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Open letter to the members of Cosatu, Nactu, Fedusa, independent unions

We expose the plans of the state to eliminate all progressive forces in the army (including most of the veterans from all ex-liberation armies)

On Friday 4th September 2009, the strikers from the post office (members of Communication Workers Union) were peacefully marching past the Cosatu head office, when 2 policemen (in a police BMW vehicle), opened fire on them with rubber bullets, seriously wounding one of the strikers, Zodwa Maduna. The strike has been going on for weeks now and still the state has not met the demands of the workers. One of the key demands is abolishing the apartheid wage gap. Fifteen years of ANC rule and still the apartheid wage gap in the Post office exists. Many workers at the post office have been retrenched, many post offices closed down and still basic democratic demands in the post office have not been met. Municipal workers who merely tipped over trash cans were shot at; protestors in communities, demanding basic services, after thousands of marches and protests fell on deaf ears, were shot at; unarmed soldiers, who are denied the right to strike, took the unusual step of taking leave, to protest at the union buildings, were denied the right to march, and were shot at.

On the other hand, leaders of the ANC have become overnight billionaires; they live in mansions and have many houses while the masses are starving, homeless and underpaid. Billions are spent on stadiums and coal power stations that will not benefit the working class. Hundreds of billions of Rands in profits are shipped offshore each year by Anglo American and other monopolies, yet of the 28 million people of working age (15-65), only 9 million have some sort of work. [one more million will have lost their jobs by the end of the year].

Employment is in absolute decline and many youth face the prospect of permanent unemployment. 50% of the population are below the age of 25. Population increase is about 1 million per annum; housing need grows by 200 000 each year; housing delivery is less than 200 000 per annum and the backlog in housing is at least 2 million units. Added to this the houses built over the decades for the working class are falling apart; 30% do not have any electricity; only 32% have water in their houses/dwellings; only 42% have access to telephones; 52% have flush toilets and 14% have no toilets at all.

Hand in hand with the shooting of strikers and protestors, are steps taken by the state to clamp down on protests by targeting organisers of protests- this has taken the form of arrests and placing the sweeping charge of 'public violence' over their heads. Now the state, through its parliamentary committees, wants to target organisers even of legal protests.

The Constitutional Court ruled in favour of the soldiers, opening the way for unions and centralised bargaining in the military. Even the International Labour Organization (ILO), which is a thoroughly pro-capitalist organization, ruled that where the right to strike is limited/curtailed then workers should have the right to alternative means of having their demands addressed. Thus the Military Bargaining Council, MBC, was set up. Despite this, the state has several times tried to collapse the MBC. In April-May, **last year**, the soldiers unions made attempts to bargain for the 2009 wage increases. The state ignored them, each time saying that they had 'no mandate'. The generals received their increases of 10.5% in January this year while the soldiers just received empty promises. Now the state wants to ban unions for soldiers.

Why is the state attacking the working class more and more?

To answer why the state is attacking working class protests, more and more, we have to first look at the global picture:

Anglo American, Old Mutual, Liberty Life, Rembrandt, Sanlam, are the ones who control the SA economy- every single one of these monopolies has a cross ownership by international banks. JP Morgan Chase, for example, controls the Reserve Bank, that punishes the entire working class with high interest rates; most of the gold mines are owned by the Bank of New York, etc etc. The crisis of the international banks has a direct bearing on our lives here.

The rising trend of speculation and the absence of sufficient new areas for capital formation, poses a massive problem for the capitalists- if capital is not invested, it dies. Capitalism needs to increase the rate of exploitation and knows that this poses dangers for them- it opens up a period of capitalist instability where the prospect of the masses rebelling against their greater hardship and starvation, increases.

In the current crisis of imperialism, the older democratic forms, such as parliaments or unions, that were sufficient to contain the working class in the past, now become a fetter, an obstacle to the exploitative relations now required by imperialism. The coup in Honduras, where there was a US military base, shows that imperialism is on the march to take back the few democratic gains that the working class has won. Last year billions of Rands were stolen from our pensions by these imperialist banks. At least 50 million workers, world wide, will be dismissed this year alone; in the past, strikes and unions were tolerated as necessary evils by the capitalists, now every strike and protest opens up the possibility of moving from the economic and social terrain to the political. In other words, every protest by any sector of workers could spark off mass rebellion of the working class who has been trampled on, humiliated and starved for so long.

1996 brought a rise of community based 'social movements'; these were rapidly sidelined, co-opted and corrupted by the World Social Forum, and isolated by the leadership of Cosatu. Cosatu initially had a resolution supporting actions and campaigns of housing but these were sidelined over time.

Despite this the number of community protests have steadily risen over the years; from 2002 there have been about 1000 protests every year, increasing every year. There is thus great urgency for imperialism to implement their plans to smash the unions in the military and progressive soldiers.

When the hungry and homeless and unemployed start to rise, imperialism would want to protect their assets first. For this they need an army that is brutal, anti-worker and who is able and willing to cold bloodedly slaughter the working class, as they did in Indonesia when they killed off 1 million communists, in Chile where thousands were executed in cold blood, in Argentina, where over 30 000 activists were killed by the state under the time of the dictatorship, etc etc (there are many such examples around the globe). This is the real reason why the state is trying to smash the unions in the army.

The state plans to get rid of all the progressive forces in the army

The Institute of Security studies has already long concluded that the ANC government has a crisis of legitimacy. Imperialism, who draws on the analysis of the ISS, prepared a plan to convert the SANDF into a mercenary-type of army. This is part of a world trend to greater use of mercenaries rather than a conscripted or volunteer army. This trend to a mercenary army is one which came after imperialism drew the lesson of the war in Vietnam and the weakness (for them) of a conscripted or civilian based army, due to the mass protest movement that developed on their home soil. The war in Iraq, with its 300 000 mercenaries, is evidence of this world trend to more fascistic methods. The total security forces in Iraq is 1,3 million and still imperialism cannot contain the masses; Iran also has a 1,3 million paramilitary force and still cannot completely suppress the working class; Israel has been maintained as a fascistic jackboot over the Palestinian and Arab masses for the past 51 years and still they cannot destroy the heroic resistance of the Palestinian masses. On a world scale there has been a trend to more mercenary-type of armed forces. The question is when is quantity changing into quality (world fascism)? [In this stage of world 'peace' US imperialism has over 130 military bases around the world and increasing their number rapidly.]

In 1994 imperialism had to neutralize the nationalist liberation armies of the ANC, PAC and Azanla. Thus the process was started of integrating them into the existing army. The integrated army was constructed on the ethos of Mandela's words: "Never, never again (will we allow such repression of the people)". Imperialism made this process frustrating for many of the liberation soldiers and many of them accepted dismissal packages. But imperialism knew they had to find a way to purge all the progressive fighters from the army because if this was not done, the next time there was a mass uprising of the working class, the army could not be depended on to shoot the masses down.

In 2002 the SA government produced a document called HR 2010. In this plan they intend to limit the age of the lower ranks to 28, while those in the higher ranks who were not constantly being promoted, would be dismissed; the top ranks would be on 4- 15 year contracts and there would be 'talent scout' hunting- in

other words, the most fascistic types with experience of putting down uprisings would be brought in; the ratio would be black 64%, 10% coloured, 0.75% Indian, 24% white. The population percentage of whites is less than 10%. This means that many of the killers from the previous repressive regime could find a home within the new army, along with possible 'special skills' from US imperialism. 10 000 new recruits would be taken in annually for 2 year military service and only the most pro-capitalist types retained. **In short this plan intends getting rid of most of the progressive elements within the army and certainly most of the ex-liberation forces.** The plan is to create a professional mercenary army, equipped to suppress any local uprising of the working class. **But in order for them to do this they first have to smash and defeat the 2 unions within the army.**

The creating a professional mercenary army has consequences for the rest of the working class in Africa too. Currently the role of the SANDF has nothing to do with 'defence of the nation' (we are not under military attack from imperialism at the moment) but everything to do with protecting imperialist plundering in DRC and the rest of Africa. The creation of a mercenary-type SANDF means that the increasing role of the army will be to put down any working class uprising in the rest of Africa as well. Imperialism cannot depend on the current SANDF to do this, thus their need to purge the army of all pro-worker, progressive elements.

From the way municipal and post office workers are being shot, it is clear that **the state wants to suppress all forms of protest, including that from all unions.** The imperialist mouthpiece, the Institute of Security Studies, on SABC 1, Asikhulume on 6 September 2009, already described all unions in SA as 'unprofessional', and 'unlike unions in Europe'- what he forgot to add that the unions in Europe are passive, toothless and very skilled at selling out their members.

This explains why the police and the courts were so brutal in suppressing any protest by the soldiers, strikers and community protestors. The ground is being laid for integration of more fascistic types into the army means that the petrol bombing of the military vehicle on the August 26 protest by the soldiers at the Union buildings in Pretoria could have been the work of an agent provocateur. If the state appoints as head of the Hawks, Dramat - whose only claim to fame is being part of a intelligence crackdown on Pagad (where infiltration and framing of activists were of the order of the day)- this explanation seems not only likely but probable and could even become a more widespread tactic by the state to crackdown on the rising tide of resistance. It also shows the methods of the FBI and CIA are alive and well in SA. Imperialism and their lackeys in the state were looking for an excuse to purge the army of any elements who might side with the working class. The first step was to mass dismiss 1300 of the leading 'troublemakers' and then proceed with more mass dismissals until they have purged the army of all or most of the pro-working class elements. In 2002 the army stood at 78 000; the state plans to reduce this to 50 000 or less initially, and then increase it by filling the ranks with mercenary-type professional killers, such as currently operating in Iraq.

There is great urgency for imperialism to implement their plans to smash the unions and progressive soldiers. Protests from the working class are accelerating. In the April 2009 elections 9 million people did not even bother either to register to vote, or to vote. Millions who voted for the ANC were giving them a last chance to deliver. Since June we have been living through a strike wave, where hundreds of thousands of workers (and now the soldiers too) embarked on protest action, despite the efforts of the Cosatu leaders to keep them off the streets.

The SACP is deliberately baiting the WIVL

The SACP youth wing has written a letter to us wherein they hint that the WIVL is calling for an 'insurrection' now. This is a blatant untruth. As Lenin wrote in *What is to be done?* ... 'the masses have no need of stimulants'. When the masses protest for their democratic demands, on whose side are we? The question is why are they trying to frame us? This is to hide the fact that the state is on the march to not only smash the unions in the army, but also to dismiss all the progressive members of the army, including many of the rank and file of the ANC-SACP-Cosatu alliance supporters in the military.

The SACP ministers, including Nqakula and Kassrils, oversaw, as members of the state Arms standing committee, sales of weapons of half the total amount to the US military, during the period of the US imperialist invasion of Iraq and its subsequent occupation. The current slaughter of civilians by the US imperialism in Afghanistan is being assisted by SA produced weapons, supported by the SACP. The current SACP ministers in cabinet, all unanimously support the mass dismissal of the 1300 soldiers who were brutalised by the state in their attempted peaceful protest at the union buildings. The YCLSA and Cosatu leaders have condemned the mass dismissal but is this just posing 'left' or just an expression of fear of the consequences of the state's actions (to sharpen the class conflict). The current 'security cluster' is staffed by higher ranks of the SACP. If there is a mass uprising again in the future, on whose will the SACP be?

The 3 million mzantsi accounts hand over, for free, R30 million extra per month in bank fees, to monopoly capital, thanks to the SACP campaign. [This money comes from the monthly bank fees of a minimum of R10 per account].

Fifteen years of dependence of the middle class and capitalist class in the ANC of 'deepening democracy' or of a 'developmental state' needs urgent re-evaluation and assessment by the working class. Lenin drew the conclusion in his work *STATE AND REVOLUTION*, that upon achievement of a democracy, the middle class and the capitalist class lose their revolutionism. Was Lenin wrong? Have the past 15 years proved his analysis wrong, or has it been confirmed?

The petti bourgeois cannot deal with fundamental issues and tries to distract the working class from discussing and debating them. The members of Cosatu and the rank and file of the SACP need to

confront a real assessment of the class role of the alliance leadership, and indeed of the role of the alliance itself. The lives of the working class depend upon this.

The questionable class role of the Cosatu leaders

The Cosatu leaders have failed to organise a real fight against high food prices; they have failed to wage a fighting campaign against the million job losses this year, and now they want workers to shift focus by not demanding a living wage and rather accept increased slave conditions in exchange for 'jobs'. They have 'forgotten' the basic rule of capitalism, that the capitalists are here to make money, not to create jobs and that any concession from them has to be extracted through struggle. The leaders of the Cosatu unions have supported 'broad based black economic empowerment' such as sasol inzalo (where workers lost millions of their savings); they invest in privatization of the health sector and promote an additional tax on workers to fund a so-called National Health Insurance. 'Empowerment' is seen by these leaders as advancement of workers into the ranks of management, not as a generalised increase in the conditions of the working class.

Despite the words of the Cosatu and SACP leaders, the interests of the middle class and the billionaires of the ANC are always placed above that of the working class, such is the fundamental nature of the alliance with it.

The way forward

The main axis of the way forward has to be:

Even if the Cosatu leaders do not put it on the agenda, it is important to raise that workers demands for decent housing for all should be met; demands that could be considered also are a sliding scale of wages (when prices go up then wages should too); sliding scale of hours (reduce the working week without loss of pay and share all the work among all those who can work); etc. These demands are important to unite and gain support of employed with the unemployed. All these demands centred around defence of workers and soldiers interests. A living wage for all! Stop retrenchments and mass dismissals of workers and soldiers! Reinstate all dismissed workers and soldiers! Stop the terrorising of the workers' and soldiers' protests by the state! Let us put it to the workers of Cosatu and other federations, we need a programme of action **irrespective of which party you support** or belong to. **Defend the worker, defend the unemployed, defend the soldier. Down with the fatcat CEO's, Cabinet Ministers and generals! This should be our central slogan.**

What ever action plan is decided we call for the formation of workers and soldiers committees in every industrial area and in every working class community. These must lead the defence of the working class against the ongoing attacks by the state and the imperialists. We call for a national meeting of workers

and soldiers delegates to discuss and plan a national and international programme of action to defend working class interests.

Workers, we want you to know that a section of the advanced guard of the vanguard fighters from Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brasil, New Zealand, USA, and South Africa, as united in the International Leninist Trotskyist Fraction support your cause. Without worker-soldier unity, imperialism will defeat us. **If the imperialists succeed in mass dismissals from the army, the working class will later pay with its blood, like in Honduras, like in Iraq, like in Afghanistan, like the Palestinians, like the masses in the DRC, like the masses in Rwanda, like the masses in Zimbabwe!**

Workers of the world unite! We have nothing to lose but our chains!

PS: Don't be fooled by reactionary forces such as the church leaders who now at 5 past midnight wake up and 'discover' that workers and soldiers are suffering- they and the NGO's are there to try to pacify the slaves (us), not to revolt against the exploitation of the 'master'.