

New Unity Movement



IN HONOUR OF BEN KIES AND THE UNITY MOVEMENT **IN SOUTH AFRICA¹**

16 December 2019

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PART ONE

Introduction

Ben Kies was a leading member of the Unity Movement, officially founded in 1943. He had, as I understand it, belonged to the Workers Party before that time, as a student. That had been set up in its turn in 1935 as a fusion of Trotskyist groups, of which the Lenin Club and a group from Johannesburg which included the future leader of the 'Militant group' in the UK – Ted Grant or Isaac Blank. The Lenin Club was founded and primarily existed in Cape Town. There were a fair number of Jewish members who had come from Eastern Europe either as refugees or in order to have a better life.

South Africa was almost unique in the world in the period down to the nineteen-sixties and possibly later, in having a relatively powerful Trotskyist movement. The right-wing government of 1950 paid tribute to that fact by writing it into the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 when it talked of Marxism/Communism as interpreted by Lenin or Trotsky. In both intellectual and organisational terms only Ceylon or Sri Lanka

¹ This is a draft of the Keynote Address delivered at the event held in Cape Town on 16 December 2019 to commemorate the legacy of Ben Kies on the fortieth anniversary of his death.

today, had a comparator. Although there were possibly twice as many Trotskyist groups as in the UK or France before 1960, the Unity Movement was the largest and the only one with a substantial following at that time. By the late seventies and eighties, there were more groups, usually connected to ones in the UK. The UK, of course, was in the process of developing three substantial groups and probably another fifty more by the eighties. Today, there are of course quite a number of Trotskyist parties, 11 on one count. Wasp, I gather is one, but EFF is clearly not Left-wing and not Marxist.

In reality, there is little meaning to be attached to talk of a non-Trotskyist Marxist party. The Socialist Party of Great Britain is such a party, but it has maintained its sectarian and isolated existence for around a century, without alteration.

The Russian revolution of 1917 was the crucial turning point in world history. Before that time, the discrimination against the Jewish population was such that millions left particularly from 1870. After 1917 discrimination against Jews ended in the Soviet Union until Stalinism established itself from 1924-7 onwards. It was not surprising that there were a disproportionate number of people of Jewish origin in the left.

The Western Cape was the father of South African Marxism just as the Rand was the basis of militant action. There is no other Marxism other than one that recognises the role of Trotsky and the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism today. When we look at the Communist Parties: Chinese CP, the Greek CP, the US CP etc, one has to be ashamed to be known as a supporter of what amounts to mass suppression and mass murder.

Back to Ben Kies himself

Ben Kies got BA and MA degrees at UCT. In 1949, he married Helen Abrahams.

He became Vice Chairman of the New Era Fellowship from around 1937. It was an intellectual discussion group, where Ben Kies played a leading role. It also played an important political role. His views "rested on the notion of a unity of all oppressed non-European people, the embracing of an ethos of non-racialism, and principled

opposition to all forms of racial organisation, including that of the coloured elite in the African People's Organisation and the nationalism of the African National Congress."

He founded and edited the TLSA Journal and The Torch, which was famous for its strong and biting line against racism and capitalism. Unlike the Stalinist journals, it took a critical line on the USSR. However from what I remember those commentaries were not too frequent. He was a leader in the anti-CAD movement (Coloured Affairs Dept). He was crucial in the fusing of the Anti-Cad movement with the All Africa Convention to form the Non-European Unity Movement in 1943. Nasson says that Kies helped to steer the Teachers League of South Africa into fellowship with the NEUM.

He was banned in 1956 from teaching and lost his High School post. He then acquired a legal qualification allowing him to practise as a barrister. In 2004 he was given the Order of the Disa by the Cape Provincial Government.

The Unity Movement split, with I.B.Tabata leaving with his followers in 1957.

The working class and the peasantry

There is one issue that arises from the split directly or indirectly. That concerns the question of the attitude towards the working class and peasantry.

Trotsky had written a substantial number of pages in reply to a request that he analyse South Africa. While acknowledging that he did not know much about South Africa, he had argued that Marxists should not forget the peasantry. That, in fact, was very much the line of Tabata.

In fact, at the age of 19, I had discussed the question with Yudel Burlak, the major theorist and life-long leading member of the Lenin Club and Workers Party. The latter went underground in 1939. It never emerged into the light of day. However, it continued to operate underground. This is what Trotsky said:

Given these conditions, propaganda can and must first of all flow from the slogans of the agrarian revolution, in order that, step by step, and on the

basis of the experience of the struggle, the peasantry may be brought to the necessary *political and national* conclusions.”[2]

Today the official proportion of workers on the land in South Africa is around 10 per cent of all workers.[3] Even if the number is doubled it will not alter the reality that Trotsky’s words do not apply. The conditions to which Trotsky referred were the supposed preponderance of workers in agriculture in South Africa. Even at that time, the comparison with pre-revolutionary Russia where 80 to 90 per cent of the population were on the land was incorrect. The proportion of farmers today who are not white is small and the government has passed legislation to raise it to 30 per cent.

Burlak, at that time, took Trotsky’s line very strongly. As I understand it, it remains a question with the Unity movement.

Really if you read Trotsky’s argument you can get the sense that we have to make the programme credible. He is either saying that the peasantry is too backward to understand what we are proposing or the peasantry finds it incredible that anyone could offer them a much better life than farming.

The alternative was the Socialist programme or steps towards it. It has remained that put forward by Marx: From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs or socialism is the society, when work becomes humanity’s prime want. Of course, there is political merit in putting forward a believable programme. However, the conditions were not quite as backward as had been represented to him. One could, of course, look at the UK, where the Labour Party has put forward a programme, which in my view is entirely credible but it has been laughed at as impossible by those to its right. In this latter instance, it is true that the right is using a misconception of economic growth.

The organisation of the working class was in fact undertaken, in that the mineworkers were organised during the 2nd World War by Trotskyist Max Gordon, as part of a different Trotskyist group. Baruch Hirson provides a description of the history of Trotskyist groups in South Africa from a somewhat critical perspective. As a former participant [4] who rejected the viewpoint adopted by the founders, he did not try to wrestle with their arguments. Baruch stood for an openly expressed revolutionary socialist viewpoint, adjusted of course for the exigencies of the time, that Marxism was banned.

The argument usually levelled against the NEUM and therefore against Ben Kies and other leaders like Dick Dudley was that they did not try to put together a powerful, openly Marxist, force. That was the attitude of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and its successor after banning (The South African Communist Party - SACP). Of course, they were totally opposed to them anyway since the SACP supported Stalinism, but that would not have been enough for them to win many other people over. This issue is very important because it explains the relative isolation of the NEUM outside of Cape Town and Pondoland. There was, in fact, a real reason why Ben Kies and others at his level were not open about their Marxism. Ben Kies used to meet every Friday night with the *de facto* major founder of the Trotskyist movement in South Africa, and leader of the Workers Party of South Africa, Yudel Burlak. I do not know how and what they discussed but I do know personally something of Burlak's viewpoint in this connection. Clearly only an idiot would stand up openly and profess themselves members or followers of the banned parties or their doctrines. That was not the issue. The real issue was that Burlak basically took the view that Stalinism had been so destructive and so overwhelming that only underground work was possible until it was spent or defeated. After that, the genuine left could begin the process of recruitment and party building. In the meantime, the task was to maintain and develop what was possible as a basis for the next generation or two.

(The basis of my understanding rests on the 5-hour discussion that I personally had with Burlak when I was 19 in 1956.)

Within the context given by the leadership of the NEUM, there were a series of vibrant discussions, organisations and forms of recruitment. As compared with the ANC it was done on a low key.

The NEUM and the other organisations associated with it like the TLSA had people, who wrote or spoke on issues of equality, explaining why people in power, reactionaries, need to claim superiority of their species, inventing their species or race. The orators, teachers and leaders who did so were trying to help people understand their oppression and its limits. In the first instance, it required to show that the claims were necessarily false and then why the rulers had to invent doctrines which were false, how they maintained their power, through control of the means of production, and

that fundamentally their power meant that they extracted surplus value from the majority who worked.

However, it had to be hidden under the false notion that the workers were necessarily inferior. Where there were no visible differences then they invented less visible ones and indeed ensured that there were differences. In South Africa, there were real or invented physical differences, and there were ones caused by the system itself, as by starving children, providing poor education, poor housing, poor transport, etc, all of which ensured that most people were in some way different from those who owned or controlled the means of production, distribution and exchange. In earlier times there was slavery, but capital requires more from its workers.

PART TWO

We live in a transitional period

The theoretical basis of the Workers Party and its descendants lies in the writings of Trotsky who argued that the German Social Democrats had betrayed their revolutionary principle in 1918-19. They had abandoned the taking of power in order to begin the process of building a socialist world. Instead, they stabilized Germany, a process begun by killing Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Germany was the leading industrial power in Europe by this time, having overtaken the United Kingdom. In turn, the effect of the defeat of Germany, combined with the decline and exhaustion of the UK, led to the USA becoming the hegemonic capitalist power, although its full force only showed itself during and after the Second World War.

It is now 100 years since the uprisings in Europe, and 97 years since the General Strike in 1922 in South Africa. General Smuts, in fact, played a critical role in both cases. In both Hungary, where Bela Kun and the Left had taken power in 1919, and in the 1922 General Strike, Smuts sent in the troops. Smuts at that time was in the British War Cabinet. It is clear that the failure of the Communist Party to unite black and white workers to engage in direct opposition to the Government led to a defeat with long-lasting consequences.

The result for the world, for socialism and for South Africa has been traumatic. We have still not recovered politically given the rise of Stalinism and its mass killings in the USSR and elsewhere. It has meant that we live

in a kind of historical hiatus, where we appear to have no movement forward or backwards. In reality, there is movement but it is slow and often not of an immediate observable kind. As it were, the system, the world, is waiting for a time when it will be quick, immediate and clear. Our task is to educate and then take advantage of the times when forward movement becomes possible.

Capital has gone through a succession of stages and phases over the last 1000 years, from the time it was struggling to come into existence in pockets in Europe and possibly elsewhere. Initially, it used direct force and punishments to control its workers. Religion was a powerful form of control, at a time when life was short and disease rampant. Feudalism was coming to an end and the attachment to the land was being replaced by the sale of labour-power. The sale of labour-power without other conditions co-existed with slavery and forms of lesser or short-term unfree labour.

Temporary social formations

The Soviet Union and China are or were not socialist countries but distorted transitional forms. Whereas the USSR had full nationalisation without any control from below, the Chinese have allowed and encouraged private enterprise to a considerable degree, as shown by the fact that 129 of the largest corporations by revenue^[5] are Chinese though the figure is 119 corporations after excluding Taiwanese companies. Eighty-two of the Chinese firms in the Global 500 are state-owned. Nonetheless, it is reckoned that private enterprise accounts for around 60 per cent of the Chinese economy.^[6]

Even Forbes makes the same point in the quoted article to the effect that modern economies are increasingly a mixture of state-controlled and private companies. However, the reality is somewhat more sophisticated than they allow. There is clearly a difference between a regime like that of the USA where the nominal philosophy is pro-capital and one which is not, as in China. Growth, although slowing, is much higher and has been very much higher in China than the USA or Europe. In the second place, critical decisions are usually taken by nationalised banks and government bodies rather than private enterprises.

However, it is also true that across a range of economic activities the state plays a crucial role. This has been brought out by Professor

Muzzacato.[\[7\]](#) She argues that the state pioneers investments and the shape of the market. She says, "The private sector only finds the courage to invest after an entrepreneurial state has made the high-risk investments."

In an intensively researched chapter, she reveals that every technology that makes the iPhone so 'smart' was government funded: the Internet, GPS, its touch-screen display and the voice-activated Siri.

Rana Foroohar argues in the Financial Times a parallel case for business supporting a government role in the economy. She says that "it is becoming a given that the US needs a more coherent national economic strategy in a world in which state capitalism is in the ascendant."[\[8\]](#)

Of course, these points about the modern economy are not new. It is obvious that the state plays a more and more important role within modern otherwise capitalist economies. Education has to be provided by the state and as knowledge expands and becomes more complex it becomes essential to provide mass education to higher and higher levels. Medicine cannot be run on the basis of doctors making a profit. Insurance for health instead of state-supplied medicine is wasteful and inefficient. Research and development run by private enterprise works poorly, as Muzzacato may imply. In fact, a more humane, socially-caring society would be more efficient. As society progresses this becomes more obvious in more spheres. This much had been predicted directly or indirectly for more than possibly two centuries.

Today, it looks as if the world may face a few catastrophes before a form of global state has to intervene to save the earthly environment.

Looked at from the present perspective as opposed to the one of 1994 when the counter-Keynesian reformation was taking place, South Africa has been facing in the wrong direction. Crucial countries' governments are moving if not to the left, then away from the centre. The left itself is shifting from the centre-left so-called to the left. That has happened now in Germany and had already done so in the UK. France is yet to declare, as it were. Macron has failed. Most of Europe is in an intermediate position in which it will move eventually right or left. Poland and Hungary are on the far right inside the EU though not in the Euro. South Africa is in the odd

position of a government which includes parties declaring that they are on the left when their policy is to maintain privatisation, i.e. on the right.

Global bourgeois strategy and capitalist decline

In fact, the only way to understand the present muddle is to recognise the reality that capitalism itself is in political-economic decline. It is not just a question of changing governments. Of course, the decline is half of what I meant when I talked of a world in transition. When there is the talk of increasing state capitalism it is obvious that capitalism is at the very least in the process of change. But it is clearly more than that. Lenin, after all, proclaimed the decline of capitalism as from 1870 referring in particular to the rise of monopoly capital, or decline of competition and the export of capital combined with imperialist conquest and robbery of Africa in particular, as well as elsewhere.

The decline of capitalism can be seen in three aspects. First is the empirical problems, with low or declining productivity. That, of course, has been a worse problem in the last few decades. The second issue is around the movement away from value whether through monopoly/oligopoly, the state or other bases. The third issue concerns the inability of capital to solve its economic or political-economic problems or in Marxist terms, the increasing difficulty that capital finds in bringing interaction into play within contradictions as opposed to moving to conflict. In other words, capital today is finding it difficult to run the economic structure.

The post-World War 2 period was one in which the British Empire was transferred to a US-dominated global entity. Given the developed nature of capitalism, it did not need direct colonial rule. It showed who was master at the time of the Franco-British mastered invasion of Egypt over the Suez Canal. US global domination was buttressed by the Cold War and between the two, capitalism was stabilized. Wages rose in developed countries and education was either free or cheap. This was a period of relative stability combined with decolonisation. Opportunity and the standard of living rose in developed countries. In 1968, it was effectively challenged and combined with the US defeat in Viet Nam, the bourgeoisie chose to dismantle the welfare state or the particular forms of it. The system was under direct threat. The Soviet Union was itself in dire straits; it had reached the

ultimate point of a society based on very low productivity and a dictatorial form.

However, it was also true of the so-called West or capitalism.

The Reagan-Thatcher shift came at the right time for a change for the bourgeoisie. From the point of view of capital, there was no alternative. It worked; the gap between the top 0.1 per cent and the rest of the population widened over time to several hundred per cent from what amounted to single figures. The crash of 2006-8 was inevitable and indeed obviously coming. It was preceded by a series of crashes. In 1987 the stock market plunged and was saved by direct state-backed intervention but the downturn was transferred to 1989-93. The entire period thereafter was on the brink, with the East Asian Crash in 1997, and the long-term capital management crisis in 1998. The latter was a hedge fund with 126 billion dollars of assets which could not meet its obligations. It was bailed out, but it is believed that had it gone under, the 2008 crisis would have happened at that time. In March 2000 the Stock Exchange did crash. Between 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq, the economy picked up but by 2006 there was a property crash which was the beginning of the 2008 downturn. The only way that one can read that history is of a system which cannot find a way out.

Capitalism in decline

The fact was that the contemporary capitalist economy had not been delivering what it did in the 30 years after the last world war. Put another way, the seventies were a watershed when the capitalist system had to concede by going for higher growth rates, higher wages, and loss of control to the workers, etc, or pull the plug. They chose the latter course by attacking the unions and privatizing nationalised sectors and reverting to finance capital as a mode of control. The reversion to finance capital and denationalisation was done almost to its limits in some countries. Finance capital has been a fetishized form, a step away from the direct producers. It forced the expropriation of houses, businesses and companies on the grounds of unrepayable debt. From this point of view, the crash beginning in 2006-8 was inevitable under conditions where ultimately the total debt was unrepayable without forgiveness or forced labour.

Capital today exists outside its natural term. In principle, competitive capitalism cannot control its total production as there is no planning or collusion among firms. In contrast, non-competitive or monopoly capitalism can control its product in particular sectors. Finance capital can collude with productive firms, like automobile producers, to limit production according to the number of possible solvent customers. The state plays its role by providing credit through actions of the central bank and through financing parts of the economy if necessary.

The problem does not arise with the productive firms, as they can control their output over time, but with finance capital. In principle, the state sector can expand its supply of money in order to reduce unemployment or a downturn. That is what happened after 2008. China has less of a problem doing so, as an ultimately state capitalist economy. The EU is still pumping money into the economic system. In reality, the situation is not quite so abstract. Banks and particular firms are supported and others not.

One of the crucial features of the global transition from capitalism is the change in power of the ruling class and its relation to its instrument – the state. They are not fused together and can have differences.

Brexit is an example where most of the powerful sections of the ruling class are opposed to the policy of leaving the EU but prefer to allow the state to take the measures required. They are handling it quite delicately in general, with occasional outbursts. The question is only whether the outcome is formally Brexit, or formally a break with the single market, or not.

Similarly, the ruling class has delegated part of its power to the Central Banks and formal economic administration of the state and has regular tussles with them, within an overall capitalist framework. The essential point is that capital today administers capitalism to a considerable degree. The concept of the free market in its application to the economy is limited. Milton Friedman's idea that oligopoly does not change the rules of the market is simply wrong. Capital wants a somewhat free market in labour above all, but it is not about to have many more aircraft companies to compete with Boeing, or many Amazons, Googles, Facebooks, Intels, Qualcomms, Oracles, IBMs. If President Trump creates a second Amazon, little would change. Where there are a number of companies, as with automobiles they are not many. We are at a stage in the development of

technology where abundance in staples could come quickly, but it is held up by the market form. There is normally sufficient overall control to ensure that overproduction does not take place through the action of the firm combined with the state.

In other words, we have more than reached the stage of capitalism in which human beings can consciously plan their society to the benefit of all. The ruling class is afraid to go that way since they will lose their role and position in society. The result is that they are consciously restraining the forces of production from delivering their potential.

Where are we now?

In short, the present stage of society is one in which the ruling class is very conscious of their precarious situation and have the means to delay their demise. We cannot understand economic policy as something automatically delivered by an unmanaged market economy.

While a capitalist economy cannot be genuinely planned, it can be steered and have limited, partially conscious controls. In other words, the so-called economic or capitalist production cycle is much more limited as a cycle than in earlier times. Firms can plan their production over time and restrict production and with it, investment. There have been a series of predictions of upturns and downturns in the last 10 years, but they have not generally meant much. Michael Roberts has discussed the issue in many of his blogs, including, very usefully, why he turned out to be wrong in predicting a downturn last year^[9]. At present, the relative upturn has been called in question, at least for Europe.^[10] It was thought that the EU was entering a boom period but this year the economy has turned down.

The rate of growth in China has gone upwards this year, so making some economists look foolish. The simple fact is that a large growing economy in which the state is all-powerful has an advantage in that it can pump in money easily, and open and close down plants when it deems them unnecessary. It does take a toll on the incentive system, but a substantial level of *de facto* unemployment in the countryside helps. This does not make the Chinese economy socialist in any sense, but it does illustrate the disadvantages of a capitalist economy, particularly in a transitional world.

Unsurprisingly, the global hegemon is trying to do something about it. This point is made in some detail by Phillip Alldrick, under the title of "Trump didn't start the trade war, it has been a long time coming."[\[11\]](#) Given the friendship between Murdoch, owner of *The Times* and Trump, this might have been expected. Trump's intended large-scale imposition of tariffs on Chinese goods thus appears as no novelty.

Martin Wolf[\[12\]](#) has written a number of articles both on the rise of China and on the present predicament of a protectionist world. Today[\[13\]](#) he is arguing for economic and political reform. He argues that competition is too weak, productivity is feeble, inequality is too high, there is rentier capitalism, finance capital plays too big a role or is too costly and there is plutocracy rather than democracy. That he should say these things all together is new for him but of course, for most people on the left, he is saying nothing new. Someone so much part of the establishment and in a newspaper of the bourgeoisie itself does tell the world that capitalism is in a new stage of its continuing crisis.

The Left's dilemma

The left has been placed in an impossible position for almost a century. It argues that the world is ready for socialism, which will be a society which is superior, in all respects, for all humanity. However, until capitalism is overthrown globally, the socialist transition in itself cannot begin. We are in a transition towards that state, which is different. We now live in a transition of a different kind, one which involves the decline of capitalism and the emergence of non-socialist non-capitalist forms.

Analysis of the present is necessarily difficult and confusing. Forms of action, of trying to encourage society to move forward are contradictory. Slogans in a transitional programme risk providing a reformist solution, which, if initially successful, eventually collapse on top of their progenitors. Furthermore, such a solution may help only a section of the workforce and disadvantage others.

Lenin, famously, had little time for the trade unions of the time in Russia, who generally were reformist. In the October revolution of 1917, it was workers councils, Soviets that played the revolutionary role, even though such as the railway workers helped on occasion. Much of the left, since,

have sought to enter the trade unions as a means of spreading the gospel as well as acting politically.

The problem has often been debated under various titles, but not solved. If one puts forward immediate demands and they are conceded, where are you going next? There can be no question but that the pressure of the working class, and left-wing leadership, has helped to raise the standard of living and reduce the brutality of life under capital. But it is not socialism, and the demands are humanitarian rather than socialist. Nor are they steps to socialism.

On the other hand, if the only demands are for a new society, for the working class to take power as a class, there is little meaning when we are talking of small groups or sects. Only if the demands come from a party of sufficient popular support to constitute a real threat to the power of capital, is there likely to be some movement.

What then was done in the last century, once social democracy accepted capitalism and Stalinism established control over much of the left? The latter effectively accepted the status quo, putting forward essentially reformist demands and doing deals which supported the ruling class as in France in 1968.

The small genuine left remained on the side-lines experimenting with support from students and the youth in general, as well as layers of intellectuals and workers. This has been the reality essentially based on the *de facto* defeat of the left, first by the betrayal of German social democracy and then by the Stalinist coup d'état in the USSR.

On what basis can we formulate a programme or individual demands today? We can only answer this question by deciding on the stage that we are in today. Socialism in one country has failed in the USSR, China, Cuba and Venezuela, and both Stalinism and social democracy are either dead or dying. People are turning to the far right in many countries, as in the thirties. The post-war mould is broken. For the first time, since the twenties, there is a real possibility that the working class will take up its class demands. That class is largely skilled and white-collar in the developed countries, although peasants and unskilled workers dominate in the underdeveloped countries.

Immigration – open borders

In this situation, it is crucial that internationalism rules. It is important that the international nature of the struggle is strong and clear. Socialism in one country as stressed above would be nonsense if it were not a tragedy. Nor does it help to have two countries, going socialist, as it were. It has to be an effectively global victory, in which the developed countries help the rest. The process may take a few years to develop, but it is clear that the capitalist class will crush or fatally undermine any revolution in one or a few countries immediately it begins unless it extends itself.

The central basis of the Marxist political economy lies in the extraction of surplus-value by the capitalist from the worker. In order to keep wages down, the capitalist system has to maintain a reserve army of labour. Historically, the reserve army was maintained partly by through replacement of workers by machinery, and by the absorption of labour from the countryside and from other countries. It is not surprising that workers should see the flow into the towns whether from the countryside or other countries as competitors, as the capitalist class has used the inflow of farmworkers/peasants and non-citizens as a means of lowering wages. The United States was clearly built on immigration. In the UK, Irish workers were super-exploited, something that Marx discusses in *Capital*. The process is continuing in the EU. From this point of view, the bourgeoisie appears today in a dual category: as a super-exploiter of imported labour, and as a liberal on immigration.

It is not enough to stand for equal wages for citizen and non-citizen labour. The fact is that the employer will not want immigrant labour at the same wage, as the whole point is to raise the surplus-value. On the other hand, the immigrant worker is in desperate circumstances with little choice. There is no solution under capitalism. Inevitably, some trade unions end up preventing the employment of immigrant labour and against immigration.

Racial discrimination is another aspect of this phenomenon. In South Africa, white workers fought to protect their higher wages. The whole structure of apartheid was based on the protection of white workers. There is no way around the point that the left must stand for both equal wages/opportunity

for all and open borders. They have to endorse a ban on discrimination based on colour or citizenship.

Where does this leave left activists in unions? They have to demand open borders and equal wages for immigrant and local workers. This means that they have help to organise both sets of workers to be able to control the bargaining with the employers to ensure non-discrimination and equality of wages. It is not a straightforward struggle in anything but the aim for a truly human society, where work has become humanity's prime want.

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16 December 2019

END

[1] This is a draft of the Keynote Address delivered at the event held in Cape Town on 16 December 2019 to commemorate the legacy of Ben Kies on the fortieth anniversary of his death.

[2] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1933/04/safrica.html>

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agriculture_in_South_Africa

[4] For a detailed history of Trotskyist groups in South Africa between the two World Wars see Baruch Hirson: *The Trotskyist Groups in South Africa: A Retrospective View*. Available at the following website: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/backiss/vol4/no4/hirson04.htm>

[5] "As the Chinese Century nears its third decade, *Fortune*'s Global 500 shows how profoundly the world's balance of power is shifting. American companies account for 121 of the world's largest corporations by revenue. Chinese companies account for 129 (including 10 Taiwanese companies). For the first time since the debut of the Global 500 in 1990, and arguably for the first time since World War II, a nation other than the U.S. is at the top of the ranks of global big business." <https://fortune.com/longform/fortune-global-500-china-companies/>

[6] Rainer Zitelmann: State Capitalism? No, The Private Sector Was And Is The Main Driver Of China's Economic Growth, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rainerzitelmann/2019/09/30/state-capitalism-no-the-private-sector-was-and-is-the-main-driver-of-chinas-economic-growth/#15425e6827cb>.

[7] Mazzucato also controversially argues that in the history of modern capitalism the State has not only fixed market failures but has also actively shaped and created markets.

<https://marianamazucato.com/entrepreneurial-state/>

[8] Rana Foroohar: "Consciously Decoupling the US economy" <https://www.ft.com/content/f23d8854-11fa-11ea-a225-db2f231cfeae1st December 2019>.

[9] See his useful blogs, giving commentaries on the present and raising important questions e.g.: <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2017/05/> <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/>

[10] "The global recovery has hit some resistance; splatterings of weak economic data should have policymakers worried." Editorial in Financial Times 14th April 2018. They run through the indicators in the EU area, USA, Japan and China and point out that the indicators are 'soft,' while the recovery period from the downturn would historically presage a downturn. They are reflecting a more general view of caution.

[11] By Phillip Alldrick: "Trump didn't start the trade war, it has been a long time coming." *The Times*, April 10, 2018, p.32.

[12] Martin Wolf: "Let Knowledge Spread Around the World", <https://www.ft.com/content/1bdcf69c-470c-11e8-8ee8-cae73aab7ccb>, Financial Times, April 24, 2018. Martin Wolff: "US-China rivalry will shape the 21st century. Beijing's rising economic and political power poses great challenges to the

west”, *Financial Times*, April 10, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/5f796164-3be1-11e8-b9f9-de94fa33a81e>

[13] Martin Wolf: “How to reform today’s rigged capitalism”, *Financial Times*, 3rd December 2019. <https://www.ft.com/content/4cf2d6ee-14f5-11ea-8d73-6303645ac406>