Mazibuko Jara is a founding member of *Amandla!* magazine, and is part of its Editorial Collective.

Clash of the economic titans

By Amandla Staff

THE CONCEPT “growth path” was coined in 1990 in the Tripartite Alliance’s economic discussions. Today, economic growth, measured in the only way that matters under capitalism – bigger and bigger yearly sales – is questioned by radical economists, environmentalists and powerful social movements such as the Latin America’s indigenous and peasant movements. We live in an era of environmental destruction and climate change as a result of capitalist growth plundering our natural resources and undermining nature’s capacity to renew itself. In addition, in South Africa, we live in the era of jobless growth, where economic growth occurs with no resulting social benefits. This situation calls for an employment plan – not a “growth path”.

Nevertheless, the merit of COSATU’s *A Growth Path Towards Full Employment* lies in the plan’s focus on overcoming mass unemployment, by resisting capitalism. In contrast, Government’s New Growth Path (NGP) aims to give capitalism a human face.

That government has launched its NGP will of course facilitate engagement between government and COSATU on economic policy, even if it is unclear which economic policy is in charge. Is it Patel’s Growth Path or Treasury’s macro-economic pronouncements? There are contradictions between them. For example, Finance Minister Gordhan has reaffirmed inflation targeting and tight monetary policy whereas



Similarly, the NGP states: “Most of the projected new jobs will come from the private sector”. These positions cannot be reconciled with COSATU policy to “remove the profit motive from the provision of basic goods and services”; COSATU says that capital controls are “a critical element of the financial policies” in a plan for full employment. Consequently, COSATU wants “to reverse the relaxation of capital controls”. The NGP is completely silent on the issues of capital controls. The government announced in October that capital controls will be relaxed even further.

In Brazil, the government is in fact already implementing COSATU’s proposal for a “tax on financial transactions”. A tax on capital inflows has been introduced and raised gradually to 6 percent. This tax puts a break on the drive to push the Brazilian *real* higher and higher against international currencies, which is bad for Brazil’s exports.

Reduced public sector?

COSATU WANTS AN INWARD LOOKING industrial strategy – as opposed to the domination of profit led export of raw materials and unrefined goods. The wholesale and retail sector is critical for employment COSATU says and “calls for interventions in this sector to break the power of the conglomerates and to ensure that it carries local content to the customers.”

Such measures would reverse the policy of the government completely. They stand in stark contrast to statements of the MTBP like: “FDI [foreign direct investment] is generally higher

Patel’s Growth Plan calls for “a more competitive exchange rate and reduced investment costs through lower real interest rates.”

Opposite poles

THE COSATU ECONOMIC policy document stresses the crucial role of the state to curb unemployment, even saying that the state must be an Employer of Last Resort. The opposite view exists in both the NGP document and in Treasury’s Medium Term Budget Policy document (MTBP), which says: “The private sector (...) will remain the primary driver for job creation. The public sector plays a complementary role in this process.”



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in countries with a stable and predictable policy environment, which includes legal protection and effective enforcement of investor rights". Patel's Growth Plan is more sensitive to the policy space for state regulation and intervention in the economy. It envisages an active state driven industrial policy in "areas with employment potential" and that "require government encouragement". It is important to note though, that the NGP projects a GDP growth per year of 4 to 7 percent, but only 2 percent for state expenditure. Yet GDP is composed by both state expenditure and markets' sales. The NGP thus plans on giving more and more de facto economic power to capital by every year reducing the weight of the public sector in the economy, therefore increasing the economy's submission to market forces.

COSATU's suggestions for an alternative economic policy deserves to be debated, not just in the labour movement and civil society more broadly, but crucially within the Alliance. The very existence of the COSATU document is going to destabilise the so called "policy environment". Unfortunately for COSATU it is likely to be ignored as government tries to fudge differences between its economic ministries and reach a stable consensus. ■

It has become possible, only after recent tragedies such as those in Bangladesh or Tabasco, Mexico, to publicly debate a central precept of the dominant religion: the goal of accelerated economic growth. Fifty years of propaganda have converted the economists' dogma into a general prejudice. Without discussion, we accept that accelerated economic growth is desirable. Now the time has come to abandon this pernicious obsession.

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF economic growth to match population growth appears to be a common sense principle. But it is not. Many things should grow until they reach their correct proportion: plants, animals, people. When something reaches its correct size, and then continues to grow, the resulting protuberance is called a cancer. Much of what increases when the formal economy continues to grow is a type of social cancer. Speculation grows, irrational or destructive production grows, corruption and waste grow – all at the cost of what really should increase: social justice and the well-being of the majority.

In every country there are things that have grown too much, things which should be made smaller – and others that have not grown enough or need to continue growing for the greater good. A high rate of economic growth, measured through the gross national product, generally reflects a growth in what is already large, an authentic social cancer, and a diminishing of what should continue growing. Economic growth produces the opposite of what it promises. It does not imply greater well-being or employment for the people, or greater efficiency in the use of resources. Quite the opposite: it generates poverty, inefficiency and injustice. There is an abundant historical record to support this argument. To continue to propose a high rate of economic growth as a social goal is pure nonsense. It can only be attributed to the ignorance of a simple soul, cynicism or a combination of the two.

Almost forty years ago, Paul Streeten rigorously documented for the ILO the perverse connection between economic growth and injustice. He demonstrated that greater growth corresponded to greater poverty, and that there is a relation of cause and effect between the one and the other. He demonstrated as well that the famous "trickle down effect" – the idea that concentrated

riches spill out onto the majority, generating well-being in their wake – is a perverse and unfounded illusion.

To concentrate social efforts on economic growth disguises the real goal: greater opulence for a few, at the expense of generalized poverty and the destruction of the natural patrimony. This result is hardly logical, as the economists' obsession does nothing more than apply to the whole of society a strict capital necessity that applies only to the owner of capital: capital that does not grow, dies; and so it follows indefinitely. For this reason, cultivating the obsession implies writing a blank check to the market leaders or the State, so that they do their thing in the name of the well-being of the majority, a well-being that doesn't appear, and following that path will never appear.

We need to recover a sense of proportion that is simply another form of common sense: that sense that exists in community. In the struggle against a culture of waste, disposability, destruction and injustice, and the culture that has produced global warming to which disasters caused by irresponsibility are now attributed, we can reclaim the sensible and responsible rejection of what is unnecessary; we can do it in the name of socially viable goals, and discard forever the idolatry of economic growth.

The time has arrived to seriously propose the advantages of a negative growth rate, clearly specifying what we would continue to stimulate: for example, the support of highly efficient, productive and sensible sectors, such as those that make up the majority of the persecuted "informal sector." This will imply a focus on strengthening the productive capacity of the majority, instead of supporting the inefficient giants. The economists' nightmare, a drop in the gross national product, could be a blessing for the majority.

It is time to stop the dominant insanity. Some things need to grow, and others need to contract. Let our capacity to sustain ourselves and our vital autonomy grow. Let our expressions of liberty and initiative grow, and the spaces for exercising them. Let the opportunities for a good life multiply, according to how each individual and culture defines that good life. And, to make that possible, let us reduce the weight of a formal economy that oppresses us and wears us down, through everything that contradicts a good life for everyone or destroys nature. ■

Gustavo Esteva is a grassroots activist and deprofessionalised intellectual. He was Chairman of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and advisor to the Zapatistas.

The cancer of growth

By Gustavo Esteva



Right to organize under attack

By Mark Weinberg

THE 1994 SOCIAL CONTRACT negotiated in Kempton Park is fast reaching its' limits under the pressure of the economic and social crisis impacting the country: the deepening capitalist crisis of over production and accumulation, the resulting jobless growth and mass unemployment, hunger and food insecurity, failed agrarian reform, mass urbanization, and the housing crisis, escalating gendered and xenophobic violence.

The ANC has since the late 1980s prided itself on being 'ready to govern' – being the organization best placed to manage the contradictions that beset South African society. As the 1994 compromise reaches it's limits we can begin to see a forward thinking ANC government anticipating increased socio-economic unrest and preparing to govern a new set of social relations.

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The rights to freedom of expression, access to information, and freedom of association are historical demands of the working class incorporated into the compromise of 1994. Collectively these rights can be thought of as the Right to Organize. Given the failure to negotiate a transition to a just economic order, the right to organize defines the terrain on which to continue the struggle for social justice.

The freedom of expression was only partially secured as capitalist media monopolies' control of the print media was maintained, and in fact entrenched through taxation, trade, and competition policy. The reconceptualisation of the SABC as a 'public' (no longer 'state') broadcaster and the legalization of community broadcasting held the potential to extend the freedom of expression to poor and working class South Africans. However, as the cold winds of neo-liberalism gripped the country, these media were left to fend for themselves, shaping their programming to meet the needs of audiences most desired by advertisers.

Recent months have seen the tabling of legislation intended to curtail media freedom even further. The ICASA Amendment Act aims to give the Executive greater control over the body that issues broadcasting licenses and the Public Service Broadcasting Bill extends the influence of government over community radio – giving them seats on the Boards of community radio and television stations.

On the freedom of association front, we witness increased police brutality in townships and the continued unwillingness to 'grant permission' for marches. The Traditional Courts Bill aims to re-establish the authority of traditional leaders in the rural areas and recent ANC's National General Council (NGC) discussion documents propose the regulation of NGO funding.

Regarding access to information, the passing of the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) promised all South Africans the right to access all government information and privately held information that impacted on their other rights. However the Open Democracy Access Centre (ODAC) estimates that less than 36% of applications for information have been successful. The government has now tabled the Protection of Information of Act (POIB) that undermines the struggle for whistleblower protection and access to information, giving any state agency, including parastatals and municipalities the powers to classify public information as secret without giving reasons. Whistleblowers, NGOs, social movements, or journalists disclosing classified information can go to jail for up to 25 years.

However, as the cold winds of neo-liberalism gripped the country, these media were left to fend for themselves, shaping their programming to meet the needs of audiences most desired by advertisers.

The Right2Know Campaign, launched on the 31 August 2010 under the slogan of "Stop the Secrecy Bill. Let the Truth Be Told!", has seen an unprecedented outpouring of support. In a few short months over 400 organizations have joined the campaign, ranging from social movements to conservative ratepayers associations. Support cuts across sectors, from environmentalists, to health and service delivery organizations.

A successful Week of Action in October saw protests, community meetings and marches across the country. The Campaign has seen government move from a belligerent insistence that there is nothing wrong with the Bill to panicked retreat with the Minister of State Security making two unscheduled appearances in Parliament to attempt to soften the Bill. The Bill is currently being debated in a Parliamentary Ad-hoc Committee and the Right2Know Campaign is mobilizing for intensified mass action in the new year.

The rapid growth of the Campaign has raised a number of critical questions and organizers have called a National Dialogue of supporters to discuss the campaign's scope, strategy and structure.

Discussion documents prepared for the recent ANC NGC make regular reference to the need for 'social cohesion' and in this context the right to organize will remain under sustained attack. The Right2Know Campaign should be built to defend the space to organize. The Campaign must defeat the draconian POIB and respond to other challenges to the free flow of information – including structural limitations imposed by the communalization of public and community media and the dominance of monopolies in the commercial media. ■

Mark Weinberg has been seconded by the Alternative Information Development Centre (AIDC) to serve as coordinator of the Right2Know Campaign.



Visit www.right2know.org.za to join or learn more.

While the internet has provided a new dimension to the old psychological war tactics of imperialism in the 21st century, it has also empowered ordinary citizens in exposing the official information, challenging its accuracy and offering alternate views at the same time.

IMPERIALISM HAD AN unchallenged upper hand on how and where to launch psychological warfare until the age of cyberspace arrived. The new information and communication technologies (ICT) have provided amazing tools in the hands of common citizens worldwide to expose and challenge superpowers in their efforts to control people's mind and mould their thoughts through direct and indirect psychological warfare (PSYWAR) activities.

That's probably why the American administration is so nervous about WikiLeaks that released approximately 250,000 secret State Department documents on November 28, 2010. The recent WikiLeaks information should be viewed as a new challenge to the American administration. The White house press secretary Robert Gibbs in an effort to deemphasize its effects said "By its very nature, field reporting to Washington is candid and often incomplete information." On the other hand, the whole administration is trying to repair the damage caused by these leaks. This is not the first time, however, that a private organization has exposed a large number of secret information that helped shape diplomatic moves, policies and PSYWAR behind the scene.

While the modern technologies have transformed war images to shape public opinion, the same technology has also revolutionized the war itself. The controversial Drone attacks within the Pakistani territories are planned and launched from a communication center in the United States located thousands of miles from the battle field. As it looks the Afghan war has also become a virtual game being played on computers and TV channels every day. Wonders of the internet technology, wireless telephony and the satellite communication have made the twenty-first century war a virtual game that you can watch in the comforts of your family room. Although we receive the war related news from private media in the U.S., Pentagon is the basic source of all the war related information being released to the media after carefully analyzing and excluding unwanted information by its public affairs gurus. The objective is to control the crucial information and release only what is deemed necessary.

Consequently, the images we see on the internet, print media or television



Satellite image of Iran as found on US military website, www.military.com

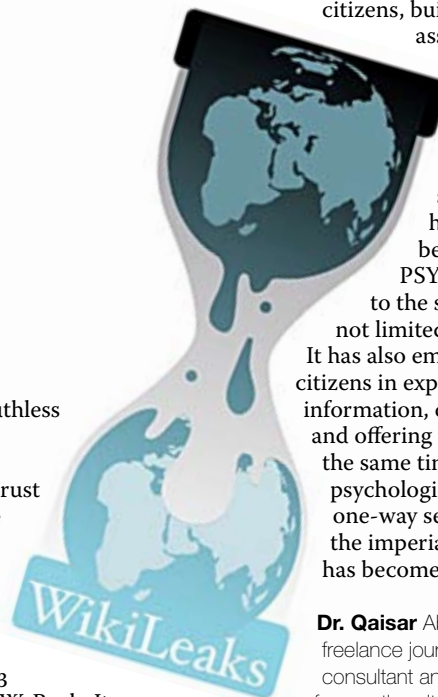
The Wiki-Leaking of *media*

By Dr. Qaisar Abbas

are part of a carefully orchestrated strategy of psychological warfare. While the coalition forces are busy invading countries, phrases, icons and media images are innovatively created to invade minds. This strategy works nicely to influence the public opinion and to make the public believe that invaders are good guys while others are bad.

Historically, three kinds of PSYWAR strategies have been used: Strategic-before the invasion, Tactical-during the combat mission and Consolidation-after the invasion. First the target individual or institution is carefully isolated from its relevant public before invading the country. Saddam Hussein, for example,

was known to be a ruthless dictator and this fact was cleverly used in creating a gulf of distrust between him and the Muslims worldwide including Iraqis during the Persian Gulf War in 1990 and the Iraqi invasion in 2003 by President George W. Bush. It did not take too long, however, for the coalition forces in Afghanistan to isolate the Taliban from the public because of Taliban's ruthless tactics and violence against Afghan citizens and women.



Strategic PSYWAR is usually carried out using the peace time mass media campaigns through radio programs, television, the internet and print media targeted at enemy citizens in their own languages. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Voice of America (VOA) are the two major international radio channels that broadcast thousands of hours of programs in hundreds of world languages daily. While BBC's approach is more indirect, VOA serves the American strategic interests directly mandated by its charter.

Second, national security becomes a magical mantra to mould the internal public opinion. The junior Bush administration believably claimed that the Saddam regime had failed to destroy Weapons of Mass Destruction implying that the UN inspectors and their work was not worth continuing. Fabricated information and data were widely used to convince the American population that Saddam is a major threat to the American security. Contrary to the ground realities, it was also desperately propagated that Al-Qaida was actively operating in Iraq.

Third, a carefully developed image of the invading force as liberators, friends and supporters of democracy is promoted through media channels. If the popular public opinion is against the war, it becomes highly crucial for invaders to show that invading forces are "people friendly" and they have arrived to establish democratic norms in an undemocratic country. Coverage of invading soldiers in Afghanistan involved in social activities, helping common citizens, building bridges and

assisting the elderly are all common images we see in mass media as part of this PSYWAR activities these days.

Blogs, websites, social media and emails have also increasingly become part of the PSYWAR game but thanks to the same technologies it is not limited to superpowers only. It has also empowered ordinary citizens in exposing the official information, challenging its accuracy and offering alternate views at the same time. For a long time psychological warfare has been a one-way secret game controlled by the imperialist powers but now it has become a two-way cyber street!

Dr. Qaisar Abbas, a U.S. based freelance journalist, grant writing consultant and a published Urdu poet, frequently writes on media, literature and society.

[Source: Viewpoint Issue 29 <http://www.viewpointonline.net/the-wikileaking-of-media.html>]

Crises of Civilisation Conference

Global crises of civilisation - the advent of change

Two things are clear since the advent of the financial crisis that broke out in 2007. The crisis is far from over despite what G20 leaders would have us believe and secondly to define the crisis as financial or even economic is to misunderstand the nature of the crisis and the uniqueness of the period we are in. These were some of the main issues discussed at the recently held Crisis of Civilisation Conference held by the AIDC and People's Dialogue, a South-South network of movements and other civil society organisations in Latin America, during October 2010.

The conference was organised around understanding the nature of the crisis as a civilisational crisis of multi-dimensions. As part of conference plenary and group discussions participants were asked to reflect on visions for an alternative society, strategies for movement building and developing a programme of collaboration towards rebuilding the global justice movement.. Amandla! brings you a collection of articles which formed the basis for debates and discussion at the conference.

Terminal Capitalism

By Edgardo Lander



Credit: Sean Gardner

The current global crisis has been described as a financial crisis. Indeed, the main anti-crisis effort by the governments of the geopolitical North, the G-20 members and of the multilateral financial institutions, have been trying to recover and regulate banks. Worldwide, many billions of public dollars have been transferred to banks and other financial institutions considered “too big to fail”.

HOWEVER, THE CRISIS FACING civilisation is based on unlimited growth in a small, limited planet. Humankind is currently over-using the planet’s carrying capacity by 50%. This means, that for each year of human activities it would take a year and a half to recover the consumption and destruction of the Earth’s life systems. We are rapidly eating away the very conditions that make life possible.

International trade makes a paradox possible. In the countries of the geopolitical North – where there is a more massive over-use of the world’s carrying capacity – the cities are clean,

the air is fresh, the forests are recovering and in some areas biodiversity is making a comeback, while exactly the opposite is happening in the countries of the global South. The world’s commons is unequally used and destroyed by a privileged proportion of humanity, who in-turn, exports its massive ecological footprint to the geopolitical South.

A zero sum game

THERE IS A FINITE AMOUNT OF FRESH water available, of fertile land, of fish in the oceans. There is clear limit to the amount of greenhouse gases that the oceans, forests and the atmosphere can absorb before catastrophic, irreversible changes in the weather patterns occur. These are the world’s commons that have made life possible in this planet; the commons that have to be shared by all humans and all living species if life is to survive.

Humanity, has been overusing these commons for the last four decades and we are now in a zero sum-game. If some part of humanity appropriates more than their share of these limited commons, constituting the conditions of life, this means that others will have

less. The myth of unlimited growth and “trickle down economics” – according to which the present patterns of consumption of the rich are the future patterns of consumption of the poor – are myths of absolute impossibilities.

Dangerous framing

THE AGENDA IS CURRENTLY SET BY three main international agents:

- Governments of the political North;
- Trans-national corporations; and
- The international scientific and technological community.

These agents recognise that humanity is facing a serious crisis. They acknowledge the limits of the planet. Modern science and technology have been put to use to diagnose the severity of the situation. International negotiations are taking place to strike agreements putting a brake on the threats to life. All this has to be welcomed. The partial framing of the issues at stake, however, makes it highly unlikely that significant results will come out of these negotiations.

A first major issue is the fact that this global crisis is defined in terms of the threats posed by “climate change”.

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This is the way in which the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) tries to deal with the issue. But once the problem is defined as “climate change” it tends to narrow the debates to carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases.

There is no debate on the limits (or terminal crisis) of a civilisation based on the radical separation between humans and the rest of the web of life and the idea of unlimited growth in a limited planet. Thus, for example, instead of discussing the need to do away with a transportation system based on individual and private cars, the debate is limited to alternative fuels. This kind of debate helps to sustain this unsustainable mode of transportation.

Food for cars

THERE IS OBVIOUSLY NO INTEREST in discussing capitalism, inequality, or the role of corporate media in creating an ever-increasing demand for goods and services. The question seems to be limited to what can we change so that nothing really has to change and this has made it possible for corporations, most governments and most of the scientific and technology community to

There is no debate on the limits (or terminal crisis) of a civilisation based on the radical separation between humans and the rest of the web of life and the idea of unlimited growth in a limited planet.

search for technological fixes and market solutions to “technical” problems.

Climate change is indeed a huge issue, but it is part of the widespread destructive consequence of this profoundly unequal pattern of development, progress and unlimited growth. It can hardly be expected that the same science and technology, the same dominant patterns of knowledge, the same market systems that have led us to the current crisis are going to offer any meaningful alternatives.

Focusing narrowly on atmospheric temperature, these negotiations include proposals that further endanger life on

earth. Geo-engineering technological fixes are one more example of the complete lack of ethical responsibility or any sense of the principle of precaution; it shows the extreme irresponsibility of those who are willing to risk life on the planet for short-term profit.

The substitution of fossil fuels by bio-fuels has led to the substitution of food production for the production of food for cars. The drastic increase in food prices that led to a significant increase in hunger in 2007-2008, has been attributed mainly to the displacement of food by bio-fuel production. Bio-fuels have also led to an increase in mono-agriculture, a reduction of biological diversity, land concentration and expulsions of peasants from the land they work, massive uses of water and an increase in the use of toxic chemicals. Taken into account the uses of fossil-based chemicals and fossil-based agricultural machinery, it is by no means clear that – on balance – there is really a reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases.

Top down vision

THE TOP-DOWN VISION ON CLIMATE issues deals with global averages, not with the way people and communities



Capitalism is rapidly destroying its life support systems.

The crisis of a pattern of knowledge

By **Edgardo Lander**



THE CRISIS OF CIVILISATION is also a crisis of so-called modern science and technology; a crisis for a pattern of knowledge based on the radical separation between humans and the rest of the webs of life. This is an anthropocentric pattern of knowledge, which assumes without question the right of humans to control, transform and destroy so-called “nature” in order to increase their material well-being.

It is a mechanistic pattern of knowledge: it has turned so-called nature into an object, into a thing, into a mechanism.

It is a patriarchal pattern of knowledge: It has privileged control, growth, destruction and violence, over care, limits, harmony and hierarchically separates reason from body. This pattern of knowledge identifies men with the full potentials of reason and creation while women are seen as closer to nature and reproduction.

will be impacted. An increase in global temperatures of two degrees centigrade could well mean temperature increases of more than 3 degrees in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, and thus threatening the livelihood of hundreds of millions of people. The top down vision and diagnosis also excludes the voice and perspective of local communities, of peasant organisations, of indigenous peoples. It assumes the corporate patterns of food production. It views agribusiness as modern and advanced, and not as a part of what has to be questioned. It gives no place for the voice of organisations like Via Campesina in their defence of peasant-based self-sustaining agriculture as a way to cool the planet.

Without a turn to a radical reduction of the human ecological footprint in this and the next decade, and without a re-distribution of access to the commons, the impact of environmental destruction will necessarily be accompanied by more violence and war. The expectation of unlimited growth, which requires more and more energy and so-called resources, can only lead to an expansion of resource wars, as the inputs for growth will increasingly have to be imported.

It is a racist pattern of knowledge that has classified human beings hierarchically in terms of the colour of their skin. This justified domination, colonialism and imperialism as part of the "white man's burden"...

It is a colonial pattern of knowledge that has classified peoples and cultures into civilised and primitive, modern and pre-modern, advanced and backward. The proponents of this knowledge pattern has assumed the right to impose their vision of modernity (by force whenever necessary) upon all other cultures and peoples of the world.

It is an authoritarian pattern of knowledge that assumes that one particular human historical experience (that of industrial liberal societies) is not only superior to all others, but the highest possible ending point of all human history, a historical experience that is by its very nature superior to all others, an experience that cannot be equalled.

It is a Eurocentric pattern of knowledge that assumes that only Western "scientific" knowledge leads to truth while the so-called knowledge of

It is a pattern of knowledge that claims to be superior to all forms of knowledge that assumes some notion of sacredness of life

Global apartheid project

PEOPLES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH WILL not simply die off as fresh water sources diminish, as extreme climatic events like floods and droughts become more frequent, and as their land produces less food. Mass ecological and environmental migration is not a future possibility but a significant current occurrence.

In response, racist policies which exclude and expel migrants are becoming more and more common in the US and the European Union. People whose livelihood is destroyed by the policies and patterns of consumption are thus kept out of those very countries.

The global strategic project seems thus to be the construction of a state of global apartheid in which all of the world's resources, all the commons, all the planet's carrying capacity is globally available for the privileged, while the territories of the global North are kept free and safe from the invasion of unwanted aliens.

Terminal crisis of capitalism

THE INCREASING MILITARISATION OF the planet, the permanent state of war, can thus not be considered to be the

product of a particularly conservative US administration, as was the case with Bush's government. It is, and will increasingly be, a structural need of the capitalist world system in its search for continued accumulation and segregation.

Capitalism as a system cannot survive without continued growth. This system of life is not compatible with life on Earth once we have reached the limits of the planet. We are witnessing the final, terminal crisis of capitalism. The question is not if capitalism will survive. It cannot. It is rapidly destroying its life support systems. The question is instead whether we humans will survive capitalism.

That is an open question. We have no guarantee. It will depend to a great extent on people's organisations, mobilisations and struggles throughout the world. ■

Lander is one of the leading thinkers and writers on the left in Venezuela, both supportive and constructively critical of the Venezuelan revolution under Chavez. He is a member of the Latin American Social Science Council's (CLACSO) research group on Hegemonies and Emancipations and is currently part of the steering committee of the Hemispheric Council of the Social Forum of the Americas.



We are witnessing the final, terminal crisis of capitalism.

the rest is mere myth or some limited practical knowhow. For this pattern of knowledge, the obvious superiority of western science and technology justifies the systematic destruction of all other forms of knowledge and memory seen as obstacles to progress and development.

We have a civilisation that has created a discipline – economics – dedicated to the study of production based on the dogma of progress, and unable to recognise that much of what it considers as wealth creation and

economic expansion (as shown in the internationally accepted criteria of economic accounting) is in fact systematic destruction of the conditions that make life possible on this planet.

It is a pattern of knowledge that claims to be superior to all forms of knowledge that assumes some notion of sacredness of life; a pattern of knowledge that believes that it is radically rational, separated from all myth and "irrational" non-scientific assumption, while it is based without doubting a completely

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unsubstantiated faith in progress and unlimited potential of science and technology to solve all possible problems.

It is extraordinarily God-like pattern of knowledge and without doubt the most transformative, technologically efficient, powerful knowledge system in human history, which has taken human beings to the moon. At the same time – and this is the other side of the coin – it is an extremely limited, unsubtle, pattern of knowledge. It has catastrophically failed to understand and value the complexities of the life systems of earth and has thus contributed systematically to their destruction.

We are facing the terminal crisis of this civilisation based on the systematic domination and exploitation of so-called “nature” and of human beings. A civilisation structured around the idea that the purpose of human life is to accumulate as many material objects and consume as many services as possible; a civilisation that thought that it could ignore all limits and get away with it. ■



Life without care

By Lilian Celiberti

THE ONGOING FINANCIAL CRISIS that started two years ago has shaken the capitalist world to the point that today we are discussing whether it is one of the many crises of capitalism or if we should be talking about a crisis of civilisation. What is in crisis, after all, is an economic production and social model based on the exploitation of natural and human resources, which has an impact on the environment, food, health, climate and social relations globally.

Traditionally, capitalism has used the over-exploitation of natural resources to overcome its crises, but today these resources have been stretched to the limit, and this impacts significantly on the very structure of social life. What is at stake here is the quality of life itself. Alberto Acosta correctly points out: “Its various impacts extend in the form of concentric circles in different aspects of life. The rise of unemployment, poverty and hunger are everyday news. Global environmental damage is no longer a mystery to anybody. Different forms of violence accompany the increasing social and environmental damage”.

More than a decade ago, responding to the process of global environmental damage, Nerbert Lechner spoke of a society wracked by three powerful fears: *the fear of the Other, the fear of social and*

economic exclusion, and the fear of non-sense. Defining these fears, he spoke of a subjective dimension of human society and its crisis of civilisation. The *Other* represents a threat in a context of deeply aggressive relations that are determined by competition, which has been established as a rule for everyday survival. “Fears are dangerous forces. They can provoke aggressive reactions, anger and hatred that corrode everyday sociability” (Lechner 1998). Women know better than anyone how those fears have an impact expressed in affective, social and personal relations. The rates of femicide are vivid and painful expressions of the crisis of civilisation and reflect the structure of gender relations and patriarchal culture.

It is necessary to analyse reality from a wider and more complex view, one which includes the crisis of a conception of society and civilisation that is supported and reproduced by the sexual division of labour. Generally,

Capitalism consolidates the separation of the public sphere as a space of masculine dominion, and the private sphere as the women’s dominion

the sexual division of labour structures gender relations in every society. It establishes a naturalised division of the reproductive areas -assigned to women – and the productive areas assigned to men. Capitalism consolidates the separation of the public sphere as a space of masculine dominion, and the private sphere as the women’s dominion, even though in every culture and territory on the planet the reproduction of human life depends on women and men. In this way a “naturalised” social order is established, which prescribes rules and patterns of conduct. Girls and boys are educated and socialised to learn how to exercise these tasks and to accept this as a “normal” social order. The sexual division of labour assigns women the responsibility of reproduction, and therefore their inclusion in the “productive” ambit is regarded as secondary. There is a matrix of structural inequality between men and women that reinforces, reproduces and perpetuates the subjugation of women as a dynamic and ever-changing phenomenon. To question the sexual division of labour implies to question a supposed complementary harmony in the distribution of labour between men and women, and to reveal the implicit power relations in the unequal social relations that are built on the separation between what is public and what is private.

The idea of the autonomous and independent citizen-individual, developed as a capitalist myth in the liberal systems, implies for its fulfilment the existence of a structure of caring that men and women need alike, but that is generally performed by women. In Izquierdo's words: "That tension between independence and dependence is supported by conceiving a citizenship made of exclusions, all of which are related to different dimensions of caring". (Izquierdo 2003:5)

Indeed, the sexual division of labour assigns responsibility for caring tasks to women, and at the same time develops the illusion of self-sufficiency in men, which devalues the relations of dependence and the need for others that are shared by all human beings. When the "productive" place assigned to men in the work market is threatened by instability and uncertainty, those fears mentioned by Lechner deeply erode the collective subjectivity, especially the masculine one. Everyday necessities like eating, getting dressed, and looking after the children and the ill are mixed with the need for affection, recognition and solidarity. Women have provided society with this fabric of affections and care, accepting in return their exclusion from other spheres of citizenship.

Feminist theory has focused on these relations, thus opening up the possibility of analysing society as a whole. Carrasco points out that "to focus explicitly on the way each society resolves its problems of sustainability of human life offers, without a doubt, a new perspective on the social structure and makes visible that part of the process that is usually implicit and that is rarely mentioned" (2003:12)

In the time-space relation between productive and reproductive labour, the time that acquires value is the time dedicated to productive labour because, among other reasons, capitalism

Society and the economy still ignore the fact that the care for human life is a social and political responsibility

presumes the commercialisation of time; this is how the acquisition of "value" brings on a payment, and this has implications at a symbolic level.

How have the most basic human necessities been relegated to an invisible space in order to consider the "macro" problems of society? How is it possible that "economic systems have been traditionally presented to us as autonomous, hiding in the process the domestic activity, which is the essential base for the production of life and labour forces"? (Carrasco 2003:13)

Given the persistence and generalisation of this omission in economic and social theory – including alternative ones – we could conclude that the task of feminists and of the women's movement to dismantle patriarchal hegemony still remains a titanic one – despite all their achievements.

Society and the economy still ignore the fact that the care for human life is a social and political responsibility and that the participation of men in caring tasks is a key practice of human solidarity which is necessary for the development of new political and social cultures. One of the tasks feminism has assumed is to explore this link, not only to denounce the way capitalism uses women's free labour, but to revalue the essential importance of caring tasks as social and ecological ethics when thinking of alternatives.

Feminist economy has developed the concept of the "economy of care" to refer to the space where the labour force is reproduced and maintained,

including all those activities that involve cleaning and cooking chores, general house-maintenance and looking after the children, the ill and the disabled.

This discussion shows once more that each time the social experience of women enters the public debate inconsistencies and contradictions arise in place of perceived unanimities and consensuses. Those spaces that were assumed as fair and neutral, such as that of the family, are no longer considered as innocent, because they reveal matrixes of inequality, domination and violence.

To build alternatives is not a project that can be only achieved in meetings or demonstrations. As Butler puts it "social transformations do not simply occur because of a mass gathering in favour of a cause, but precisely through the forms in which everyday social relations are rearticulated and new conceptual horizons are opened by subversive and anomalous practices". (2003:20)

To ask ourselves today how much we really need to live, while avoiding that the comfort of a few becomes the basis for the misery of the majority of humanity, is a necessary question to achieve the development of a new ecological economy. To diminish the materialisation of production, as Wolfgang Sachs affirms, requires the redefinition of human labour in terms of producing what is necessary with the least amount of energy, with the least consumption of water and the lowest contamination possible.

The development of a notion of "good life" or "good living", in which the need for caring does not turn into a factor of inequality between men and women, is imperative in order to integrate the ethics of care with the ethics of justice and the adequate defining of alternatives.

I agree with María Jesús Izquierdo when she says that approaching the idea of care can help us draw an ideal of freedom that does not ignore that we depend on each other, and therefore the individual can only be such if there is a community supporting him/her". (2003:27)

Because of this, thinking of alternatives to the crisis of civilisation today also supposes raising the cultural challenge of building new social relations between men and women, which will necessarily happen through the development of a new generation of caring men. ■

Lilian Celiberti is well known for her work in gender and youth and is the co-ordinator of a feminist – *Cotidiano Mujer* – as well as Uruguay's national co-ordinator for the Youth and South American Integration Project.

Translated from Spanish by Salyam Fayad



Visit www.amandla.org.za for a complete bibliography.



A "naturalised" social order is established, which prescribes rules and patterns of conduct.



War is also about blood for food, blood for genes...for biodiversity and water.

Credit: Bela Szandelszky

The War on Earth

By Vandana Shiva

WHEN WE THINK OF WARS in our time, our minds turn to Iraq and Afghanistan. But the bigger war is the war against the planet. This war has its roots in an economy that fails to respect ecological and ethical limits – limits to inequality, limits to injustice, limits to greed and economic concentration.

A handful of corporations and powerful countries control the earth's resources and transform the planet into a supermarket in which everything is for sale. They want to sell our water, genes, cells, organs, knowledge, cultures and future.

The continuing wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere are not only about "blood for oil". As they unfold, we shall see that they are about blood for food, blood for genes and biodiversity and blood for water.

The war mentality underlying military-industrial agriculture is evident from the names of Monsanto's herbicides – "Round-Up", "Machete", "Lasso". American Home Products, which has merged with Monsanto, gives its herbicides similarly aggressive names, including "Pentagon" and "Squadron". This is the language of war. Sustainability is based on peace with the earth.

The war against the earth begins in the mind. Violent thoughts shape violent actions. Violent categories construct violent tools. And nowhere is this more vivid than in the metaphors and methods used for industrial, agricultural and food production. Factories that produced poisons and explosives to kill people during wars were transformed into factories producing agri-chemicals after the wars.

The year 1984 woke me up to the fact that something was terribly wrong with the way food was produced. With the violence in Punjab and the disaster in Bhopal, agriculture looked like war. That is when I wrote *The Violence of the Green Revolution* and why I started Navdanya as a movement for an agriculture free of poisons and toxics.

A handful of corporations and powerful countries control the earth's resources and transform the planet into a supermarket in which everything is for sale.

Pesticides, which started as war chemicals, have failed to control pests. Genetic engineering was supposed to provide an alternative to toxic chemicals. Instead, it has led to increased use of pesticides and herbicides and unleashed a war against farmers.

High-cost feeds and high-cost chemicals are trapping farmers in debt – and the debt trap is pushing farmers to suicide. According to official data, more than 200,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide in India since 1997.

Making peace with the earth was always an ethical and ecological imperative. It has now become a survival imperative for our species.

Violence to the soil, to biodiversity, to water, to atmosphere, to farms and farmers produces a warlike food system that is unable to feed people. One billion people are hungry. Two billion suffer food-related diseases – obesity, diabetes hypertension and cancers.

There are three levels of violence involved in non-sustainable development. The first is the violence against the earth, which is expressed as the ecological crisis. The second is the violence against people, which is expressed as poverty, destitution and displacement. The third is the violence of war and conflict, as the powerful reach for the resources that lie in other communities and countries for their limitless appetites.

When every aspect of life is commercialised, living becomes more costly and people are poor, even if they earn more than a dollar a day. On the other hand, people can be affluent in material terms, even without the money economy, if they have access to land, their soils are fertile, their rivers flow clean, their cultures are rich and carry traditions of producing beautiful homes and clothing and delicious food, and if there is social cohesion, solidarity and spirit of community.

The elevation of the domain of the market, and money as man-made capital, to the position of the highest organising principle for societies and the only measure of our well-being has led to the undermining of the processes that maintain and sustain life in nature and society.

The richer we get, the poorer we become ecologically and culturally. The growth of affluence, measured in money, is leading to a growth in poverty at the material, cultural, ecological and spiritual levels.

The real currency of life is life itself and this view raises questions: how do we look at ourselves in this world? What are humans for? And are we merely a money-making and resource-guzzling machine? Or do we have a higher purpose, a higher end?

I believe that "earth democracy" enables us to envision and create living democracies based on the intrinsic

worth of all species, all peoples, all cultures – a just and equal sharing of this earth’s vital resources, and sharing the decisions about the use of these.

Earth democracy protects the ecological processes that maintain life and the fundamental human rights that are the basis of the right to life, including the right to water, food, health, education, jobs and livelihoods.

We have to make a choice.

Will we obey the market laws of corporate greed or Gaia’s laws for maintenance of the earth’s ecosystems and the diversity of its beings?

People’s need for food and water can be met only if nature’s capacity to provide food and water is protected. Dead soils and dead rivers cannot give food and water.

Defending the rights of Mother Earth is therefore the most important human rights and social justice struggle. It is the broadest peace.

Vandana Shiva is a philosopher, environmental activist, and eco feminist. Shiva participated in the nonviolent Chipko movement during the 1970s. The movement, some of whose main participants were women, adopted the approach of forming human circles around trees to prevent their felling. She is one of the leaders and board members of the International Forum on Globalization



“urbanity is collapsed to the simple construction of housing, not neighbourhoods”

The Mega-City Squeeze

By Lorena Zárte

African cities are growing at a pace never experienced in world history.

By **Caroline Kihato** and **Mark Napier**

IN JUST TWO DECADES MORE THAN 50% of Africans will live in cities on the continent. In 2015, while London’s population will increase by six people an hour and Berlin’s not at all, Lagos will grow by 58 people every hour, Kinshasa by 39 and Nairobi by 15.

Though the rate of urbanisation in South African cities is less dramatic than in cities north of the Limpopo (Johannesburg is estimated to grow by four people every hour), a significant eight out of every 10 South Africans will live in cities by 2050.

It is clear that the epicentre of what has been called the “century of the city” is shifting from the global north to the global south.

Yet Africa’s growth is unlike urbanisation in other parts of the world. The history of urbanisation in developed countries shows that there is a strong correlation between urbanisation, economic development and improved quality of life.

But for contemporary South African cities, this correlation does not seem to hold – at least not in the short to

medium term. This “over-urbanisation”, as some urbanists have called it, is characterised, not by improved lifestyles but by the reproduction of poverty.

The most visible evidence of this is that as our cities grow, so too do slums. Here, the daily struggle to feed, clothe and educate families is compounded by the lack of basic services. In many ways the “apartheid city” remains with us as income and spatial inequality persist in our cities.

Research conducted by land activist group Urban LandMark in the past four years suggests that despite laudable government efforts to create more equitable cities access to land and housing remains deeply unequal.

Caroline Kihato is the regional theme coordinator and **Mark Napier** the programme director of Urban LandMark.

This is an extract of an article published in the Mail and Guardian on Oct 29 2010



Visit www.urbanlandmark.org for more information.

WHEN THEY WERE YOUNG, my grandparents lived in the countryside, three hours north west of Buenos Aires in Argentina. My parents were born in a peripheral town, but they still knew how to produce some basic food.

I was born and raised in another city, and I would die if I have to survive from a piece of land.

During the last two or three years, documents on housing and urbanisation have been repeating the same ground breaking facts. For the first time in human history, half of the global population of 6.7 billion people lives in cities and by 2050 it is expected that 70% of us will live in cities. Of course, there will be many differences between and within regions and countries.

In Latin America, the high tide of urbanisation took place during the 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s. It was strongly linked industrialisation that produced mass internal migration. Today, the movement from the countryside and small villages continues, not only to the districts of capitals (many of them in fact losing population) but to mid-size and big cities across the national borders. In Africa and Asia that process continues, but faster than elsewhere and under more difficult economic, social and institutional conditions. Over the last 60 years, many mega-cities from the Global South have multiplied

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Principles of Right to the City from the Mexico City Charter

The contents of the Right to the City Charter are structured around six strategic principles:

- 1) Full exercise of human rights in the city;
- 2) Social function of the city, of land, and of property;
- 3) Democratic management of the city;
- 4) Democratic production of the city and in the city;
- 5) Sustainable and responsible management of natural, heritage, and energy resources of the city and its surroundings;
- 6) Democratic and equitable enjoyment of the city.

there population ten times or even more. By 2030, the urban population of Africa will exceed that of Europe.

Condemned to poverty

THE CONCENTRATION OF ECONOMIC and political power is a phenomenon of exploitation, dispossession, exclusion and discrimination whose spatial dimensions are clearly visible: dual cities of luxury and misery; empty buildings and people without a decent place to live; land without *campesinos* [peasants], agro-business and private appropriation and accumulation of commons goods as opposed to resources and wealth collectively created.

The conditions and rules – explicit or not – that our societies have created are condemning around one third of the world population to live in poverty. The inequalities are increasing both in the so-called *developed* and *developing* countries. Slums are home to at least one third of the population in the Global South (in some Latin American and African countries that could reach 60% or more).

What real opportunities are we giving to young people, who constitute the vast majority of the population in many of our countries, if 85% of the new jobs are created in the “informal” economy? Not having a place to live, or an address, also amounts to a denial of other economic, social, cultural and political rights (education, health, a job, the right to vote and participate, among many others).

Over the last 60 years, many mega-cities from the Global South have multiplied their population ten times or even more.



What kind of citizens and democracy are we producing in these apartheid cities?

Abandoned responsibility

OBSERVANT PEOPLE WILL KNOW that, especially in the last 25 years, governments have abandoned their responsibility for any urban-territorial planning, letting “the market” to freely operate the private appropriation of urban spaces almost without any restriction to real estate speculation and exponential revenues. On the contrary, states have played a prominent role in causing the last financial crisis that started in the North and then – and still – urgently rescuing the big institutions’ private debts, operating a massive transfer of public resources (much of that, as we know, money from people’s savings and retirement plans). Thousands of families have been put under the unbearable threat of evictions without any alternative – with particularly devastating effects for women and children.

At the same time, governments ignore, and even criminalise people’s individual and collective efforts to obtain a decent place to live. In the South, between 50 and 75% of the available living space – not only houses but also entire neighborhoods – are the result of people’s initiatives and efforts, without any or with very little support from governments and other actors. In many cases these initiatives go against many “official” barriers – not only a bureaucracy.

Houses without neighborhoods

INSTEAD OF SUPPORTING THESE popular processes, our states have created conditions to guarantee that a few private housing developers make

profits. Housing policy in Mexico has been greatly influenced by the Chilean housing programmes, and now Mexico itself is influencing other countries in that regard, and not only in Latin America. Thus we see the beginning of a series of changes (including Article 27 of 1992 in the Mexican Constitution) to allow increased expropriation of sites that were once communal (*ejidales*).

After almost 10 years of what is presented as a “successful” housing policy, José Castillo writes in a study that “the result in some of these planned neighbourhoods is the emergence of large amounts of units overnight, with developments of up to 13,000 units”. They are “usually built by a single developer and in many cases designed by a single architect, with very little state intervention”. In these new gated communities, usually located at the urban periphery with a four-hour daily



governments ignore, and even criminalise people's individual and collective efforts to obtain a decent place to live.

commute to and from the city centre, "there is no zoning, no planning for educational, commercial or civic uses, a very limited approach to public space, no relation to metropolitan transport infrastructure, and, most importantly, no room for growth and transformation". In other words, "urbanity is collapsed to the simple construction of housing, not neighbourhoods".

Right to the City

WHAT WE SEE IN THE URBAN landscapes of the world is a consequence of the actions and omissions of many different actors – government, real estate agencies, developers. At the same time, the main elements of a democratic, inclusive, sustainable, productive, educational and livable city have been part of the debates, proposals and concrete experiences of social movements, national and international civil society networks, trade unions, academic institutions and human rights activists in different Latin American countries for the last 50 years. Urban reform and the right to the city are now present – explicitly or implicitly – both in theoretical and legal frameworks and are also part of the platform for action and practical work in other regions. ■

Lorena Zárate is coordinator of the Habitat International Coalition Regional Office for Latin America (HIC-AL) based in Mexico City.



The Quest for Common Good

By Wim Dierckxsens



Cuba circa 2000... Cuba does not exhibit mainstream consumerist patterns of life.

Credit: Desmond Boylan

IN 2007, A REPORT FROM UNITED Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change established that the amount of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere already was above the potentially dangerous threshold. The only *real* alternative is to reduce energy consumption especially in the global North. We cannot continue to "consume and grow". We need another kind of civilization.

Latin American countries, like Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, recently halted its neoliberal economic model and are looking for endogen alternative development. This means to develop countries organically from the inside and not the outside. However, it is not easy to disconnect a single country from the global market economy. It is

even more difficult to imagine a single country planning a non-growth economic development path. A demand for endogen development easily leads to the promotion of the existing consumerist style of production and life. In the long run, nationalization and autonomous allocation of natural resources tend to be a real political option in the South, and an actuality in Latin America. Recuperation of natural resources is a necessary condition to reallocate them, but it does not guarantee a change in attitudes towards development. It is interesting in this context to mention that Cuba is an exception.

A Cuban life for all?

CUBA DOES NOT EXHIBIT MAINSTREAM consumerist patterns of life. A mixed economy with foreign direct investment in tourism in the last ten years has changed this in some way, but consumerism is not dominant. Despite being a poor country subjected to 45 years of US economic blockade, Cuba has made unparalleled environmental achievements. It has transformed its agricultural system from fossil-fuel intensive farming to organic agriculture, reforested significant sections of its land area, and implemented large-

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Despite being a poor country subjected to 45 years of US economic blockade, Cuba has made unparalleled environmental achievements.

scale energy-efficiency measures. According to the World Wildlife Fund, Cuba has become the only nation to achieve sustainable development. Periphery countries, however, have the right to aspire to a better life and not be the target of economic blockades, trade instruments meant to appropriate resources or multi-national corporations acting as imperial raiders. This implies a more just international allocation of natural resources.

Solidarity ethics

THE HUGE CONCENTRATION OF INCOME to an ever smaller part of the world population and a methodic exclusion of majorities in the South is leading to a global resistance. It is also the fertile ground for solidarity ethics.

Solidarity ethics emerges from the insight that there will be no life for "us" if the "others" cannot live, no salvation for "us" unless we try to save "others". Solidarity ethics leads us to the Common Good, which stands in growing conflict with the current system. For the ethics of solidarity, the quest for the Common Good is a basic principle of emancipation from exploitation and oppression, to struggle in the belief that another world is possible. Solidarity ethics allows for the creation of a world which makes space for many "other worlds", irrespective of nation, race, culture, gender or religion. It implies a place for Nature.

In the Bolivian experience in which natural resources are nationalized, indigenous majorities not only struggle against the irrational exploitation of natural resources by multinationals, they also struggle against the national exploitation of it. They not only demand less exploitation of nature, they demand a more respectful attitude towards it. Modernity reduces nature to an object to be exploited without any sense of solidarity. This is the anthropocentric attitude, but nature in the indigenous Cosmo vision cannot be reduced to an object of exploitation. In this different Cosmo vision, a more respectful attitude towards nature places the economy in *function* of life and not in *opposition* to life. In other words, this vision demands another civilization.

Economy in function of life

A SOLIDARITY-BASED SOCIETY PLACES the economy in function of life itself, and does not sacrifice life in function of the market economy. From the point of view of the market, the demands of human life are perceived as distortions. From the point of view of those affected, the totalisation of the market economy appears as a grave distortion of all human life. Faced with 20% of the world population included in the market economy and who consume 80% of the natural resources, the excluded 80% are seen as superfluous to the system. They

The Solidarity Economy stands for a society of equal and free human beings constructing their future.

claim an alternative economy where there is a right to live without exclusion. To give a concrete example: political leadership committed to making another world possible demand the implementation of a Basic Citizenship Income at a world level; an income that guarantees life as citizens without dependence on the market.

The Solidarity Economy stands for a society of equal and free human beings constructing their future. It is not about a mere illusion, but a mobilising project that starts out from the needs of life, such as the fact that consumption of natural renewable resources cannot be faster than the speed at which nature replaces them. For this mobilizing project to succeed, it presupposes an alternative to the capitalist rationale, which is now reaching its objective limit.

Shorter life span, bigger profits

FOR A TOTALISED MARKET ECONOMY, the sacrifice of resources constitutes the source of accumulation. The limit for the capitalist rationale is found in the fact that capitalism has shortened the average life span of even its own means of production. Since the World War 2, the average life span of the used technology in companies has been relentlessly shortened.

With this, the cost of technological innovation has risen at an astronomical rate.

The incorporation of new technologies allowed the reduction of labor costs, but at a slower rate. Since the 1970s, the cost of labor has fallen at a lesser rate than the cost of technological innovation. The result was a reduction in the rate of return. Due to this, capital had to seek cheaper labor costs

on the periphery, principally but not exclusively in China. Investment abandoned the productive sphere and centered more on the division of the world as a means of the accumulation of capital. As this tendency makes its way at the expense of productive investments, the rate of growth of the global economy as a whole has fallen.

Capital nowadays tries to save profits through intellectual property rights.

They constitute a source of income in the form of unproductive rent. An alternative economy will stand for a longer average lifespan of all products in the world. Faced with the global crisis, an alternative economy will inevitably have to intervene to lengthen the average life of a product as a function of its quality. If its lifespan doubles, the most consumptive quintile in the world will need half the resources and products that nowadays are generated to keep their genuine level of welfare. This minority could then keep on living without a loss in welfare, with half the work and half the money. On this basis, an alternative economy will stand for a global redistribution of income from today's centre to today's periphery to boost production, employment, and income.

Qualitative accountability

IN THE LONG RUN, RENEWABLE resources are substituted by nature itself through natural growth and regeneration. You can express the cost of using such resources in quantitative terms. Loss of non-renewable resources however cannot be expressed quantitatively. Biodiversity will not be substituted if a hectare of jungle is replanted by a hectare of new commercial and exploitable forest. You have to count as well the loss of flora and fauna in general which can only prosper in a primary forest. It means a loss for present and future generations that cannot be replaced. In the same way is it hard to count the costs of the consumption of non-renewable resources like oil and petrol. If one had to quantify



Cuba has transformed its agriculture from fossil fuel dependant to organic farming.

Credit: Jack Whithead

under capitalist production relations, sooner or later, development of the means of production will not be a vehicle of capital accumulation but a problem.

losses of such kinds of resources, they would tend to have infinite values.

This kind of accountability inevitably subordinates quantitative aspects to the qualitative ones. Alternative economics will not sacrifice life for quantitative prosperity or gain, but has to take decisions in function of the quality of life itself. Economic regulation that does not sustain diversity of natural life, cannot attend to wellbeing.

Alternative economic policy, in other words, has to substitute quantitative accountability for a qualitative one.

Alternative economic policy has to set bottom up and not top down consumption "benchmarks". Top down consumption priorities are defined today by transnational enterprises and leads to consumerism. Bottom up consumption "benchmarks" have to be set, which imply the formulation of consumption priorities in everyday life while being conscious of the environment and nature.

Well being and negative growth

WHEN MEANS OF PRODUCTION, OR capital goods, have an ever shorter life span, a capitalist firm may for a period of time innovate ever faster. But when average life span of capital goods comes close to zero, innovation costs come near to infinite values and so profit rates will fall. This means that under capitalist production relations, sooner or later, development of the means of production will not be a vehicle of capital accumulation but a problem.

As a consequence, intellectual property rights are nowadays used as a rent on monopolized knowledge by capitalists. This means capitalists nowadays tend to become unproductive renters, like the feudal lords in former times. There is no possibility to raise profit rate with ever shorter lifespan of capital goods. Profit rate will fall ever more and capitalism as such has no way out. Without profit, there is no possibility to pay rent on knowledge.

Alternative economics has to declare patents and intellectual property patrimony of humanity. Alternative economics as a policy will prolong the average life span of capital goods in favor of quality and durability. When average lifespan of all human products is prolonged, well conserved wealth will replace the yearly created wealth, which will be produced with less innovation and wear of capital goods.

Post-capitalist equilibrium

AND SO WE CAN SKETCH A POSSIBLE post-capitalist non-growth utopia of global equality. The annually produced output may fall because total conserved output from previous periods is rising. As production cycles are repeated less and less frequently, leisure time is



Calgary (top) 2010 and Shanghai (bottom) 2010: a more respectful attitude towards nature places the economy in function of life and not in opposition to life.

growing at the expense of labor time. More leisure time means more wellbeing. Investments are made to obtain more leisure and not more monetary wealth. Investment will mean liberation. If annual production diminishes in terms of money, so do wealth in terms of money, but not wellbeing, if the average lifespan of the national product rises. If the rhythm of growth of national product in the South guards its relation to the slowdown of national product in the North, interest rates tend to zero internationally: in the North they will be negative and meanwhile in the South positive. This leads to a flow of money from North to South, also possible to organise through taxation, when the mass of money in circulation in the North loses its relation with falling annual national products.

In this way more equal income redistribution will be pushed by two tendencies: a slowdown of income without the loss of wellbeing in the North and a fast income growth in the South with a simultaneous gain of wellbeing. With a negative growth rate of national product in the North that is bigger than positive growth rate in the South, interest rates on the average will eventually become negative. Any kind of capital accumulation is then impossible. Nature will be the winner, as the rhythm of material reproduction comes closer to the rhythm of reproduction of nature. ■

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The Banknote Wars

By Benny Asman



IN SEPTEMBER this year, the Brazilian Finance Minister coined the phrase “currency war”, when commenting on the falling price of the dollar, saying that the US had started one. In November the US central bank, the Federal Reserve, decided to print an additional 600 billion dollars, which will of course eventually flood the international markets. The move is called “quantitative easing”. It intensified the tension between governments before the G20 meeting in Seoul.

The currency war is nothing else than an intensified battle for markets between different groups of capital. This war is now so vicious that it is apt to speak of a real economic war, making the phrase “globalisation of the world economy” obsolete. States are desperately scrambling for markets and influence. We are beyond “globalisation”.

Ran out of credit

AT THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM LIES the fact that the model for growth of the capitalist system that dominated the world since the middle of the 1990s has collapsed and cannot be kick-started.

For almost two decades China manufactured a greater part of the consumption goods bought at Wal-Mart stores in the US. The low price were made possible by the exploitation of the Chinese labour force. In this way, increases in US real wages could be kept to a minimum. In fact, the real wages of a large majority of US workers employed in retail and manufacturing decreased. This was compensated by consumption on credit. The role of China, besides being a producer of cheap goods, was to

make greater indebtedness of US consumers possible. China has used its huge incomes from its growing export to finance the American trade deficit by buying US state bonds.

This model grew the two parties together like Siamese twins. The arrangement worked perfectly for the capitalists of the two world powers, up until 2007 when the financial crisis started.

The financial crisis, and even more the following crisis for “the real economy” of goods and services, completely changed the conditions for the AmeriChina-model. In one stroke, it became impossible for US households to buy on credit. Scores of thousands of families lost their homes and many more their jobs. Consumption was replaced by debt rescheduling.

Already before this crisis, a serious crisis of overproduction had occurred in many important branches of industry, such as cars and electronics. That the American households now had a knife at their throats didn't make the situation better. Their consumption of everything, from houses to cars to cell phones decreased.

Now, in a capitalist world economy some people have to increase their consumption of goods and services if others are decreasing theirs. Otherwise

growth cannot be sustained and a crisis or recession follows. And this is where the heated debate about currencies starts. Who will bear the brunt of this crisis?

Cloak of “objectivity”

UNDER THE CLOAK OF “THEORETICAL” statements and observations which at first sight seem “objective”, a crude game of power between Europe, China and US is hidden. In a certain sense, we are back to the infected debate of the 1970s when Japan instead of China was the third corner of a similar triangle. In November, the Minister of Trade in the European Union (EU) Commission, Karel De Gucht, said that “countries which export more than they import create imbalances in the international payment system”, and made a reminder about EU being the largest economy in the world, thus hinting that USA and China should watch themselves and be careful.

Besides the EU not being one economy but many, De Gucht's statement at first looks correct and “neutral”. Then one realizes that the complete opposite statement is also correct. “Countries which import a lot more than they export create...” and so on, is also correct, which leads us back to the kernel of the present exchange rate crisis for the US dollar and the price of the Chinese yuan that is tied to the (now falling) dollar price. I am convinced that there was a silent agreement between the USA and China during the George W Bush presidential administration; that US accepted the “undervalued” Chinese currency in exchange for a

Quantitative Easing and Trade War

The US central bank buys treasury bonds from US banks with completely new money. The banks in turn lend out the new dollars to investors at the low interest rates prevailing in US. Financial assets are then bought with this money, after being exchanged to local currencies in countries where interest rates are higher. The massive sale of dollars influences exchange rates to the advantage of US exporters. Brazilian or South African products become relatively more expensive to foreigners when the Real or the Rand increase in value relative to the US dollar.

promise that China would continue to finance the American deficits by buying US treasury bonds for billions of dollars every month: "You sell us cheap consumption merchandise and invest your proceeds in our interest bearing debt certificates, the treasury bonds."

Before the G20 meeting in Seoul, Barack Obama sent a letter to the ministers who were about to gather. The letter is clear: "Going forward, no nation should assume that their path to prosperity is simply paved with exports to America". And neither were Obama's attacks on China's "overvalued currency" at the press conference unclear: "China spends enormous amounts of money intervening in the market to keep it undervalued. Chinese officials retaliated and accused the US of "uncontrolled money printing". In short: the strategic partnership between US and China is over and instead of tacit or silent agreements we are entering a period of harsh attacks between China and the US, with EU as a floundering partner at its (the US's) side.

EU is defunct

IN THIS CONTEXT, KAREL DE GUCHT's presentation of EU as an economic great power is nonsense. EU is not a functioning unified market. Ever since the outbreak of the financial crisis, each country is pulling in its own direction. The statements made by German Chancellor Angela Merkel before the G20 meeting also reveals how the capital of each country is closest to every government's heart. In almost anti-capitalist rhetoric – not used when Germany financed a bail-out of German

banks with a 80 billion euro austerity package – Merkel argued against supporting the indebted governments of Portugal and Ireland, pointing out how private finance capital profited from speculation in securities and real estate but left the tax payers to pay for the broken plates and glasses after the party.

Two weeks after that statement, the Irish bank crisis spilled all over the place. After the Irish' real estate bubble had burst, the equivalent of staggering R850bn of funds were missing, (i.e. close to the entire South African national budget!).

Again, the very existence of the euro is under threat. However, the underlying problem is the competition between different groups of national capitals. Each of them is asking its working population to tighten their belts and each of them is simultaneously wishing for big time consumption in the surrounding EU countries. The huge export surplus of Germany is based completely on this expectation. Without comparison, the rest of EU is the biggest export market for Germany. To be sure, the export to China grows faster than the growth of the export to other EU countries, but China still only stands for 10 per cent of German exports.

In fact, the growing export markets of the "developing countries" – like China or Brazil – only increase the tensions between the EU countries. Few EU countries have enough competitive industrial production able to profit from the dynamism of these markets. The pull from these markets can become another nail in the coffin of the European Union project.



Fake smiles

US CAPITALISM HAS FOR ITS PART decided to take strong measures to preserve and increase the world market share of its industry. As a result of the worst crisis in 80 years, we are heading towards more harsh warfare over markets and profits. In this war it is the workers who will be the victims. The political artillery has already opened fire

in the North against everything that has to do with social welfare. Britain's new Prime Minister, David Cameron, is laying the ground for a republishing of the Charles Dickens novels depicting British social misery. The mid-term election victory of the Republicans in USA forebodes attacks on what remains of US social welfare for workers and middle class. French president Nicholas Sarkozy is also embarking on a policy of economic belt-tightening

Those who think that the smiles on the family photo from Seoul promise well-mannered relations between "our" leaders in the future will be disappointed. But the "currency wars" between countries is also flanked by economic and social civil wars. In the battle for markets and profits there are really no longer any place for concessions to unions, protective labour laws or historically established social rights. ■

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Right turning US

By Lee Sustar



Credit: M. Shakeria

showed up at the polls. Those who did were disproportionately white, middle class, conservative and middle aged. The youth who helped propel Obama to his victory in the Democrats' primary election and the general election two years ago were missing in action. In 2008, they accounted for 18 percent of voters; in 2010, just 9 percent. The number of African American voters dropped from 13 percent of the total in 2008 to 10 percent this year.

The disaffection with Obama stems from both his policies and the economy. The jobless rate for October 2010 was 9.6. The jobless rate has been above 9 percent for nearly a year and a half, making this the longest period of mass unemployment in the U.S. since the Great Depression of the 1930s. But even those grim numbers greatly understate the problem. For African Americans, the jobless rate is 15.7 percent; for Latinos, 12.6 percent. And when the unemployment figures are broadened to include all those who have been forced to accept part-time work for lack of full time jobs, or who have ceased looking for employment altogether, the number rises to 17 percent.

Given the weak U.S. economic recovery, those numbers aren't expected to get much better for several years. Even if the U.S. economy heats up enough to create jobs at the pace of the best years of the 2002-2007 expansion, it would take 11 ½ years to reach pre-recession employment levels. The Great Recession may be behind us, but the economy will remain depressed for the foreseeable future.

With the joblessness has come the biggest spike in poverty in 15 years in 2009, when some 4 million fell under the government's poverty line. Some 43.6 million U.S. residents – about one in seven people – are officially poor. One in five children lives in poverty, and one in four African Americans and Hispanics are also under the poverty line.

Many of these new poor are those who lost their homes in the mortgage foreclosure crisis. Having invested their life savings in an asset that, they were told, was bound to increase in value, millions people found themselves unable to pay the so-called "sub-prime" mortgages that included interest rates that rose sharply after a few years. Millions more could no longer pay because they lost their jobs. And many of those who can pay are wondering if they should keep doing so, since nearly one in four homeowners now

It is the Republicans who are claiming to ride on a populist wave initiated by the Tea Party, a loose collection of right-wing activists and Republican insiders.

Has US president Barack Obama's call for hope and change given way to fear and reaction? Or has Obama's failure to deliver demobilized his base and allowed the right to fill the vacuum?

JUST TWO YEARS AGO, SOME TWO MILLION people took to the streets of Washington, D.C., to view the inauguration of Democratic President Obama, the first African American president of a country built on slavery. Now, however, it is the Republicans who are claiming to ride on a populist wave initiated by the Tea Party, a loose collection of right-wing activists and Republican insiders who have pushed aside a number of establishment Republican figures to put forward far more conservative figures as candidates, several of whom won.

The Republican Party has made a powerful comeback in midterm elections. The conservative party captured at least 61 seats in House of Representatives (some recounts were still underway at the time of writing), marking the biggest shift between parties since 1948. The Republicans also made

gains in the Senate, thereby narrowing the Democrats' majority in the upper house, and captured 18 state legislatures and nearly a dozen governor's races.

For mainstream political commentators, all this was evidence that the U.S. was reverting to its "natural" course as a center-right nation as voters rejected a Obama's policies as being too left wing, even "socialist." Even Obama himself appeared to accept this analysis in his post-election press conference. "I think people started looking at all this and it felt as if government was getting much more intrusive into people's lives than they were accustomed to. We thought it was necessary, but I'm sympathetic to folks who looked at it and said this is looking like potential overreach."

But a closer look at the exit polls shows that the Democrats were defeated not because of a groundswell of the right, but because much of Obama's base from the 2008 election simply stayed home. Turnout in midterm elections is always low in the U.S. – and this year, only about 42 percent of eligible voters

owe more money on their mortgages than their homes are worth.

At the other end of the U.S. social spectrum, however, life remains sweet. Even *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof – who usually advocates for a supposedly reasonable center in U.S. politics – was recently driven to register his disgust at the fact that between 1980 to 2005, more than four-fifths of the total increase in American incomes went to the richest 1 percent of the population. “To me, we’ve reached a banana republic point where our inequality has become both economically unhealthy and morally repugnant,” he wrote.

Barack Obama was, of course, elected on the promise, quite literally, to change all that. Instead, however, his big but underpowered \$787 billion stimulus program may have saved 3 million jobs or so but couldn’t stop the hemorrhaging in the employment market. But Obama spared no effort in protecting banks and the rest of big business from the fallout from the financial crash of October 2008. Obama continued George W. Bush’s \$700 bank bailout program, which was supplemented by literally trillions of dollars in backdoor aid from the U.S. Treasury and Federal Reserve Bank. Obama asked in return that the banks work with the government to modify mortgage payments of hard-pressed homeowners, but only a tiny minority of those in need have benefited. Instead, the bankers used the money from the government bailout to lobby – successfully – against the few tough measures contained in the financial reform bill passed Congress earlier this year.

In fact, the Obama administration was in position to create jobs directly, through the government takeover of bankrupt General Motors, it did the opposite. Government aid was tied to concessions from the United Auto Workers that eliminated tens of thousands of jobs and eliminated work rules built up over decades.

After bailing out the bankers, Obama quickly moved to appease the Pentagon. His much-touted “withdrawal” of U.S. troops from Iraq will still leave tens of thousands of troops occupying that country with aim of propping up a loyal client state. In Afghanistan, Obama dramatically escalated a losing war with an additional 20,000 troops and spreading the war across the border to Pakistan. And although the Obama administration dropped the Bush-era phrase of a “global war on terror,” Obama has maintained and expanded the Bush administrations routine violation of civil

liberties at home and abroad, including claiming the right to assassinate those designated as enemies of the U.S.

Even Obama’s big success – the passage of health care reform – turned into its opposite. Rather than expand Medicare, the government-run health care program for senior citizens, the Obama administration extended coverage to the uninsured by forcing them to purchase inadequate insurance or face a financial penalty. This provides a captive market to private health insurance companies’ central role in health care – but the measure won’t even take effect until 2014. In exchange, the insurance companies finally agreed to stop barring people with previously existing conditions from getting insurance – a welcome change but very far from what is needed.



Health care reform should have been an opportunity to marginalize the Republicans for a generation. Instead, it alienated the left and became the focus for their comeback after right-wingers disrupted the town hall meetings of held by members of Congress in August 2009. These protests became the basis of a self-proclaimed movement calling itself the Tea Party, named for the anti-tax protesters in the era of the American Revolution. But the Tea Party is anything but an autonomous, grass-roots movement. The Tea Party’s patron saint is Glenn Beck, a television host who works for Fox News, owned by billionaire media baron Rupert Murdoch. Other key sources of funding for the Tea Party are the billionaire brothers David and Charles Koch, who run the second-biggest private company in the U.S. The best-known figure in the Tea Party is former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, the Republican vice presidential candidate in 2008 known for her hard right views.

With this mix of big money and media coverage, the small but visible activism of the Tea Party allowed the Republicans to capture some of the popular anger over the terrible economy and declining living standards – and give it a reactionary direction. Bashing immigrants and Muslims were standard Republican fare as the midterm elections approached, and the Tea Party barely bothered to disguise its racism towards Obama.

All this intensified the usual election-year dilemma of the U.S. left. Social polarization in the U.S. has reached its greatest level in nearly a century, but politics remains dominated by and polarized between, two capitalist parties. The Democrats, having campaigned on hope and change in 2008, now ran for office simply on the basis that the Republicans would inflict more pain on working people. Obama himself personally ridiculed those on the left who criticized him. The message: get back in line.

Unfortunately, liberal organizations and organized labor did exactly that.

Having failed to mobilize to fight for jobs or to hold Obama to his promise to push for labor law reform, the unions finally called a national march in Washington, D.C., a month before the vote – and it was little more than an election rally. It’s been nearly three years since the beginning of the Great Recession, and still the unions haven’t taken the initiative to fight for jobs or take on the big banks.

Instead, labor has again poured money and personnel into electing Democrats. While this has never been an effective strategy – even in relatively good times, the Democrats fail to deliver to labor – the unions’ approach is positively self-destructive today. For example, Democratic candidates for governor in the big states of New York and California explicitly promised that if they were elected, they would *attack* public sector unions in order to help balance the government budget. Yet public sector unions poured big money into their campaigns anyway, in the desperate hope that those men would be better off than if a Republican took office. In fact, the unions would be far better served if they had put money into supporting the scattered local and state Green and Socialist electoral campaigns as a step toward the independent political formations that U.S. labor has historically lacked.

In any case, the Republicans and the Tea Party will find that the majority

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of people in the U.S. do not support their platform. "Despite 2010's political rhetoric, academic and media surveys from 2007 through today repeatedly find that most voters want government protection from economic hardship and continuity of core programs, such as Social Security [retirement benefits], Medicare, in education and infrastructure spending," reports the liberal advocacy group Project Vote. (Obama is out of step, here, too: the co-chairs of this commission to study how to reduce budget deficits wants to take the axe to what little remains of U.S. social benefits)

What's more, in the last 18 months, two national polls, including one by the conservative Rasmussen Reports, found that around one in three Americans had a positive view of "socialism." By contrast, just 18 percent of Americans identified themselves as Tea Party supporters in another poll. This is hardly a portrait of a country lurching to the right.

What's missing from the U.S. political scene, of course, is large-scale resistance to the right and the effects of the crisis. The working class is still reeling from the aftershock of the financial crash, and the cumulative effect of years of losses of well-paying manufacturing jobs, many of them unionized. Demographic change – driven by immigration and ageing – poses new challenges for working class organization as well.

There are sparks, however. Reformers have won office in some important public sector union locals (teachers in Chicago, transit workers in New York). While the number of strikes is at a historic low, a few long strikes by workers facing wage cuts imposed by profitable companies have highlighted the anger and bitterness building up among workers. Beyond the workplace, repeated statewide student protests against budget cuts in California point to the radicalization of large numbers of young people. The immigrant rights movement, which erupted in 2006 against proposed reactionary legislation, continues to mobilize against deportations of undocumented workers. LGBT activists and their supporters have created new organizations to fight for gay marriage and reverse the ban on gays in the U.S. military. In fact, LGBT activists organized a march of hundreds of thousands in Washington in 2009, dwarfing anything the Tea Party has assembled.

The challenge for the U.S. left is to build and broaden these fights, oppose the right wherever it rears its head, and link these battles to the pressing social and economic issues facing working people. ■

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The Conference that outraged the ANC

By Amandla! Editorial Team



Without Gwede Mantashe's paranoid response (see box) the COSATU/Civil Society conference may be relegated to the media wilderness.

WHILE NOISE HAS BEEN made regarding the ANC's reaction to COSATU holding a conference with civil society organisations to which it and other Alliance partners were not invited, not much information and analyses have been forthcoming on the conference itself. *Amandla!* was invited to the proceedings and offers an overview.

The organisers of the COSATU Civil Society Conference owe a debt of gratitude to ANC Secretary-General Gwede Mantashe and the ANC National Working Committee (NWC). Without their paranoid response the Conference would have been confined to media obscurity. There is considerable interest amongst various sectors of society on what COSATU and its partners' next move will be. Will the Conference be a one-off event or will it lead to popular mobilisation and a possible realignment of forces?

COSATU disillusionment

THE BACKGROUND TO THE CONFERENCE is COSATU's growing disillusionment with the ANC government. The failure of the Zuma administration to break with the class project of the Mbeki-era is at the nub of COSATU's growing

sense of betrayal. After all, COSATU played a significant role in removing Mbeki and getting Zuma elected President of the ANC. The hope was that this would not just put the Alliance at the centre of policy making but that COSATU, with the assistance of the SACP, could bring about substantial economic and other policy shifts.

With the nationalist forces in the ANC using the ANCYL as a battering ram, the influence of the Alliance left in the ANC has been blocked as Zuma plays one faction off against the other to consolidate his hold over the centre. In addition, the Treasury and the Reserve Bank remain in control of macro-economic policy buttressed by the power of international finance and Zuma's fear of *pissing-off* the markets. Crony capitalism and corruption linked to a predatory elite with increased influence in the leading structures of the ANC have become major concerns for COSATU. The struggle for the heart and soul of the ANC is being lost even though COSATU with others was successful in getting rid of Mbeki.

Of further concern to COSATU has been the neutralising of the SACP as a force for popular mobilisation. Having been given senior representation

in government, both nationally and provincially, the SACP would seem to be more concerned with the maintaining delicate balancing act of winning space in the cabinet and the ANC's executive committees than with the day-to-day class struggles fought at the workplace and in the community.

The breaking-up of the coalition that put Zuma in the Union buildings has pitted COSATU in a bitter battle against the ANC Youth League and other nationalist / populist forces in the ANC. This has particularly played itself out in the NWC of the ANC where the populists have the numbers. A key moment was when the NWC threatened to bring disciplinary action against COSATU's General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi for the union federation's attack on allegedly corrupt cabinet ministers.

And if corruption, cronyism and nepotism were features of the Mbeki era, the one and half years of Zuma's presidency has indicated just how far the flood gates can be opened. COSATU's fear is that if a major effort to expose and fight corruption is not undertaken – and for COSATU this must be a civil society effort – then the predatory elite will tighten its hold on the state, killing the possibility of a progressive, state-led development agenda.

Against this background it was not surprising that three issues dominated the agenda of the Conference, namely fighting corruption, addressing inequality especially in relation to education and health, and drafting a social justice charter that can give a new direction to civil society struggles and act as the glue of a labour-civil society coalition. COSATU's new growth plan document also featured as a major discussion item.

Participants

OVER 300 DELEGATES FROM A range of organisations attended the Conference. Firstly, COSATU was well represented. At least 40% of those that participated were from COSATU. If not every COSATU affiliate, then clearly most affiliates sent delegations with representation from different regions. Most of COSATU's provincial secretaries attended and its head office sent a strong delegation, including national office-bearers and heads of departments.

While the majority of civil society delegations were from Gauteng, because travel and accommodation costs were not subsidised, there was a diverse range of organisations present. Section 27 (formerly the AIDS Law Project) together with the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) were the co-convenors and were well represented. The Social Justice Coalition and Equal Education – closely aligned to TAC were also well represented and geared up for the Conference. The civil society organisations that

We were also equally perplexed that COSATU being part of the liberation movement and the Alliance, found it appropriate that it could lead attacks on the liberation movement – the ANC – and our government without affording those that it attacked, its allies, the ANC and the government, at least an opportunity to respond to the criticism so as to show objectivity and maturity...

[ANC Media Statement in response to COSATU/Civil Society Conference held in late October 2010]

attended included the Congress of Traditional Leaders (CONTRALES), South African Council of Churches, the Anti-Privatisation Forum, and the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee.

Under represented were organisations from the land and rural sector as well as many of the new social movements that have been at the forefront of service delivery protests. This may be because many of them, such as the Landless People's Movement and Jubilee SA, have weakened and fractured since the heady days of the big social movements' march during the Summit for Sustainable Development. Others may have stayed away because of their mistrust of COSATU and its alliance with the ANC.

Abahlali baseMjondolo did not attend because they have been recently attacked by COSATU and some civil society organisations in the Western Cape for their direct mass action campaign in Khayelitsha. What was illustrative of the openness and the constructive nature of the discussions was when Vavi was asked from the floor why it was that COSATU was criticising social movements like Abahlali. He refused to use the platform to defend COSATU but said that the planned meeting of Abahlali, COSATU and others should go ahead to sort out differences. This set an important tone for the meeting and signalled to participants the constructive atmosphere in which the conference was to be conducted.

Political Orientation

There was a refreshingly strong anti-neoliberalism and anti-capitalism in the plenary inputs and contributions from the floor. Conference also received a radical flavour from the opening addresses of COSATU's Zwelinzima Vavi and Section 27's Mark Heywood. While Vavi was at pains to dismiss ANC concerns that the Conference represented the first steps towards forming a new workers' party, he stated boldly that

We have only one enemy – neoliberalism, that has condemned our people to poverty and unemployment. We want to roll back neoliberal advances and struggle for the adoption and implementation of

alternatives. Our struggles have to be both defensive and offensive.

The purpose of the Conference was captured by Vavi when he said:

The high levels of poverty and inequality aggravate many other anti-social phenomena which we see increasingly – violent community protests, xenophobia, crime, corruption and the collapse of social and moral values. We face not just personal and family disasters but a national catastrophe, a ticking bomb, which has already begun to explode in our poorest communities.

This was our reasoning behind calling this summit. We can't stand there making speeches without developing a programme that will mobilise our society to stop this ticking bomb from exploding.

Heywood in his input highlighted inequality as the central issue that a movement must be built around. He emphasised that the Conference should not be a talk shop and that conferees must not replicate the Grand Old Duke of York syndrome where initiatives are started and not followed through. As for the left, they could take comfort from Heywood's strong emphasis on mobilisation and movement building and his critique of the market. Perhaps of concern was his emphasis on civil society using constitutional means and legal forms of struggle. His scepticism of nationalisation and socialism is somewhat more worrying. However, since socialism is not exactly on the agenda, given the current balance of forces both nationally and internationally, agreement on prioritising movement building and militant forms of struggle is much more important.

Conference broke up into three commissions focusing on developing a social justice charter, campaigning against inequality with specific references to health and education, and taking forward COSATU's economic policy document, A Growth Path Towards Full Employment (see Mazibuko Jara's article pg 19).

The commissions were also marked by constructive and open discussions with high levels of consensus being achieved and with strong participation of both the unionists and civil society participants. Some of the spirit of commission discussions is captured by an input of Sam Mashinini, COSATU Free State Provincial Secretary, when he asked in the Growth Path Commission "who are the civil society formations in the Free State, we need to replicate this discussion in the Free State."

The commission debating the development of a social justice charter agreed that such a document could be a powerful instrument, especially if it emerged out of struggle and popular consultation. It could serve as a powerful tool to unite civil society and overcome

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its current weakness and lack of purpose. Analogies were made with the Freedom Charter, both in terms of how it was produced through popular mobilisation and how at a particular moment in the struggle it became a powerful force in the struggle for national liberation.

While the COSATU Growth Path for Full Employment was endorsed, a number of points were made on how the document could be strengthened. Conference urged COSATU to advance a social solidarity economy, particularly in regard to workers in the informal economy. Decent work programmes should be formalised, with workers dictating the agenda. The “right to work” should be constitutionalised as part of the struggle to overcome unemployment.

Conference expressed concerns about the idea of a social pact. Workers should not be coerced into pacts with government or employers that could lead to lower wages or worse working conditions. It was also the view coming from this commission that the tax-GDP ratio in South Africa was far lower than in other comparable countries. There was space to increase tax which could furnish the government with billions of rands more to implement important programmes, such as National Health Insurance, and help to eliminate inequality.

An important weakness of the current document was that it needs to be clearer on the idea of the green economy and sustainable development. We need to move towards sustainable energy, to migrate the economy from one based on a coal to a low carbon or possibly carbon-free economy.

In terms of taking forward the ideas of the Growth Path, Conference resolved that 2011 should be declared a year of mass mobilisation on economic policy and against unemployment, poverty and inequality.

The need for mass mobilisation and joint campaigning was a strong theme of the commission that dealt with rights to health and education. This commission called for the establishment of a campaigns committee that will co-ordinate the campaign for a National Health Insurance (NHI) that would overcome current inequalities in the health system. The commission felt strongly that the model of the NHI must be one that strengthens the public healthcare system and not private health. Conference endorsed the view of the commission that community health workers must be formally brought into the health care system as employees of the Department of Health and unionised.

The Conference agreed to a national campaign on education to ensure the proper functioning and resourcing of schools. In addition, the Conference felt strongly that all public officials must enroll their children in public schools and use public health institutions. This would be the impetus to ensuring decent public schooling and healthcare.

It was agreed that civil society conferences like this should be held annually and replicated in all provinces and regions within three months, and that a consolidated directory of civil society organisations be drawn up.

Where to from here?

THE CONFERENCE HAS CREATED expectations that labour and progressive

civil society will collaborate in building campaigns against inequality and for social justice. The Conference strongly endorsed the idea of annual meetings and that the Conference is replicated at a provincial and regional level where campaigns and joint struggles can be implemented.

While COSATU was at pains to deflect potential concern from its Alliance partners that this initiative was not aimed at building an alternative political front, nevertheless this is the suspicion of the ANC and SACP leaderships. Their fear is that should COSATU proceed with building this process and develop real campaigns with progressive civil society organisations the dynamic that will be unleashed could displace the ANC and the SACP as COSATU's strategic partners. This is why the Conference was greeted with such hostility by the ANC and the SACP.

It remains to be seen how this will impact on COSATU's enthusiasm for the Conference and the potential alliance with progressive civil society organisations. However, what is clear is that the global crisis will narrow the space for the Zuma administration to implement radical reforms that address worsening inequality and unemployment. This, ultimately, will play a large role in determining how COSATU will go forward. Given the anger at the base of society, the real question is if COSATU can afford not to build a broader movement against neoliberalism and for social justice. Politics, it seems, is once again becoming interesting on the left side of the spectrum. ■

Jesus was a Palestinian Jew

By Rev Edwin Arrison

SINCE AT LEAST THE 1940S, many Christians have accepted the Israeli state narrative on socio-political and religious dynamics of Israel and Palestine.

The first reason for this was the matter of compassion for those, mainly Jews, who had suffered in the Holocaust, and the complicity of many Christians in that Nazi genocide and also the need not to make the same mistake again.

This position was solidified with the “Jesus was a Jew” narrative. The question is only now being asked about what kind of Jew he was and what kind of prophet. But linking Jesus and Judaism most probably cemented the above relationship.

The “Tours to Israel” movement – Christians going on “pilgrimages” (often

really just tours to heritage sites) – of course also helped with this. These tours were and often still are being conducted by Israeli guides and largely ignore(d) the existence of the Palestinian people, let alone the Palestinian Christians. It is ironic that many Christians who have gone to Israel never met or interacted with Christians there. Of course, they saw them (for example in the church in Bethlehem), but the level of real engagement has been minimal or non-existent. It could be considered shocking that Christians who adhere to a “we who are many are one body” theology “behave” in this manner.

But slowly Christians around the world are waking up to the fact that besides the dead stones in Israel, there are also living stones, people, and some

of these living stones are Palestinian Christians. The “Jesus was a Jew” story is slowly being replaced by “Jesus was a Palestinian Jew” narrative, which is historically more correct since Jesus was born and grew up in Palestine.

This awakening, strengthened by other awakenings, leads to a new understanding: that Jesus is on the side of the marginalized and those who suffer; in fact, not only on their side, but actually one with them. This means that the solidarity with Jewish people who suffered was correct during and after the Holocaust, but today the solidarity belongs, in my opinion, to another suffering people, the Palestinians.

This awakening also leads to other awakenings: Christians always thought that this was simply a fight between Jews and Muslims (and often we took the side of the Jews) but now we realise that there are also Christians involved – Palestinian Christians. But even if there was not one Christian in Palestine, we should still have asked: Whose side is God on? And inevitably we would come to the conclusion that God is on the side of

The broken dream of African unity

By Jean-Karim Fall



THE ORGANISATION OF African Unity (OAU), which became the African Union in 2002, was founded on the key principles of unity and solidarity. The organisation has had to weather many storms in the last 47 years of its existence. And the 53 member states are still struggling to reach agreement on many vital issues.

On 22 May 1963 young Ethiopian students, whom the imperial government had summoned to attend a welcoming ceremony, discovered with fascination the leaders of 27 freshly independent African states invited to Addis Ababa by Haile Selassie, King of kings and Emperor of Ethiopia.

The leaders were from both British and French former colonies. Many had been appointed just a day after independence.

In Addis they decided to play down their divisions and to present a united Africa to the world. But, even during its formation, the OAU was mired in disagreements over its future objectives and prerogatives.

Divisions, disagreements and conflicts

THE REVOLUTIONARIES – EGYPTIAN President Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Ghanaian N’Kwame Nkrumah and Guinea’s Sékou Touré – opposed moderates like Côte d’Ivoire’s Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Senegal’s Léopold Sédar Senghor, who advocated of a prudent approach to continental unity.

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those who suffer. Some might argue that the Israelis are the ones who are suffering, but that is the furthest from the truth.

Many Christians are beginning to question their own faith: what do we mean by the elect people of God? What do we mean by the covenant or covenants? How does the Jesus story intersect with what we call the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible? There are even deeper questions: Were the promises to Isaac the same as the promises to Hagar and Ishmael? And are we not really all part of one faith tradition that emphasizes truth, justice and love? And if we are, to what extent does the situation in Israel and Palestine conform to these values?

The Christians in Palestine have written what is called the Palestine Kairos document, drawing inspiration from the South African Kairos document of 1985. In it they raise many of the questions above; and calls for commitment to a theology that leads to life rather than one that leads to death. They also call for non-violent actions against the State of Israel by the international community. Emeritus

Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s call to the Cape Town Opera to not perform in Israel as a political statement against that country’s apartheid laws which oppress Palestinians, is in line with this “Kairos” wish. The fact is that if we do not want to see more violence in Israel and Palestine, we need to call for and support non-violent actions by both sides. Failing to do so, would only encourage those who are using the tools of violence.

What we also have realised is that some Christians (in fact many millions of them, based particularly in the United States of America) have a particular understanding of the Bible and of the future. In some of their most extreme views there MUST be a war in Israel in order to egg on the Armageddon. This is partly what is behind the call to invade Iran. One could even argue that this is also what is behind the “movement” to destroy the environment and consume as much as possible. The attitude is this: Why care for the environment if it is going to be destroyed in any case in the above scenario, and if this destruction is in any case part of “God’s plan for

the world”. The political leaders in Israel love this Christian movement because it allows Israel to continue its oppression of the Palestinians and it encourages a military-industrial complex to continue to grow. It also provides them with significant political support in the US. Money, indeed the worship of Mammon, is behind the thinking here.

Thank God for the Palestinian Christians who have begun to expose this worship of Mammon and have warned us about it, and who have indeed called us to a theology of life and of love. The question is: Will we listen to this prophetic voice, or will we continue to be influenced by the narrative of Mammon given by its many high-priests in the US and elsewhere? ■

Rev Edwin Arrison is an Anglican priest, and board member of the Centre for Christian Spirituality in Cape Town. He writes in his personal capacity.

Dates of Independence

26 July 1847: Liberia	1 July 1962: Rwanda
28 February 1922: Egypt	1 July 1962: Burundi
24 December 1951: Libya	3 July 1962: Algeria
1 January 1956: Sudan	9 October 1962: Uganda
2 March 1956: Morocco	12 December 1963: Kenya
20 March 1956: Tunisia	24 April 1964: Tanzania (Tanganyika 9 December 1961 – Zanzibar 10 December 1963)
6 March 1957: Ghana	6 July 1964: Malawi
2 October 1958: Guinea	24 October 1964: Zambia
1 January 1960: Cameroon	18 February 1965: Gambia
27 April 1960: Togo	30 September 1966: Botswana
26 June 1960: Madagascar	4 October 1966: Lesotho
30 June 1960: DR Congo	12 March 1968: Mauritius
1 July 1960: Somalia	6 September 1968: Swaziland
1 August 1960: Benin	12 October 1968: Equatorial Guinea
3 August 1960: Niger	20 September 1974: Guinea-Bissau
5 August 1960: Burkina Faso	25 June 1975: Mozambique
7 August 1960: Côte d'Ivoire	5 July 1975: Cape Verde
11 August 1960: Chad	6 July 1975: Comoros
13 August 1960: Central African Republic	12 July 1975: Sao Tome and Principe
15 August 1960: Congo	11 November 1975: Angola
17 August 1960: Gabon	29 June 1976: Seychelles
20 August 1960: Senegal	27 June 1977: Djibouti
22 September 1960: Mali	18 April 1980: Zimbabwe
1 October 1960: Nigeria	21 March 1990: Namibia
28 November 1960: Mauritania	24 May 1993: Eritrea
27 April 1961: Sierra Leone	
31 May 1961: South Africa	

[Source: <http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20100216-timeline-african-independence>]

In a speech to the conference, Haile Selassie warned his fellow leaders of the dangers of not reaching common ground and declared that it unthinkable that the conference should end without the adoption of an African charter.

After 48 hours' heated debate, a charter was signed.

There were some issues that the founders agreed on with ease – a complete emancipation of the continent by liberating Rhodesia and countries still under Portuguese colonial rule and an end to apartheid in South Africa, as well as the second article of the charter which committed members to eliminating all forms of colonialism in Africa.

But, as Boutros Boutros Ghali, an expert in African diplomacy who was to become the UN Secretary General, pointed out in 1968 the charter was “a compromise between two theses, but more favourable to the thesis of an Africa of nations than to Dr Nkrumah's federalist thesis”.

During a second summit in Cairo a year later, participants agreed not

to change the borders inherited from colonialism. Guided by this principle, the organisation tackled the first fratricidal war in one of its member states, the Biafra conflict in Nigeria. It supported the central government in Lagos but behind the scenes some states, including some big players like the Ivorian Félix Houphouët-Boigny, backed the Biafran separatists.

The dogma of unchangeable boundaries was then accompanied by an unwritten principle, non-interference in member states' internal affairs. These two principles rendered the debate on democratisation sterile. Democracy and human rights became taboo subjects and the OAU became a club of one-party states.

Effects of the Cold War

THE NEW ORGANISATION WAS ALSO influenced by the fallout from the Cold War, which opposed the US and the Soviet Union on the continent.

In Angola the two great powers flexed their muscles while their respective

African allies clashed on the diplomatic front in the OAU. Neither side pulled any punches. The organisation narrowly avoided falling apart in 1976 at the height of the Angolan civil war between Agostinho Neto's Marxist government and Jonas Savimbi's pro-Western rebels.

Memories still haunt older diplomats of long nights of violent debates leading to an unprecedented tie – 22 countries siding with the Luanda government and 22 in favour of the rebels. The organisation only just avoided a split.

Then yet another deeply divisive eruption. A case of colonisation stirred opened new divisions.

The independence of Western Sahara and the admission of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic as the 51st member of the OAU led to a severe crisis, with Morocco, which still claims the territory, deciding to pull out.

Economics has to wait

IT TOOK THE ORGANISATION 20 years to tackle the economic situation affecting its members.

At the start of the century, a majority of countries were saddled by debt, leaving the continent owing an estimated 200 billion dollars. This prompted Africa to call for a relaxation of repayment terms and a review of instalments.

The 1991 OAU summit in Nigeria adopted a treaty instituting the Economic Community of Africa. The timespan of the Abuja treaty was limited to 34 years, with the hope of reaching complete economic integration of the continent by then. The project was never brought up again.

Politics became the order of the day. The Berlin Wall came down, the bipolar world disappeared with it. But armed conflicts continued.

The new decade was marked by the emergence of democratic demands. Urban Africa woke up and started calling for an end to one-party systems. Certain countries hesitated to comply with this demand.

But in the name of the sacrosanct principle of non-interference, the OAU took no position on the question. And there was little echo of the movements towards democratisation in the organisation's meetings

Kadhafi pushes unity agenda

BY THE END OF THE 1990S REGIONAL powers, such as South Africa, Nigeria and Algeria, were showing little interest in the OAU. The fiery Libyan Colonel Moamer Kadhafi who was isolated on the international scene took advantage of the relative vacuum and proclaimed himself the new champion of pan-Africanism.

With the liberal use of dollars and grandiose gestures, Kadhafi made the most of the 2000 Lomé summit, making fundamental changes

to an organisation he described as ineffective and timid. The birth of the African Union was celebrated in pomp in Lusaka, Zambia in 2001.

Its objectives were ambitious and inspired by the process that led to the creation of the European Union. The new African Union is made up of several institutions: a commission, a parliament, a court of justice, a central bank, a peace and security council for handling conflicts, a security council made in the image of the United Nations' but without a right of veto.

The principle of non-interference was even re-examined, with the establishment of a mechanism for mutual surveillance.

With a volley of portentous declarations, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) was formed. It aimed to attract investment in Africa's infrastructure in Africa – roads, railways and electricity grids. There was much talk of billions of available dollars. But Nepad turned out to be an empty shell.

The new African Union and its array of institutions were built on shaky ground. As early as 1968 Boutros Boutros Ghali pointed out its weaknesses.

"Whatever may be the course of future evolution for the organisation," he wrote, "it has to be recognised that its fundamental weakness is a result of the weakness of the member states themselves due to the partitioning of Africa."

New versus old

FROM SUMMIT TO SUMMIT THE original split resurfaced. Supporters of the United Nations of Africa clashed with those taking a more cautious view that it should first of all reinforce major regional bodies.

The southern countries led by South Africa oppose Kadhafi's old-fashioned, unionist ambitions. Former South African President Thabo Mbeki blocked several of Libya's proposals. But the colonel received support from Uganda's Yoweri Museveni and, to a lesser extent, from Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

The new African Union is treading water. Mali's Alpha Oumar Konaré, former president of the African Union Commission and a strong believer in the United States of Africa, on several occasions had to do a balancing act between the rival camps to avoid an overt crisis.

The virus of division still infects the Organisation of African Unity, 47 years after its formation. The participants may have changed, as well as the initials, but long-standing differences linger on. ■

[Source: <http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20100212-africa-50-years-independence>]

Soaring Food Prices Squeeze Poor

By Adam Morrow and Khaled Moussa Al-Omrani



Source: www.lianasarabianbites.blogspot.com/

PRICES FOR MOST BASIC food commodities in Egypt have finally returned to earth – more or less – after soaring to unprecedented levels over the summer. But steadily rising food costs in recent years, along with the government's seeming disinclination to take effective steps to regulate the market, continue to be the source of mounting public anger.

"Even though the summer price hikes have eased for the time being, the situation is still desperate," Hamdi Abdelazim, economist and former president of the Cairo-based Sadat Academy for Administrative Sciences told IPS. "If the rise in food costs persists, there will be an explosion of popular anger against the government."

In late summer, consumer prices for several basic food staples – including sugar, rice, cooking oil and wheat – skyrocketed suddenly. The hikes came on the back of already soaring beef and poultry prices, which, according to official figures, had risen by 40 and 25 percent respectively since the beginning of the year.

Fruit and vegetables saw the most radical price jumps. Prices for cucumbers, potatoes and beans doubled overnight, while those for green beans and apples tripled in some areas.

Tomatoes, an irreplaceable staple of Egyptian cuisine, surged by more

than 600 percent in some provinces, with prices rising from 1.50 Egyptian pounds (26 cents) per kilo to a whopping 13 pounds (2.2 dollars).

"At these prices, my monthly salary only covers food enough for ten days," complained Mohamed Moustafa, a 40-year-old government engineer from Cairo and father of three.

September and October saw increasingly frequent public demonstrations in protest against soaring prices. In several cases, angry demonstrators called on President Hosni Mubarak to intervene.

"Public demonstrations in every province have drawn increasing numbers of protesters – even though security forces aren't afraid to put down such demonstrations with violence," said Abdelazim. "This is the first time that Egypt has seen so many major protests against rising food prices since 1977."

In that year, late Egyptian president Anwar Sadat issued a decree raising the price of several subsidised food commodities. The move prompted a wave of public protests countrywide until Sadat moved to reverse the decision.

In early October, Mubarak called a meeting with provincial governors where he ordered the latter to take steps aimed at bringing local markets "under control." Ten days later, Egypt's Council of Ministers announced a decision to eliminate customs duties on certain

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Countries That Will Be Screwed By A World Food Crisis

KENYA

GDP per capita in USD: **\$783**

Food as a percentage of total household consumption: **45.8%**

Net food exports (as percentage of GDP): **-0.8%**

ANGOLA

GDP per capita in USD: **\$4,714**

Food as a percentage of total household consumption: **46.1%**

Net food exports (as percentage of GDP): **-1.4%**

AZERBAIJAN

GDP per capita in USD: **\$5,315**

Food as a percentage of total household consumption: **60.2%**

Net food exports (as percentage of GDP): **-0.6%**

SUDAN

GDP per capita in USD: **\$1,353**

Food as a percentage of total household consumption: **52.9%**

Net food exports (as percentage of GDP): **-1.3%**

EGYPT

GDP per capita in USD: **\$1,991**

Food as a percentage of total household consumption: **48.1%**

Net food exports (as percentage of GDP): **-2.1%**

CHINA

GDP per capita in USD: **\$3,267**

Food as a percentage of total household consumption: **39.8%**

Net food exports (as percentage of GDP): **-0.3%**

INDIA

GDP per capita in USD: **\$1,017**

Food as a percentage of total household consumption: **49.5%**

Net food exports (as percentage of GDP): **0.3%**

UKRAINE

GDP per capita in USD: **\$3,899**

Food as a percentage of total household consumption: **61.0%**

Net food exports (as percentage of GDP): **0.9%**

[Source: <http://www.businessinsider.com/nomura-food-crisis-2010-9>]

imported foodstuffs and to establish new mechanisms to “monitor” the market.

Critics say these moves did little to ameliorate the situation.

“These measures were aimed merely at pacifying public anger,” said Abdelazim. “But in terms of tangible results, they proved negligible; prices remained as high as ever.”

Mohammed Sami, assistant professor at the Cairo-based Al-Sahara Research Centre, which is affiliated with the agriculture ministry, agreed.

“The Mubarak regime has done little more than play the role of spectator,” he told IPS. “There’s no other country in the world in which the public must call on its head of state to personally intervene to solve food shortages.”

The government attempted to absolve itself of responsibility for the crisis by blaming runaway prices – especially those of fruit, vegetables and meat – on unusually high summer temperatures. Atypically hot weather this year, officials claimed, had decimated harvests and caused abrupt shortages.

“The jump in the price of vegetables and meat are a result of low annual yields due to poor climatic conditions,” Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif declared in mid-October. “And this is out of the government’s hands.”

According to Sami, however, there was more to the shortage than simple hot weather.

“The heat wave this summer was only partly to blame for fruit and vegetable shortages,” he said. “In addition to hot weather, there was also a virus that afflicted this year’s tomato crop, which ended up killing some 80 percent of the summer harvest.”

Sami’s assertions appear to be borne out by accounts from tomato farmers.

“A virus destroyed most of my summer harvest, which fell this year from the usual 50 tons per acre to only 10 tons,” Mohamed Khairy, a tomato farmer in the Nile Delta province of Beheira, some 200 km north of Cairo, told IPS. “I tried to get assistance from the agriculture ministry, but my pleas fell on deaf ears.”

Critics further point out that shortages were exacerbated by exploitive merchants – and the government’s seeming reluctance to regulate their activities.

“Unscrupulous traders took advantage of the shortage to raise retail prices through the roof, allowing them to realise enormous profits,” said Sami. “And the government has continued to allow them to get away with it.”

Abdelazim concurred, noting that Egypt’s ruling regime was largely composed of businessmen and “monopolistic traders.”

“The regime, which is characterised by economic corruption and chaos, doesn’t regulate the local market or move to break up monopolies – it merely looks on as consumers are

exploited,” he said. “Meanwhile, Egypt’s limited civil society plays a negligible role in protecting the consumer.”

Abdelazim went on to dismiss the notion that runaway food prices could be attributed solely to the “global financial crisis,” as has often been claimed by Egyptian officialdom.

“The global crisis has led to rising food costs all over the world, but the price hikes in Egypt have little if any connection with the global recession. When the price of certain products falls internationally, they nevertheless continue to rise in Egypt.”

With the arrival of autumn harvests in late October and early November, fruit and vegetable prices have gradually stabilised – although they still remain about 20 percent higher than usual. Tomato prices, too, have returned to earth, to alight at about 2 Egyptian pounds per kilo.

“But now that tomato prices have come back down, sugar prices have abruptly surged,” said Abdelazim. “It seems that whenever prices for one product stabilise, the cost of some other vital food commodity begins to soar.”

Protests, meanwhile, have subsided this month, “because the public’s attention is currently focused on the Nov. 28 parliamentary elections,” added Abdelazim. “But this doesn’t mean public anger isn’t still boiling over steadily rising food costs.” ■



The same kind of worldwide solidarity that helped bring down apartheid is necessary to free the global South from economic domination.

World social forum – Africa continues to draw inspiration

Stanley Kwenda interviews Dakarayi Matanga, Executive Director of ZIMCODD, Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development

THE SAME KIND OF WORLDWIDE solidarity that helped bring down apartheid is necessary to free the global South from economic domination. “Global solidarity has proved to be the only sustainable mode of confronting global apartheid, as exemplified by the liberation struggles that were fought in the 20th century,” says Dakarayi Matanga, whose organization, ZIMCODD, is a member of the Southern African Social Forum. Global apartheid refers to the divergence in the economic and social development of a white North in the industrialised world and a brown

South in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Compared to Latin America, Africa has not seen large-scale mobilisation against neoliberal policy. These are policies that stress the private over the public sector, for example reducing trade barriers, minimising regulation and cutting social services by the state; the idea being that this will create economic growth and more efficient government. A series of World Social Forum activities throughout 2010 and the global meeting taking place in Dakar, Senegal in 2011 will help Africa’s social movements to better connect to the global demand for alternatives.

Stanley Kwenda (SK): Leaders from the South – from trade unions, social movement and other civil society – are meeting in Brazil this week to reflect on

ten years of the World Social Forum. Several prominent Latin American heads of state will be present, but not a single leader from Africa is attending.

Dakarayi Matanga(DM):

Apart from political posturing, the African government leaders are more neo-liberal than their Latin American counterparts. The forum is therefore “none of their business”.

SK: What opportunity is presented by the return of the World Social Forum to Africa, in the form of a series of thematic meetings in 2010 and culminating in a global forum to be held in Dakar in January 2011?

DM: The World Social Forum has developed into arguably the major trans-

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movement world gathering. It brings together thousands of social movements, NGOs, trade unions, self-help and advocacy groups from a majority of the world's countries. The WSF in Dakar will be the second major one in Africa, and thus an important step towards integrating African movements and NGOs into the transnational network against neo-liberalism, imperialism, fundamentalism, war and other anti-human elements of the present global financial crisis. It will be of importance in Africa since the population of this continent suffers intensely the impacts of the crisis. The WSF will present opportunity for Africa to reflect and rededicate time to fighting the immense poverty that's gripping the continent.

SK: What needs to be done to prepare the ground and take full advantage between now and then?

DM: The Forum has been seen by a lot of people as an annual reunion, a time to swap stories and reconnect with old friends. There are five widely-held critiques of the WSF and the forum process. First, that it is too large, incoherent, and more of a carnival, than a space for serious engagement in ideas, strategizing and mobilising; there are too many fora, and too little time in between for action. The forum's governance and accountability structures are weak and largely undemocratic, and the emergence of local fora is undervalued by the leaders of these structures. The forum is too inclusive of forces that themselves are products of the neo-liberal project – for example, large establishment-oriented NGOs, big foundations, and inter-governmental bodies. Finally, little is done to include dynamic social movement actors that do not yet have traditional organisation. These issues need to be addressed in preparation for Dakar 2011. Publicity work in Africa needs to be stepped up through local actions and community mobilisation. National and Regional coordination needs to be galvanised as well.

SK: How do these meetings concretely help grassroots social movements, for example the Zimbabwe Social Forum?

DM: I have been involved in the WSF process for six years now. I have been in most of the world forums. With this accumulated experience, I can testify about the importance of the Social Forums process to the social movements and the grassroots in Zimbabwe. The main achievement of the process was to build a very large and open space for political exchange between social movements and NGOs. Many social movements have drawn inspiration from the "spiritual" mood characteristic of the WSF events. Arguably, the presence of

the forum in Dakar will afford a better opportunity for Africans to attend, as opposed to one located in Latin America.

SK: What are the most important questions facing social movements in Southern Africa at the moment?

DM: Entrenched neo-liberalism, dictatorship, undercover imperial interests, conflict (ethnic, but foreign motivated) and the hegemony of right wing resurgence.

SK: Most Southern African countries are faced by a huge foreign debt burden which retards development. What alternative has the Southern African Social Forum been proposing/exploring? Is there a way out of this social catastrophe?

DM: Cancel the debt. Audit the debt to isolate the odious (odious debt is where loans have been diverted by corrupt leadership, leaving the population to repay money from which they have seen no benefit), intensify the fight against local dictatorships, broaden the anti-neoliberal movement and develop lending and development systems that belong to the South (the Bank of the South proposed by Venezuela's Hugo Chavez as an alternative to the International Monetary Fund is an example).

SK: Where are ordinary people located in this whole framework?

DM: The participation in the Dakar WSF by local populations and African people in general will be impacted in 2011 mainly because of the withdrawal of funding partners who have been affected by the global financial crisis. Various obstacles, financial – high registration fees – or logistical – translation – or simply the cost of airfare will make the attendance of participants problematic.

SK: How can challenges in linking the interdependence between global and local actions be overcome?

DM: The Social Forum process is a viable attempt to link the global and the local. Vigorous local mobilisation and exchange of human and material resources. Widening the use of e-communication. This can only be achieved if the local is organised. ■

Stanley Kwenda is a freelance Zimbabwean journalist. He also blogs on Zimbabwean political issues at www.tatamburaturimes.blogspot.com

[Source: <http://www.afronline.org/?p=3321>]



THE 2005 NAIVASHA Agreement ended the civil war between the Sudanese government and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM), based in South Sudan. About 2 million people were killed in the 1983-2005 conflict. A further 500,000 people were killed in the 1955-1972 civil war, also fought between the government and rebels in the south. Under the agreement, a referendum on independence will be held in the south in January 2011. The SPLM leadership recently endorsed independence for the South, while prior to the peace process it been committed to a united, democratic, federal Sudan. SPLM leader John Garang died when a Ugandan military helicopter he was in crashed on July 30, 2005 — less than a month after he had become Sudan's vice-president under the Naivasha Agreement.

Soubhi Iskander is editor of *The Flame*, the Arabic-language *Green Left Weekly* supplement. He is a member of the Socialist Alliance in Australia and a long-term activist with the Communist Party of Sudan.

He spoke to *GLW's Tony Iltis* about the referendum, what dangers he sees in the division of Sudan, and the recent formation of the opposition Broad Front.

We don't see any benefits in the referendum. We know that to split the country will lead to more trouble than during the civil war. To stay in power the Islamic junta would split the country. We know the new southern nation will be faced with much trouble.

▼ Soubhi Iskander says that a new South Sudan nation will be faced with many challenges.



We are also seeing conflict between US capitalism and China because ... currently most oil wells are under Chinese control. There could be a very sharp conflict between these two nations.

John Garang was a great leader. He was a unionist — he believed in one Sudan. He led his movement to liberate the whole Sudanese people. He called his movement the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement — not the Southern Liberation Movement.

When Garang went to [the Sudanese capital] Khartoum, after the signing of the Naivasha Agreement, four million people went to the airport to meet him, including many North Sudanese. He had such charisma. He could have been a Chavez of Africa.

I think the CIA was afraid to have such a leader in the geographically largest country in Africa, with so much resources, that they made what looked like an accident. What we believe is that he was murdered.

In Sudan, some nomads wear shoes made from fresh sheepskin, and are followed by dogs that smell the fresh meat. The new South Sudanese nation will be like that — it will raise the appetite of every capitalist power in

At the same time it shows the carrot, saying: "If you go ahead with the referendum we will let you stay in power."

And the junta will do anything to stay in power — not only split off South Sudan, but the west and the east of Sudan, just to stay in power.

The people of all these regions are not Arabs. Some of them are Muslims but they don't speak Arabic. So there are movements that think these regions can also be separate and have their own states, especially in Darfur.

Until 1917, Darfur was an independent sultanate. The British army colonised it and attached it to Sudan. They don't feel Sudanese.

I think the split of South Sudan will encourage other regions to want the same model.

The Sudanese people know what will happen if the country is split and we know how much trouble we will have from having the junta still in power.

So a lot of people in jail, opposition and exile have called for a Broad Front to organise an uprising inside Sudan.

The first meeting of the Broad Front was in London on October 22 and agreed to set up the front in every European country, and every country worldwide where there are Sudanese people.

Our agenda is:

- To have a unified, independent country
- To separate religion from politics.
- To have respect for all citizens, regardless of religion or ethnic group, and a democratic constitution with freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom to strike.

The Broad Front was launched here in Sydney on November 27 in Liverpool.

The Islamic Front — the ruling junta's party — succeeded in domesticating the opposition groups: it made them like pets.

Before the election the junta opened the country and invited the opposition groups individual to come back and gave them a period of three to four months with complete freedom. They were allowed to have newspapers and exercise free speech, just to make people feel there was an opposition.

But when it came to the election, in both the south and the north, it was clear that the results were falsified. President Bashir, who is hated by all Sudanese, got about 85%. The opposition inside the country, including the Communist Party of Sudan, can do nothing.

Opposition newspapers are now always closed, or sometimes printed blank because of censorship. So the opposition is really domesticated and it will need leadership from the diaspora outside Sudan for this uprising to happen. ■

[Source: Green Left Weekly(www.greenleft.org.au)]

Sudan: Referendum could split country

First of all, the US multinational corporations will try to suck away the country's resources. Especially natural resources — petrol, gold and uranium.

Also, we are afraid that Israel will have its hands on the sources of the Nile [if the south separated]. This will put Egypt and Sudan in a very difficult position because they depend on the Nile for their economic life.

The US is the number one [outside power seeking influence in South Sudan] — it has its eye on the petrol. The west of South Sudan is very rich in petrol. There are places near the Bahr el Ghazal, one of the White Nile's tributaries, where there is uranium that was discovered during [military dictator] General Gaafar Nimeiry's reign in the 1970s.

Europe or Asia and will be powerless.

South Sudan is not inhabited by just one ethnic group. The biggest ethnic group is the Dinka but there are others — like Shilluk, Nuer, Mundari, Zande. There are about 23 smaller tribes that have their own language, traditions and religious beliefs.

Some of them, especially the Shilluk, the second largest ethnicity, and the Nuer, will never permit the Dinka to rule them. So we predict ethnic uprisings in South Sudan. Hopefully it will not happen, but that is what we fear. US policy [towards the junta is] the stick and the carrot. It shows the stick, saying: "We will catch the criminal president of Sudan and put him in front of the international court if Sudan doesn't have the referendum."

REVIEWS



White Gold tracks the migration of Indian indentured labour.

WHEN WALKS AND watermelon, the beach and parties become too much over the summer holidays, press play and watch Amandla! Best Choice holiday doccies and movies

Documentaries

Countdown to Zero
Director: Lucy Walker

Running time: 91 minutes

Countdown to Zero is a documentary on the nuclear arms race. It includes interviews with Jimmy Carter, Mikhail Gorbachev, Tony Blair and others. The Wall Street Journal has called this documentary "hair raising". ●

South of the Border
Director: Oliver Stone

Running time: 70 minutes

Stone's documentary on presidents in the Americas, with a focus on Hugo Chavez from Venezuela, has created much buzz worldwide. Co-written by Tariq Ali the documentary is a must-see for those interested in the region. At the opening showing Stone and Chavez walked in together, both wore black suits with red ties while Stone lifted Chavez's hand prompting onlookers to applaud. ●

From B-Boys to Being Men

Creators: Emile YX? and Tanswell Jansen

This locally-based documentary will be released by the Heal the Hood

organisation and tells the story of the hip hop movement in Cape Town and this organisation's influence on b-boy scene in the country. ●

Cinema Nouveau

Mao's Last Dancer
Director: Bruce Beresford

Running time: 117 minutes

Based on the autobiography by Li Cunxin, the movie is the story of the 11 year old Li who is selected to the Beijing school of ballet at the height of Mao's Cultural Revolution. He impresses an American ballet director who offers him a three month stay at a ballet school in the United States. ●

The Kids are alright
Director:

Running time:

A lesbian couple are both artificially inseminated by the same donor. When their eldest child turns 18 the younger one convinces her to secretly contact the sperm donor and biological father. This sets the scene for the rest of movie. ●

White Gold

Director: Jayan Moodley

White Gold tracks the migration of Indian indentured labour to South Africa and their experiences of how they are treated on the plantations. The movie is filmed in Hindi, Tamil and English and shot on location in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa and India ●



Recipe – Holiday Punch
Bang a fruity punch with this summer drink....for extra punch add a generous splurge of rum, vodka or triple sec.

Tangy Fruit Punch (non-alcoholic)

- 1 (46-oz) can of pineapple juice
- 1 (12-oz) can of frozen orange juice concentrate (thawed)
- 3/4 C lemonade concentrate
- 1 C water (divided)
- 1/2 C sugar
- 2 large ripe bananas
- 1 (20-oz) package frozen and unsweetened whole strawberries (thawed)
- 2 liters of ginger ale (chilled)

The global traffic of world music is controversial.





Mao's Last Dancer based on the life of dancer of Li Cunxin.

In a punch bowl or large container, combine pineapple juice, orange juice concentrate, lemonade, 1/2 cup of water and sugar. Place bananas, strawberries and remaining water in a blender; cover and process until smooth. Stir into the juice mixture. Cover and refrigerate. Just before serving, stir in ginger ale or a South African favourite, zero sugar Stoney Ginger Beer.

Source: <http://hubpages.com/>

Credit: Balkan Beats Kollektiv



The Rough Guide to World Music: Europe, Asia & Pacific (Vol.3)

By T. E. Bosch

THE 3RD EDITION OF THIS TEXT, widely considered the most reputable reference text for world music enthusiasts, does not disappoint. The "rough guide's" series is considered premier reference texts for music from around the globe. This 3rd volume of over 700 pages reflects the rising popularity of world music, and the text is intended as an accompaniment to the music CDs, which carry the same title. World Music has often been considered synonymous with African or Latin music, and it's interesting to see the vast wealth of world music from Europe, Asia and the Pacific, which this text also covers.

Each chapter provides a brief history of the region, giving a useful socio-political context to the emergence of each music style, as well as a reflection on its links to local social identities. Each chapter also has a discography and a playlist with descriptions of each track, as a useful accompaniment to the CDs. Unfortunately these playlists are

not yet available for download from the internet, and would have to be sourced from various compilations, potentially rather difficult. The book reflects the diversity of music styles in the chosen regions, covering popular and classical, religious, secular, and more modern genres such as the club and DJ scenes. Criticisms of previous editions of the book have been taken into account, and regions that were previously excluded, now have chapters here. These include Sardinia, Slovenia, Burma, among others.

The global traffic of world music is controversial. The debate between "music as expression" and "music as commodity" comes to the fore rather starkly as we consider the notion of "world music". Often both the people and their music have been colonized in a kind of world music industrialization

continued on next page ►

in which colonial hegemony determines musical style. The term world music itself is often used to refer to the music of indigenous or ethnically marginal people who produce sounds dissonant to Western ears. But of course this doesn't take into account the notion that culture and by implication music, is fluid; and that "world music" may straddle various actual "worlds" as they struggle between competing discourses of authenticity versus commercialization in the global economic market.

So this text is no exception in its coverage of the world music of its chosen region.

Despite these critiques, this is a thorough and well-researched text, which covers diverse musical forms from Chinese Opera, the electric gypsies of the Balkans to inner Asian throat-singing and action songs of New Zealand and the Cook Islands. While one might take issue with the homogenization of world music, one cannot argue that this is an indispensable text for the world music student and enthusiast. ●

States and revolution in Latin America

By Fred Fuentes

If we want to look for a real alternative, we need to look at the Landless Workers Movement of Brazil (MST), which "doesn't wait for the state — it acts according to its own logic and needs".

Credit: MST



REVIEWS

OF LATE, A BURNING DISPUTE has opened up, mostly among those writing from an anti-capitalist orientation: a debate over the complex relationship, or “dance” as Ben Dangl calls it, between social movements and states in Latin America. *Dancing with Dynamite: States and Social Movements in Latin America* is Dangl’s second book.

Like his first book, *The Price of Fire: Resource Wars and Social Movements in Bolivia*, Dangl’s latest offering provides an opportunity for the subjects of the social changes underway in Latin America to speak for themselves and tell their own story.

However, this time he expands his focus beyond Bolivia and the wars between communities and corporations, to look at how an intriguing dance between states, governments and social movements is playing out in seven different countries. Dangl’s introduction to *Dancing with Dynamite* says: “The discussion surrounding the question of changing the world through taking state power or remaining autonomous has been going on for centuries.

“The vitality of South America’s new social movements, and the recent shift to the left in the halls of government power, make the region a timely subject of study within this ongoing debate.”

Dangl comes out strongly for “remaining autonomous” from state power. Citing Emma Goldman, Noam Chomsky and John Holloway, author of the polemical book *Change the World Without Taking Power*, Dangl argues that in each country he studied, while social movements are constantly on a “tightrope walk between cooptation and genuine collaboration,” more often than not, cooperation with the state leads to demobilisation.

The dance between state and social movements can be deadly, because “the state and governing parties is, by its nature, a hegemonic force that generally aims to subsume, weaken or eliminate other movements and political forces”. Faced with this dangerous dance, Dangl reaches the same conclusion as Raul Zibechi, Uruguayan activist and author of *Dispersing Power: Social Movements as Anti-State Forces*.

“If the state is in danger of falling into the hands of fascist groups”, Zibechi says, “we should do all we can to prevent that from happening, including participating in the elections, in a direct form or in support of other connected groups.

“But we know that there, in this field, in this space, what is central to our future is not being fought over. We will not put our best forces in this terrain because we know that what is fought over there, usually, is not decisive in terms of changing the system.”

This is why, according to Dangl, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Bolivian President Evo Morales and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva “demonstrate important parallels”.

It’s just that “populist rhetoric, constitutional changes, and funds from nationalised industries cushion the setbacks in Venezuela and Bolivia”.

If we want to look for a real alternative, Dangl says we won’t find them in Venezuela or Bolivia, where many of the movements “bow down to politicians and parties during campaign seasons, and then prostrate themselves for government handouts or positions”.

Instead, he says we need to look at the Landless Workers Movement of Brazil (MST), which “doesn’t wait for the state – it acts according to its own logic and needs”.

The MST best encapsulates the correct approach of both “pressuring the state and empowering their own territories from below”.

Using an approach of expanding – or “dispersing” – power “can mean working to become a sustainable movement that can weather political climates”, says Dangl.

Leaving to one side whether this accurately reflects the goals of the MST or not, a number of problems arise in such an analysis.

For a start, Dangl uses the terms government and state interchangeably, confusing two different things. Second, his ideal of “dispersing power” (while pressuring the existing state), as opposed to creating an alternate state power, leads to some contradictory conclusions.

On the one hand he argues that by their nature, states co-opt and ultimately destroy social movements.

Yet, Dangl also argues that while “working for a better world without a state” a “viable strategy” could be “supporting state-based programs, if they indeed help people achieve their long and short term goals”.

The chapter on Venezuela best highlights what Dangl means.

Correctly pointing out that the old, existing state “replicates the inequalities and challenges found in many other nations”, Dangl also notes that this state

is attempting to, in the words of Sara Motta “create a new set of state institutions that bypass the traditional state, and distribute power in a democratic and participatory manner”.

The explanation for this seeming contradiction is simple.

First, Dangl confuses the difference between a movement – in this case the Bolivarian movement – winning government and controlling the state.

When Chavez was first elected in 1998, he was elected as the head of a capitalist state. However, he and the movement very quickly realised that this state had not been created to benefit the majority, and that instead it was necessary to “give power to the people” to tackle poverty.

To shift the rules of the game more in its favour, the Bolivarian movement convoked a constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution.

But to make this, and the government’s social and economic programs, a reality, it was necessary to gain real control over the state, and in particular PDVSA, the state oil company.

It was the attempt by the Chavez government to move forward on this front that triggered an intense reaction by Venezuela’s elites, who saw it as a direct attack on them.

The intense class battles of 2002 – the struggle to defeat the April military coup and then the December-January 2003 bosses’ lockout of the oil industry – led to the emergence of a number of important social movements (particularly the workers movement) and a break of capital’s control over the armed forces.

These forces were crucial to the survival of the government, but also shifted the balance of class forces in favour of the poor majority and their government, which only now had the power to move forward on a number of its social programs.

And more importantly, they helped in the creation of the new state institutions that Dangl and Motta refer to. ●



Cecil Barnard, also known as jazz genius, Hotep Idris Galeta

Farewell to another jazz Legend

By Carol Martin

Hotep Idris Galeta

7 June 1941 – 3 November 2010

THE LATE HOTEPE IDRIS GALETA, aged 69, was a South African icon in the Cape jazz world and a naturalized American. He grew this music genre with American jazz legends during his 30 years of exile abroad. Born Cecil Barnard in Cape Town, the young Cecil took on an assumed name of Hotep Idris, (Galeta being his traditional name) which allowed him, shortly after the 1961 Sharpeville massacres, to jump on a boat to England where his exiled journey

began. Some of it was spiritual. He became greatly influenced by the Black Muslims he met in New York, and had earlier embraced the Islamic mystical traditions of Sufism in his Cape Town home so, with a changed name, Hotep continued his prolific journey into other iconic worlds of jazz and contemporary music – in London, USA, and finally back home in South Africa by 1991.

A combination of private study with jazz pianists in New York and a Masters in Jazz and Contemporary African-American Music equipped this young lion to spiral his career forward, working with the very best of contemporary American musicians of the time. These include a long list of greats, known to

South African audiences as well, as Jackie McLean and his son, Rene (longtime resident in RSA), Joshua Redman, Woody Shaw, Elvin Jones, and Archie Shepp. Hotep's early New York days were heavily influenced by another exiled countryman, Dollar Brand, later known as Abdullah Ibrahim. Together, they grew Cape jazz in a post bop era in those vibey quarters of New York night clubs and schools. Hugh Masekela became part of the group as well, continuing their friendship from the 1950's when Hotep joined Hugh's "The Jazz Epistles" band. These cross-breeds thrived in eager circles with appreciative audiences who also supported their anti-apartheid messages. Before his exile, Hotep hung out with other frustrated jazzmen, like pianist Chris McGregor and saxophonist Dudu Pukwana.

I knew Hotep when he was assisting Cape Town's community radio station, Bush Radio 89.5FM, in its music programming. "This is a wonderful place to train young DJs and radio journalists; Bush has a cause, a coverage, and a consciousness", he explained to me, "that will carry local and indigenous music further into public airwaves." Working with youth, Hotep adopted a love for hip-hop, stressing to youth the importance of discipline and commitment in developing one's art.

His vision(s) were broad. As an educator before returning to a newly democratic South Africa, Hotep served as a lecturer in jazz studies at the University of Hartford's Hartt College of Music in Connecticut, USA, for six years, where he also formed a strong friendship with saxophonist, Jackie Mclean, who also taught at the school. Upon return to South Africa in 1991, he spearheaded several national and community-level jazz education programs, including the University of Fort Hare's initiative to establish a school of jazz and a multi media audio visual production center, the Miriam Makeba Performing Arts Center, at its new East London campus. This also positioned him to embark on his fascinating compilation of jazz history in South Africa and in "Notes from H I G – The Album Malay Tone Poem".

But it was saxophonist / flautist Zim Ngqawana who introduced the newly returned Hotep to Sheer Sounds which subsequently promoted Hotep's first South African-produced (by Zim) album, "Malay Tone Poem" featuring Zim and a host of other notable jazz musicians. Besides acoustic jazz, Hotep also plunged into the world of electronic jazz and the growing array of music technologies. Hotep's recent attachment to Hugh Masekela's music education initiative in Johannesburg proves how this don was forever committed to jazz education and youth development. His discography of over 18 albums, playing with the worlds greatest, suggests this lion will remain legendary as a South African jazz icon. ■

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