



THE APDUSAN

Vol 12 No 2
September
2006

AFRICAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC UNION
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Interests Of The Workers And Landless Peasants Shall Be Paramount

WORKERS AND THE 9th COSATU NATIONAL CONGRESS

Delegates representing almost 2 million members of COSATU will debate critical questions facing the working class at the federation's 9th National Congress. At this congress, COSATU affiliates will also elect a new leadership for the union federation. Each affiliate at its own congress has in the mean time put forward names for key leadership positions- largely from the ranks of those now occupying top posts and thus secure the careers of some union bureaucrats.

While the media concentrates on the soap-opera like leadership squabbles in COSATU, the following cardinal question hardly gets mentioned: On what principled basis, in the final analysis, should workers elect their leadership? A trade union leadership ought to be militants indefatigably fighting for the short-term and long-term demands of workers. These militants understand the necessity to mobilise and organise fellow workers around an anti-capitalist platform. They build confidence and awareness among workers in every shop-floor and political battle affecting worker interests.

In the build up to the 9th congress, COSATU unveiled in its 'political discussion document' the major planks that will form the platform for the incoming leadership. Roughly a third of this 20-odd page document surveys the socio-economic and political landscape in South Africa and the world today. On the socio-economic front it reiterates how neo-liberal policies (GEAR and ASGISA!) lower the floor of working and living standards of the working class to deeper levels of misery. There has been no real reversal in job losses and casualisation, the paper observes, especially in retail and cleaning services where strikes have been ongoing for several weeks. It rightly exposes black economic empowerment for what it is worth yet makes only scant reference to the controversial trade union investment companies that bankroll start-up capitalists with union dues.

These multi-pronged attacks on workers are set to intensify because sustaining the profitability of capital in the world nowadays can only be done by forcing workers to pay a heavier price. To counter this offensive, COSATU, according to the

discussion document, needs to re-examine and sharpen its political strategies and action. The document repeats COSATU's commitment to 'radical transformation and socialism'. In this context, delegates will inspect deeply the longstanding question of 'the balance of forces and direction in the tripartite alliance'. Thinkers in COSATU are of the opinion that while a black elite has hijacked the ANC, this party remains the political home for workers. What COSATU and its other ally, the SACP, must do in this situation is to rescue the ANC from the clutches of the black bourgeoisie. Only a political ignoramus or opportunist will try to deny the well-known fact that the ANC is pursuing a bourgeois political programme while calling on workers to subject their aspirations to what is essentially a bourgeois party. A thorough and genuine examination of its history testifies to this. Building an alternative party based on the short-term and long-term demands of working people thus takes second stage to saving the tripartite alliance guided by a bourgeois platform.

'Defence of the alliance at any cost' seems to be the overriding orientation in this political discussion paper and it dictates the federation's approach to trade union unity and the 'new social movements'. When COSATU celebrated its 20th anniversary in December 2005, NACTU and FEDUSA made public their agreement to unite and work out the next steps in this process. The political discussion paper views this unity process as 'an indictment of COSATU and the democratic movement'. COSATU is trailing instead of leading its 'rivals' in wider trade union unity talks, due to a lack of resoluteness and urgency on the part of its leadership. What, aside from competing politics subscribed to by their leaderships can be holding trade unions back from 'unity talks'?

COSATU knows that it can no longer ignore the 'new social movements' and has to take a clearer stand on collaborating with these formations. Across the country, in working class townships and among peasants in villages, resentment runs deep because 12 years after apartheid there has been no

➔ meaningful service delivery and agrarian reform. Out of these spontaneous protests, working class communities and landless peasants started mobilising and organising themselves in social movements to fight for their demands. These social movements (Anti-Privatisation Forum, Social Movements Indaba, etc) conduct their struggles outside the fold of the alliance, as at the WSSD 2002, around recent local elections and ongoing protests for housing, land, electricity, healthcare and education. Indeed, through the 'end job losses and poverty campaign' it was possible for COSATU to forge a 'united front' with social movements. But

once again the 'politics of the alliance' proved to be an insurmountable obstacle to such a development.

During and after the 9th COSATU national congress worker militants in trade unions must advocate an anti-capitalist platform consisting of these minimum planks: workers' democracy in the trade unions; promote self-organization and forging principled unity between trade unions and social movements; construct a broad political movement based on the political and economic aspirations of the working masses. ●

QUO VADIS SATAWU?

A security worker, Siyanda, responded to the Bargaining Monitor reporter about their strike: "Ours is a just cause. We are fighting selfish people who are determined to treat us as if they are doing us a favour. We are selling our labour power to them. They need to treat us with some respect, like human beings. People should always remember that what is at stake here is our life, our pain and our struggle."

According to Western Cape Cosatu secretary, Tony Ehrenreich in the Cape Times of 23 May 2006 "Any one strike is only one battle in a bigger war to create decent workplaces with a living wage that promotes greater social justice throughout society." In order to win the war it is vital that everyone involved in this war learn from the mistakes of every battle and to apply these lessons in the new battles. Let us learn from the lessons of this strike.

We are all aware of the various complaints, letters to newspapers and other protests that preceded the wage negotiations for the security industry. The subsequent negotiations revealed that the organised security industry is divided into various different unions. All advanced their own demands while the bosses were united under one employer

organisation. The subsequent settlement of the different unions bears testimony to this. As soon as this happened we found that the SATAWU leadership accused these union leaderships of being sweetheart unions and of betraying the interests of the workers. This is a classic sign of union rivalry, which is encouraged by the employers. This also comes at a time when business is busy with a serious attempt to amend the labour law.

We also witnessed a situation at the June 16 rally when sloganeering in support of the police and prisons union (POPCRU) was met with a negative response by members of SATAWU. The COSATU 'end job losses and poverty' campaign meeting in the Cape Town Good Hope Centre also saw a situation where members of SATAWU broke up the proceedings to demand support from their sister unions. The question to be asked is whether COSATU had given effect to the slogan "AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL". We can unfortunately only come to a negative conclusion. Drawn-out strike action always holds the real danger of workers' fighting spirit waning and the bosses being able to strengthen their own bargaining position instead. The failure of the COSATU leadership to organise

solidarity/sympathy strikes contributed directly to the strike ending in failure. This should be a lesson to all of us even the union officials who have progressively become a complacent bureaucracy.

It is necessary to understand the importance of keeping the goodwill of the public when fighting for decent working conditions and a living wage. Failure to do so will reduce our efforts to naught. This will allow a situation where the government, who represents the *class* interests of the bosses, use laws to prevent the workers from expressing themselves through public protest. The support of the public is critically important for the legitimate demands of striking workers. We have seen with the security workers' strike that this support can be lost within a very short period of time.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions must give effect to the slogan "An Injury to One is an Injury to All". Big Business is set on forcing its agenda aimed at "ease of hiring and firing". Any inter-union rivalry therefore only plays into the hands of the bosses. Agreeing on common demands must take precedence over one union wanting to dictate to others. ●

SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

The Southern African Social Forum (SASF) is due to convene in Malawi this coming October. This will be an important stepping stone for the anti-capitalist resistance movement in Southern Africa in preparing for the next World Social Forum (WSF) meeting which comes to Africa in January next year. With these major events on the horizon it is significant that the organisations in South Africa who are resisting neoliberalism and the worst ills of capitalism have not yet squared up to the task of establishing a South African Social Forum. While there has been some limited voices of criticism of the WSF - that it is mainly an organ of NGO's, it is generally accepted that a dynamic link with the WSF will strengthen and deepen the base of the resistance movement here in South Africa.

Since the birth of the WSF various South African organisations have participated in its meetings, most significantly, Cosatu and some prominent NGO's. Recently, the Gauteng APF has also linked itself to the WSF while the Social Movement Indaba (SMI) has formally linked itself to the SASF. There have also been various public report backs of WSF gatherings as well as discussions locally about the WSF itself. Why then has there been no concerted effort to establish a South African Social Forum? It could have been expected that the SMI would be in the forefront of such an initiative. But then the SMI has been in a state of flux ever since its establishment and it still has to be consolidated into an association of real substance.

What is more relevant however, is the inability of the different components of the anti-neoliberal movement to come to terms with one another. From

the side of the social movements or community based organisations there is a deep streak of suspicion and mistrust of the NGO's which are able to take up a strong position in the general movement because of the resources at their command. There is also a widespread distrust of Cosatu and its agenda due to its association with and backing of the ANC in the tripartite alliance. Cosatu, from its side, is offended by this criticism and has branded the proponents of the SMI as ultra leftists.

The establishment of a South African Social Forum would hardly be a united front that would compromise the objectives of any organisation; nor comprise the objectives of a single organisation. Organisations that constitute the SMI need to firmly reject the idea that community based social movements can spontaneously produce the broad common program that is needed to unite and drive the SMI as a whole. With their activities dominated by urgent single issues, they have failed to do so up to now. Where there have been efforts to establish broader amalgamations these have failed to achieve any stability or to go beyond fighting single issues.

The idea of spontaneity as the supreme anti-bureaucratic approach is a false dogma that only serves to stifle the development of a broader political consciousness amongst the masses. Left wing political formations and the SMI itself has the task of developing a progressive political programme that can unite the various facets of resistance into a powerful force. From that base it can play a radical role in a South African Social Forum which otherwise stands to be swamped by reformists and opportunists. ●

REFLECTING ON YOUTH MONTH - JUNE 2006

June 2006 saw the 30th anniversary of the June 1976 revolts and the subsequent turmoil in the country. As has been the tradition rallies and summits and commentaries on the significance of these events were the order of the day. Youth in education and those who've been through the formal education process and presently part of the unemployed masses were reminded by the country's political leadership of the need for them to emulate and build on the achievements of the youth of the 1976 era.

More than a decade into the new dispensation, many youth are asking serious questions about what benefits have accrued to them; of whether their aspirations are being realised or not. Many government, labour and business spokespersons agree on the fact that

the picture looks extremely grim. A figure of between 100 000 to 200 000 graduates are unemployed. Approximately 60% of South Africans under 30 had never had a job. Between 1995 and 2004 as many as 40% of those youth that were employed, earned under R1000 a month. 50% of students/learners drop out of the education system before grade 12. 80% of the 400 000 students doing Matric end up at home or on the street. This translates into close to 1 million youth in the space of a mere 3 years. A total of 47% of all economically active youth aged 18-35 are perennially out of work. Some commentators refer to this as a 'permanent and hard-core underclass of perpetually poor, unemployed, disaffected youth'. ➡

➔ In response to this state of affairs government has launched its 'age of hope', through which it wishes to 'deepen youth participation to fight poverty and create work'. Government departments as well as provincial governments and individual municipalities have undertaken initiatives such as the National Youth Parliament, the Home Affairs National Youth Service programme and the Youth Democracy Education Partnership. Learnerships make up one part of all these programmes. The Western Cape provincial government as an example, launched the Learnership 1000 programme through which 1000 unemployed young people would be put on a 18 month training process; once qualified, they will be deployed in sustainable jobs. 35 000 youth applied for the 1000 positions showing the glaring inadequacy of the programme. In government circles there is also strong support for a more flexible labour market as it applies to youth; of the introduction of minimal protection of youth workers' rights. If they succeed in smuggling this into law, it will have serious repercussions for millions of workers, given the high proportion of youth found in the economically active population.

Youth are being duped into believing that the capitalist system that oppresses them is the

one that will liberate them. Government is conscious of the need to create youth role models in government, business and industry - for its own political ends. Hence the political indoctrination associated with the National Youth Parliament. Hence the focus on the development of entrepreneurial skills and the like. The attention of the youth must be drawn to how they can fit into and work the system. The formal trappings of bourgeois democracy are presented as the culmination of political and economic freedom. This kind of democracy is a useful shield behind which to perpetuate GEAR and the growing inequalities that accompanies it. The present day youth political leadership has by and large bought into this political deception.

If doors are closed, whichever way they turn, and the prospects for living a meaningful life are disappearing by the minute then progressive youth have no choice but to take up the political demands of the working class and landless peasantry. The need for programmatic political struggle is as much necessary today as it has been in the past. In so doing they will do justice to the legacy of the brave youth of 1976. ●

THE CASE AGAINST NUCLEAR POWER

Contributed by Earthlife Africa

South Africa faces many challenges in terms of meeting its energy needs in order to promote poverty eradication and job creation as well as environmental protection and good governance, but the Government's move towards nuclear power as an alternative has sparked controversy.

Nuclear waste is being generated at Koeberg and the Nuclear Energy Corporation's (NECSA) site at Pelindaba, and people are dying of nuclear related diseases. As an Apartheid military hangover, the nuclear industry has no room in a rights-based society. Africa is not a dumping site for nuclear waste or a testing ground for unsafe nuclear technology. It is unjustifiable to use public funds to sponsor nuclear plants that are a threat to people and the environment.

Below is a list of several reasons why Nuclear Energy is not a solution for South Africa:

1. Health & Safety

There is no such thing as a "safe" dose of radiation. The annual acceptable level of exposure in SA is ten times higher than that laid down by the European Committee on Radiation Risk. Uranium mining is responsible for the greatest proportion of

health-related damages of the nuclear power industry. No epidemiological studies have ever been done of people living or working near nuclear facilities in South Africa. These are urgently needed. Like at any power station, there is also always the risk of an accident. Human error occurs at every level of development, construction and operation of the process. Material and component failures along with ageing can break down or defeat operational and safety systems. Unfortunately the impacts of an accident when one is dealing with nuclear energy are extreme, often resulting in exposure by humans and the environment to radiation which can result in immediate death, serious illness immediately or over the long term and damage to the environment.

2. Waste

There is no responsible way to "dispose" of radioactive waste and it can remain dangerous for very long periods of times. For example, Plutonium-239 takes a minimum of 96 000 years to reduce to "safe" levels. There is no plan in place for the long-term storage of, or any final disposal site for radioactive waste anywhere in the world. How can the nuclear industry expand without having resolved this problem or even finding a 'safe' place to store its wastes? It would be like developers building a high-rise with no toilets! ➔

3. Economics

Nuclear power is expensive electricity. The costs of nuclear power do not stop once plant construction is completed. Nuclear plants need to be decommissioned after their (approximate) 40-year life span. The radioactive spent fuel produced by nuclear reactors needs to be stored safely for thousands of years before it loses potency, which has enormous cost, health, environmental and social implications. Nuclear power subsidies take money away from clean alternatives and consumes funding that should be used to develop proven clean, renewable sources of energy like wind, water and solar.

4. Climate change

The global nuclear industry is exploiting concerns over global warming by misrepresenting nuclear power as a carbon-free electricity source and global climate saviour. However, the complete nuclear fuel chain is extremely energy intensive and dirty. The nuclear fuel cycle releases CO₂ during mining, fuel production, transport, plant construction and decommissioning, as well as for waste management far into the future. Uranium enrichment is one of the most energy intensive industrial operations and as demand for uranium grows and lower grade ores are used, so CO₂ emissions are expected to rise.

5. Transport of radioactive materials

If ten PBMR's were built there would be approximately one vehicle carrying radioactive materials every second day and approximately seven carrying chemicals every working day, for 40 years between Durban, Cape Town and Pelindaba. This could grow to nine radioactive, and 145 chemical trucks, every day at full production.

6. Jobs

Research has shown that Nuclear Energy does not compare well with other industries in terms of job creation. If South Africa was to generate just

15% of total electricity use in 2020 using Renewable Energy Technology, it will create 36 400 new direct jobs, without taking any jobs away from coal-based electricity. Over 1.2 million direct and indirect jobs would be generated if a portion of South Africa's **total energy needs**, including fuels, were sourced with Renewable Energy Technologies (RETs) by 2020.

7. Renewable Energy (RE)

South Africa is rich in renewable energy (RE) resources. Studies have shown clear evidence that there are sufficient RE resources in South Africa to provide for 13% of the electricity demand by 2020, and easily 70% or more by 2050. RE is clean, sustainable, efficient and safe. South Africa's short-term electricity needs cannot be fulfilled by nuclear energy. ●

The Nuclear Energy Costs the Earth Campaign (NECTEC) of Earthlife Africa is committed to the total eradication of nuclear energy in Southern Africa. We oppose all aspects of nuclear power generation including mining, fuel production, and transport of nuclear materials, reactors, waste and the consequent lack of safety for people and our environment.

Earthlife Africa (ELA) is a membership driven organization of environmental and social justice activists, founded to mobilize civil society around environmental issues in relation to people. ELA Johannesburg (Jhb) branch was established in August 1988 as the first branch of the organization. Since then, ELA has expanded to include branches in Cape Town, eThekweni (formerly Durban) and Tshwane (formerly Pretoria), as well as one in Windhoek, Namibia.

For more information please visit www.earthlife-ct.org.za or contact Earthlife Africa Cape Town on 021 447 4912.

The table below shows the number of jobs produced per megawatt for the different sources of energy

ENERGY CONVENTIONAL	JOBS/MW	RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES	JOBS/MW
COAL (CURRENT)	0.7	SOLAR THERMAL	5.9
COAL (FUTURE)	3.0	SOLAR PV	35.4
NUCLEAR	0.5	WIND	4.8
PBMR	1.3	BIOMASS	1.0
GAS	1.2	LANDFILLS	6.0



Comrade editor

OPPRESSION IN THE RURAL AREAS

It is now twelve years since this country supposedly achieved democracy in a negotiated settlement. But when one looks around one is faced by worse living conditions. In the rural areas the majority of the people survive on government social grants that are minimal when considering the exorbitant cost of living. Next comes the teachers, nurses and public service workers. The salaries of most of these leaves shudders. On the peasant front there is not enough land and worst of all there is a lack of equipment and infrastructure. It should be remembered that people were impoverished by the land acts and the rehabilitation scheme. People lost everything in that period but they had high hopes after 1994 that they would get relief. Instead they see a new class of millionaires, some of whom have been charged with fraud and others in government service who have been suspended for corruption.

The government must be aware that there has been no improvement for most in the rural areas. There are still children being taught outside under trees or in mud structures built by their great grandfathers. There are no proper roads and bridges to schools. In bad weather how is the poorly paid teacher and the hungry learner supposed to produce proper results?

In some areas teachers cannot reach their destination in time for proper duties. People have to travel long distances for medical help on poor roads and usually poor transport in unsafe vehicles. Those in government are very much aware of these problems. You arrive at a clinic or hospital where there is no medicine and no blankets for patients. This is ridiculous in a country rich in resources. But all this wealth seems to be reserved for the lucky sons and daughters of a privileged few.

At the time of elections we see the new political elite travelling in expensive 4X4s. They know the condition of the roads and will never risk their posh cars so they come in these protected vehicles as they need the people's votes. Some visit rural areas for the first time and are not known to the people there.

These are the people that they call the rural poor instead of peasants. The workers that construct beautiful cities, who haul tons of gold and carats of diamonds out of the ground come from these rural areas. It is a shame on the aspiring petit bourgeois elements who allow themselves to be used against the working class for the benefit of the capitalists.

One does not hear a single voice calling for the wealth that they produce to be ploughed back for the benefit of the working class and peasant class. You only hear them crying about the rise and fall of their stinking reserves and how criminals that come from the ranks of the poor are robbing them. The workers should rise and revolt against these wolves who are never satisfied with how much they have.

People in the rural areas are perturbed by what is happening in the country. Children are dying of curable diseases that are a result of poverty while a minority in the urban areas are swimming in luxury. People should not be fooled by the capitalist media. It is a mere whitewash of the real situation and the conditions that people live under. Our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters and everybody live in a trauma of problems except for those who manage to rob here and there. Life expectancy is gradually falling. It is no wonder that there is an exodus to the cities. It is not that this is not known by those in government and parliament but they are just serving their capitalist bosses. Of the services that they should supply, electricity and water is made available on a very small scale and somebody is making a lot of money out of electricity. A whole host of other services lags behind while the likes of Eskom makes super profits in the name of a better life for all.

Those who received the votes of the people must pay attention to the suffering of people in the rural areas and to show some conscience for these people who make so much wealth for them. They are where they are because of the toiling masses. People do not even ask for the equal division of wealth but they want a fair share so that lives can be saved. They can benefit by saving lives and it is within their capability.

No people can live on social welfare only and a government with its hands tied behind its back cannot serve society. Those who will not believe the conditions spoken of here should take their cars and drive into the vast rural areas and see for themselves. It is a known fact that the rural areas were balkanised to satisfy the interests of the former rulers. This balkanisation only increased poverty. Today there are provincial administrations and governments that should not exist and are a drain on the resources of the country. Personnel are paid high salaries for a duplication of services and the hardest hit are the rural areas.

The revolution is far from over and comrades should involve themselves in the struggle for real democracy.

Peasant from Eastern Cape



From Around the World

RADICAL OVERTURN IN BOLIVIA?

The victory of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) in Bolivia's 2005 national elections is a new turn in the history of one of the poorest yet resource rich countries in South America. Bolivia's new president, Evo Morales, is the country's first leader from the oppressed population who has actively participated in peasant and mineworkers' resistance movements. During its first six months in political office, the MAS has introduced many decrees (nationalization of hydrocarbons, agrarian reform, public works, etc) and aligned itself with leftist presidents in Venezuela and Cuba rather than the pro-Washington governments in the region. Revolutionaries have been debating the revolutionary character of these measures in the light of recent experiences in Latin America. In what ways, they ask, are these decrees anti-capitalist alternatives that decisively break with the neo-liberal path of recent Bolivian rulers?

On 2 July 2006 the country voted for a Constituent Assembly (CA). As expected, the MAS won nearly 60% of the vote despite rightwing parties winning on 'regional autonomy' in two of the wealthiest states. Representatives from political parties to the CA started drafting the new constitution in August. This job should be done within one year, when the voters will cast ballots on the content on the new constitution. However, periodically calling workers and peasants to the ballot box fall short of the social movement demand for "mass people's assemblies" to directly partake in setting the content of the constitution.

How will this new constitutional framework affect the decrees implemented thus far? Will it deepen the self-organization of the peasants and working class and help to raise their living standards?

Nationalisation of Gas and Energy

President Evo Morales announced the decree on the nationalization of hydrocarbons on May Day. Later, in an interview with *Time* magazine, Morales said that through the nationalization of gas and energy the Bolivian state was "obeying the demand made by the Bolivian people in the elections". This demand, more accurately, "has been one of the fundamental demands of the mobilisations of October 2003 and May and June 2005", according to the executive secretary of the Regional Workers

Central of El Alto (COR-El Alto). It is known that during these battles, MAS played a marginal role and that its moderate demands trailed the demands of the social movements and trade unions. While the social movements demanded 'nationalisation without compensation', MAS called for 'nationalisation without expropriation'.

Article 1 of this decree makes the gas and energy resources the property of the state. The decree further restructures the state oil company, YPFB, and strengthens its control over these resources. As a 'transitional measure', the state and small oil companies split tax royalties from this resource on a 50/50 basis. However, the large oil companies - dominated by Petrobras (Brazil), Repsol (Spain) and Total (France) that control more than 70% of these resources - must comply with the 82-18 income split in favour of the state. These companies have 180 days within which they have to sign new contracts to continue operating in Bolivia under the new rules or face 'expropriation'. As Morales told *Time* magazine journalists: "We, of course, want [private] investment partners, and we want them to profit, but we should be the absolute owners of the land and resources".

"Agrarian Revolution"

President Morales launched his 'agrarian revolution' on 16 May, nearly two weeks after beginning the nationalization of gas and energy resources. Phase-one of this agrarian reform started on this day with Morales handing over state land, with 2 million hectares available for redistribution, to peasant communities. While transfers of state land continue, phase-two will kick-off with investigating private land ownership to identify land not productively used or used for speculation. This land will be targeted for expropriation following negotiations with landlords. It has been estimated that at least, 14 million hectares of land will be made available through this process.

Fertile lands and other agricultural resources are concentrated among a handful of wealthy agribusinesses and landlords. Agrarian inequality is extreme across the northern belt stretching from the eastern lowlands to the western *altiplano*. Figures show that in the eastern lowlands, where Morales launched his 'agrarian revolution', 100 families own 25 million hectares, while 2 million small farmers share barely 5 million hectares. In this region, ➡

► agricultural estates as big as 50,000 hectares exist!

The six decrees comprising the new government's agrarian reform platform set out to complete and go beyond previous land reform programmes. Under the dictatorship (1964-1978) wealthy landlords in the eastern lowlands accumulated a lot of land. And the 1996 land reform failed to meet its targets to redistribute land to landless peasant families due to corruption and political influence of big landowning classes. This has added to rural poverty embracing 79.5% of the rural population compared to the national average of 63%. In addition, when the tin mining sector imploded in the 1980's families returned to the countryside where coca cultivation proved to be the most profitable source of earning a living.

Peasant social movements remain critical of the MAS government's agrarian reform plans. Felipe Quispe, a leader of the Bolivian Confederation of Rural Workers' Unions and another leftist party, specifically opposes the 'negotiated land transfers of the state'. The militant MST, a movement born in 2000 and emulating the tactics of its Brazilian landless comrades, seems to favour the 'seizure of private farms' or 'occupation and expropriation without compensation'.

MAS and the social movements

To be sure, the electoral success of the MAS is a direct result of recent waves of anti-capitalist mass protests involving many social movements (opposition to water privatisation in Cochabamba, tin miners strikes, nationalization of gas and energy

in El Alto, etc). It was during these uprisings that MAS forged links with the social movements despite the fact that it only partially embraced the radical demands of the social movements. No doubt the electoral experience of the MAS-leadership helped it to victory. It is well known that Morales narrowly lost the presidential elections in 2002. But since 1995, under the banner of *Izquierda Unida*, Morales won landslide victories in local elections in coca-producing municipalities in Chapare and Carrasco. Will the party's strong *electoralist tradition* widen the gap between it and the social movements?

Bolivia's vice president and ideological leader of MAS, Garcia Lineara, is oriented towards the urban middle class. Thus the new state bureaucracy is primarily drawn from this class, with its rising weight in the party, and a few social movement leaders co-opted into some ministries. Since the elections in 2005, there has been a significant decline in mobilisations and militant activity among social movements and trade unions. Furthermore, a political party to the left of the MAS with significant influence in the mass movement is virtually non-existent.

Whilst the Morales government has introduced important measures that point in an anti-capitalist direction, the future of radical change in Bolivia will hinge on a high level of self-organisation among the working class and peasantry. It remains to be seen if the new constitution to be voted on in August 2007 will reinforce or reverse Bolivia's 'movement towards socialism'. ●

WHY HAS ISRAEL ATTACKED PALESTINE AND THE LEBANON?

The brutal assaults by Israel on the Palestinians in Gaza and the people of Lebanon are part of the unceasing war it is waging against the Palestinians and their supporters in the Arab world in their fight for liberation. The ideology on which the Israeli state is based is Zionism, which claimed the land on which Palestinians had been settled for millennia, for the Jews. Even before the birth of the state, the policy of the Zionists was to expropriate ("buy up"), land on which Palestinians had been living and reserve the working and ownership of that land exclusively for Jews.

British imperialism, which had conquered Palestine from the Ottoman empire in the First World War(1914-18) had promised the Palestinians their independence, a promise which they had no intention of keeping. Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, sought

to convince ruling circles in Europe that a Zionist state would be of great help to them as their cats-paw in the Middle East. The first military governor of Jerusalem, Sir Ronald Storrs, supported the goal of a Zionist state, which he believed would be a "loyal little Ulster" in a hostile Arab world. When Palestine was partitioned by the UN in 1948 to create the state of Israel, the Zionists slaughtered hundreds of Palestinians and drove out 250,000, who were to become refugees in the remainder of Palestine and the neighbouring Arab states. The Zionists were able to consolidate their position in the new state, establishing a demographic Jewish majority, who controlled the natural resources of the land. An apartheid state had been created with discrimination against the Arab minority in all walks of life.

As a result of the 1967 war, Israel ►

►annexed part of Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights. Crucial to Israel's victory was the military and financial support given to it by the US. Prior to 1967, Israel received the highest per capita aid from the US of any country. Since Israel's victory in the 1967 war, the US - Israeli relationship has evolved into a "special relationship" with ever larger amounts of financial and military aid flowing from the US to Israel. The strategic importance of the Middle East to the US with its vast oil wealth forms the basis of this relationship. Israel remains the biggest foreign recipient of US aid, a large part of it sophisticated military hardware.

When Hamas was democratically elected to run the Palestinian administration, Israel, the US and Europe refused to have any dealings with them. They deprived the Palestinian administration of its revenues and interrupted economic aid to it thereby crippling its economy. The crisis escalated when two Israeli soldiers were killed and one captured near the Gaza- Israeli border. The Israelis resorted to their bombing campaign in the air and land attacks on Gaza, killing scores of Palestinians. When Hizbollah in Lebanon killed 3 Israeli soldiers and captured two others in what was seen by many as retaliation for Israel's attack on the Palestinians in Gaza, the Israelis launched their brutal assault on Lebanon. Over 1000 civilians, mainly women and children have

been killed and the infrastructure of large parts of Lebanon virtually destroyed.

What has emerged in reports in the US press is that the Israeli attack on Lebanon had been planned many months before and that this had been leaked to the US and British governments. The pretext for the attack was Hizbollah's capture of Israeli soldiers. The reports throw further light on the US and Britain's sabotage of the UN's attempts to arrange an immediate ceasefire. Their efforts were directed at giving Israel the opportunity of inflicting as much damage as possible on Hizbollah. Tony Blair, further outlined their plans in a speech to the World Council Affairs in Los Angeles in August. He claimed that there was an "arc of extremism" stretching across the region linking Hizbollah with Iran, from where they get their weapons and Syria, where they also get support and which houses the leaders of Hamas. His speech can be read as confirmation that the Israeli attack on Lebanon is a proxy war against Iran and Syria.

The successful resistance of Hizbollah to the Israeli attack at the time of the ceasefire resolution passed at the UN, is a setback to the plans of imperialism. In Israel there are loud calls for Prime Minister, Olmert's resignation because he has not delivered Hizbollah's head on a plate. US imperialism has now to consider the next step in its attacks on Iran and Syria. ●

THE STRUGGLE IN EAST TIMOR

Short History

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, more popularly known as East Timor is situated on the Eastern Part of the Island of Timor, the nearby islands of Atauro, Jaco and the enclave of Oecussi-Ambeno on the northwestern side of the island. The Western side of the Island is known as Indonesian West Timor and is ruled by Indonesia. East Timor is very small, about 14000 square kilometers and is about 400 miles northwest of Australia. The country has one the lowest per capita GDP in the world of only \$400.

The country was under Portuguese colonial rule from the 16th century and was known as Portuguese Timor. The Portuguese revolution in 1974 which brought independence to Angola and Mozambique brought hope for freedom to East Timor as well. Due to political instability and more pressing concerns with decolonisation in Angola and Mozambique, Portugal effectively abandoned East Timor to its own fate. This led to local political groups led by the Fretilin party to unilaterally

declare themselves independent from Portugal on November 28,1975. The declaration was recognised by several Communist and Third World nations, including the People's Republic of China, but not by neighbouring Australia, Portugal or Indonesia.

On December 6 1975 US President Ford and Secretary of state Henry Kissinger visited Jakarta (the Capital of Indonesia) on their way back from a summit in Beijing. During the meeting they gave the go ahead to the Indonesian Dictator Suharto to invade East Timor to, as he claimed, "bring stability to East Timor". In reality what happened was that the US had just lost the Vietnam War, and wanted to stop the spread of Communism in Asia and prevented China from getting a foothold there. It did not matter to them that Suharto was a brutal dictator and that over the next two and a half decades hundreds of thousands of East Timorese would die as a result of their decision. The next day Indonesia invaded East Timor and annexed it as its 'twenty-seventh province' on July 17, 1976. After a protracted armed struggle the country eventually voted overwhelmingly for independence ►

➡ from Indonesia in August 1999.

Post independent gains and current crisis

However, following the UN sponsored referendum the Australian government under Howard deliberately delayed sending his troops in, even though he was well aware - through detailed intelligence reports - that the Indonesian armed forces intended to unleash pro-Indonesian militia against independence supporters. He then used the awful scenes of carnage to sway the UN into supporting his operation.

At price was control of an estimated \$30 Billion US in oil and gas deposits in the Timor Sea. Afterwards Australia took advantage of a nation that has just survived 25 years of armed struggle and a campaign of ethnic cleansing to force a very one-sided deal to develop this deposits, on them. This is what ultimately led to the current crisis.

The Australians have long been upset with Alkatiri, the East Timorese Prime Minister. Mari had lately been driven a hard line in negotiations over the oil and gas deposits with Australia. Many people believe that the Timorese were robbed by the original deal that Bush's Deputy Sheriff Howard calls "generous" It must also be remembered that in the recent Fretilin elections, where he faced a challenge from a Washington-based diplomat Alkatiri won more than 90% support in the party vote, and Fretilin retains almost 60% support across the country. In addition to all this Alkatiri was moving closer to the colonial power Portugal and was instrumental in getting Portuguese approved as the official language. Deputy Howard and Lord Downer of Bagdad (the Australian Prime Minister) were not willing to let anybody else muscle into their territory.

Less well known is that Australia and the World Bank refused to help rehabilitate and build the Timorese rice industry, and refused to support use of aid money for grain silos. Under Alkatiri, the Timorese have reduced their rice import-dependence from two-thirds to one-third of domestic consumption.

After independence an expensive phone service run by Telstra (Australian government owned) was replaced by a government joint venture with a Portuguese company. And following a popular campaign, Timor Leste remains one of the few 'debt free' poor countries. Alkatiri managed to retain some control over the country's budget, and the building of public institutions.

Consider for a moment that in order to continue

trading wheat to Iraq the Australians willingly paid Saddam US 300 million dollars in bribes in direct contravention of the UN oil and food program, even risking the wrath of their lord and master the US.

In addition they went to great lengths to hoodwink their country into going to war in order to protect this selfsame trade from "greedy US farmers" (their supposed allies)

What transpired next is classical regime change as formulated by the US. First they used the church to call Alkatiri a "communist" and an "anti-Christ" for allowing the teaching of religion to be voluntary in schools. Then they and the American embassy openly started to finance any rag tag group of opposition.

Unrest started in the country in April 2006 following the riots in Dili. A rally in support of 600 East Timorese soldiers, who were dismissed for deserting their barracks, turned into rioting in which five people were killed and over 20,000 fled their homes. Fierce fighting between pro-government troops and disaffected Falintil troops broke out in May 2006. The rebel leader Reinado rejects government orders, but has allied himself to Xanana and Jose Ramos Horta, the two non-Fretilin members of the government. (Ramos Horta is known to be close to the Bush administration.)

The government then invited several countries to come to its aid, notably Portugal who seems to support the government and Australia which is seen to be allied to the rebels. The Australians invaded with thousands of heavily armed army and police officers yet seemed unable to prevent large scale looting and rioting when Alkatiri refused to resign. It must be noted that the rioters were armed only with sticks and knives.

The Australian plan seems to be to get a sort of deal that is modelled on the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The "RAMSI template" is nothing but a recipe for a long-term colonial-style occupation. While the Solomon Islands still has an elected government, nominally at least, all of the main levers of power, including the police, prisons, courts and finance, are in the hands of Australian officials installed to run the administration for at least a decade. This would effectively allow Australia to control all oil and gas deposits without interference from Portugal or anybody else and to slowly put into effect their plan for empire building American style in Asia. ●