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2025 NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM NUM: IS THE TRANSITION TO SOCIALISM ON THE HORIZON?

It is with great pleasure that I extend warm greetings, compliments of the season and well wishes for the New Year, to all our members, supporters and our faithful *The Worker* readership.

Given the tumultuous times in which we are living my good wishes are coupled with a renewed appeal for us, in a spirit of solidarity to join hands in confronting the challenges that the system of Neo-liberal Capitalism Imperialism continues to throw up.

For the system of Neoliberal Capitalism Imperialism has undergone yet further baneful change so far as the citizens of the world, in the Global South in particular, are concerned.

Today, as we stand on the threshold of a New Year we are once again called upon to consider how we as an organisation which considers itself to be a part of the Left in this country, can make a contribution to setting out our vision and mission for challenging the hegemony of this evil system.

The date 7 October 2023 is seared in the memory of all freedom loving people as it ushered in what can only be described as the beginning of the total annihilation of the people of Palestine by the Apartheid state of Israel, aided and abetted by the USA and NATO. This atrocity is coupled with deadly assaults on countries like Lebanon, Yemen and Iran for their manifest support of the Palestinian cause which has been on full display on a daily basis since that day.

These assaults now also include Syria as a prelude to setting up illegal Israeli settlements on the Golan Heights.

However this atrocity has been accompanied by the widespread ravages on the world's eco systems wrought by climate change, the effect of which has escalated during the past year.

The rise of right wing, nationalist, overtly fascistic parties and leaders, epitomised most recently by the re-ascendency of Donald Trump in the USA, is a cause for great concern to the people of the Global South in particular.

Meanwhile, here at home, the decline in support for the ANC and the ascendency of the MKP does not augur well.

In addition, whilst the problem of load shedding which has disrupted our lives for months, has if nothing else, been ameliorated, the ongoing manifestations of poor service delivery and deeply ingrained corruption in government



The President of the NUM: Dr Basil Brown

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departments continues to blight the lives of millions of our compatriots.

Put in a nutshell the problems mentioned are symptomatic of the failing state administered by the ruling ANC until May 2024 and since then, by the Government of National Unity (GNU).

All of the above lead to one repeating a statement one made in 2020, "the people of the world have to make a simple decision, namely choose between socialism or barbarism."

Furthermore, one can only but reiterate a statement made In September 2021 in relation to dealing with the crisis confronting the country then. In the statement we said the following:

"We must demand the people-centric transformation of our economy, away from one which secures the prosperity of a capitalist elite, to one which is caring and all-inclusive; one which delivers jobs, houses, services, community facilities and crime-free neighbourhoods. Under the current dispensation, it is a fact that most South Africans live lives of unrelenting hardship. Violent crime, overcrowded shack- and backyard dwelling, lack of services: these are the daily realities for most South Africans.

There should be an immediate allocation of adequate levels of state resources – human and material – to the urgent task of ridding society of all forms of crime - NOW."

We in the NUM believe that ALL of the problems that confront us both nationally and globally are due to the ongoing crisis of capitalism-imperialism and that it is only the total elimination of that system which will bring about a solution to those problems.

It is in this regard that one offers the following as a proposal expressing *the vision for the NUM for 2025*.

THE VISION

One's vision for the NUM and the broad Left in this country should incorporate some or all of the following ideas:

A firm belief that the only alternative to the hegemony of capitalism imperialism is socialism.

A commitment to the building of a movement for socialism which will lead to the establishment of a socialist peoples' democracy in this country.

The need for a political programme such as our own Ten Point Programme (TPP) of Transitional Demands.

The programme must be inextricably linked to poli-

cies such as Non racialism, Anti capitalism and Anti-Imperialism.

The movement for socialism must undertake a thoroughgoing process of educating the masses about the meaningful benefits of democratic socialism as opposed to the discredited Stalinist version of socialism.

THE MISSION

The mission of a movement for socialism must be to:

Develop the Movement into an effective force capable of intervening meaningfully in current events taking place in South Africa;

Propagate ideas designed to raise working class consciousness amongst the oppressed and exploited poor and landless people of this country;

Advocate for the convening of meetings of likeminded organisations of the Non-Stalinist Left as an urgent imperative.

It was in line with that belief that we as NUM enthusiastically participated in Numsa's initiative, announced in 2016, of building a United Front and a Movement for Socialism in this country. Sadly, that initiative was allowed to fail.

TOWARDS A PROGRAMME OF ACTION

One's proposal for a programme of action for 2025 involves re-invigorating the membership of NUM in the first instance, to rededicate themselves to the cause of the NUM. Secondly a call is made to all individuals and organisations to become involved with initiatives to build a credible alternative to the corrupt parliamentary systems operating in this country and the world and to formulate a clear strategy for executing the transition to Socialism.

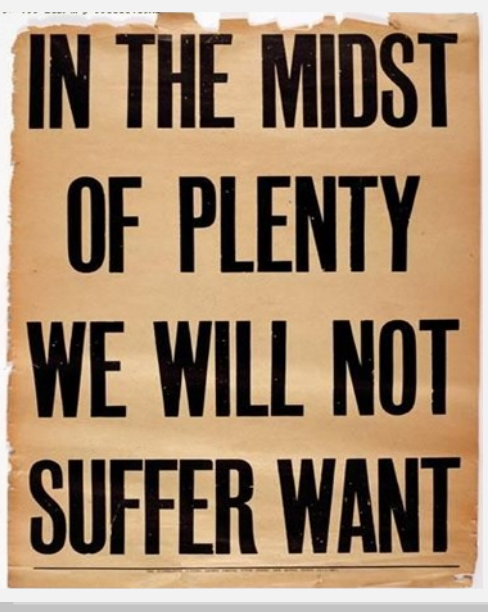
Basil Brown
President

“100 MILLION NEW JOBS IN AFRICA IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS” – PIE IN THE SKY?

At first glance it would seem like fake news – “A 100 million new jobs across the African continent over the next five years.” This, apparently, is the target that the so-called Africa Investment Summit (AIS) has set itself.

Who are these guys? It turns out they are a strictly top-down elitist initiative whose website says:

The Africa Investment Summit connects Investors, leaders, and innovators to unlock Africa's vast potential across sectors like agriculture, energy, healthcare, and more. By fostering strategic public-private partnerships, this summit aims to address barriers such as policy and regulatory challenges, paving the way for sustainable economic growth and prosperity.



states. In order for capitalist firms to maximise their profits they need to minimise their costs. As we know from first-hand experience in our own country, the first casualty of capitalist cost reduction strategies is always the working class.

Workers under the neo-liberal order

In the 1980s, class struggle “from above” resulted in mass layoffs of industrial workers in the advanced economies, destruction of working class organisations (specifically trade unions) and the globalisation

This comes directly from the neo-liberal playbook. Clearly, the AIS is less about jobs than about “unlocking” profit-making opportunities for Big Capital and African bourgeoisies.

Investment decisions

The fundamental purpose of investment decision-making under capitalism is profit-making, or more pointedly, profit-maximising.

If, in terms of their assessment, the capitalist/“profit-dependent” classes deem an investment option insufficiently profitable, they will simply not invest. They will sit on their cash, maybe even withdraw it from a particular country or economy.

We know that, at a minimum, the (neo-liberal) capitalists demand conditions such as privatisation, deregulation and labour docility. So, when AIS says it aims to “foster public-private partnerships,” and when it expresses the aim “to address barriers such as policy and regulatory challenges,” then there can be no question but that it has been set up to create the (optimal) conditions demanded by capitalism – privatisation, deregulation, labour docility . . .

Africa is not a country, or rather, it is not a single state. Each African state will be competing against the rest for capitalist investment, which will inevitably result in a “race to the bottom” for the poor across all countries/

of the value-chain, meaning that production was moved to locations where cost was lowest – in short, to countries where the conditions for investment were most favourable. Neo-liberalism became the preferred option when the welfare state (in Western countries) began to wane as a profit-making machine.

At 32.1% our unemployment rate is the highest in Africa. Clearly, we are not regarded as a premium location for investment capital. And, moving forward, with labour-saving technologies such as AI and robotics expected to impact employment globally, the prospects of our employment levels improving anytime soon are slim indeed. This can only mean increased levels of immiseration for the “wage-dependent” classes. In a scenario of growing working class destitution the question arises: would government step into the breach to provide the necessary infrastructure and services to working communities caught in this capitalist-induced poverty trap? Housing? Education? Food? With corporations resisting taxation, and with lending agencies raising interest rates, government will lack capacity, which means it will further starve the working class of essentials – such as can be seen in the slashing of the 2025 budget for education.

The Gig Economy/Casualisation of work

In a February 2024 article Michelle Hassan tells us

South Africa has seen a substantial rise in the gig economy, particularly in urban areas. In

2021, 3.9 million gig workers constituted 1% of the workforce, with a predominant demographic of individuals under 30 concentrated in major urban hubs like Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Gig work includes short-term tasks for digital platforms like Uber, Uber Eats, and Sweep South, as well as location-bound work like taxi driving, delivery, and cleaning.

The casualisation of work is the process of making jobs less permanent or regular, often by hiring temporary workers or employees without written contracts. Casualisation puts workers at a disadvantage, offering little job security, low wages, and irregular hours. (Google, 9 December 2024)

A growing segment of the gig economy is the “platform economy” where the “platforms” in question refer to computer giants such as Face Book, X, Microsoft, Amazon and Google.

These sites locate what Mike Davis describes as ‘surplus humanity’ – sections of the global populace rendered outside of the economy proper – to sporadically fulfil the needs of big tech. Contracted only for the length of a given task, workers vacillate between states of employment and unemployment, and may end up working for myriad companies over the course of a day.

The sole beneficiaries of this arrangement are contractors – often large tech firms such as Twitter, Facebook and Google – who get to shirk the responsibilities of more standard employment. No longer classed as ‘workers’ but as ‘freelancers’, ‘independent contractors’ and – perhaps most egregiously – ‘players’, those who work on these sites forgo rights, regulations and any last vestige of bargaining power.

(Phil Jones. *Work Without the Worker: Labour in the Age of Platform Capitalism*. Verso. 2021)

A not insignificant factor with regard to gig-type work is that in many cases, the workers must themselves provide their own “means of production” – Uber drivers must use their own cars and purchase the necessary fuel. And platform workers need to provide their own computers, internet connections, and electricity.

AIS will be working *within* the system which creates the gig economy. So, for AIS, the question might be asked: what counts as “a job?” It would seem that their vision is to transform Africa into a massive slave colony.

“Yes, but . . .”

There will be those apologists who will be saying, “yes, but at least people who otherwise might not have seen any income now have something, albeit it a pittance from degrading, de-skilled and what will often be inhuman/alienating work.

The owners of platforms such as Amazon and X are dollar billionaires – among the wealthiest individuals in the history of the planet. The profits they derive from the sweat of casualised labourers enable them to spend their money on space jaunts around the earth.

Their lackeys are government apparatchiks ever-willing to do their bidding – creating the “right conditions” for investment. Lackeys who will promote the fiction that the point of capitalist investment is that it benefits our country’s economy, that it is the route to job creation and prosperity.

“Africa has 40% of the world’s gold, 90% of its platinum and chromium, and the world’s largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds, platinum, and uranium. It also has 65% of the world’s arable land and 10% of the world’s renewable fresh water.” (Google, 9 December 2024)

Is AIS going to facilitate the neo-liberal feeding frenzy?

According to Freschia Gonzales in an April 2024 article:

The 2024 Africa Wealth Report by Henley & Partners reveals that the total investable wealth on the African continent stands at US2.5tn, with the millionaire population expected to increase by 65 percent over the next ten years.

Who are AIS trying to fool?

Quo Vadis?

Within the scope of this short article we cannot do justice to the discussion of how effective resistance might be mounted. Thus, we will re-visit this question of “where to?” in a future issue of *The Worker*.

A luta Continua!

The Impunity that is the Colonialist Mindset

Most people around the world are by now aware of the horrific ongoing killing, maiming and destruction perpetrated by Israel in Gaza. The merciless, gruesome detail is laid bare in real time news. Similarly, it is common knowledge that Israel has the backing of the United States which is supplying weapons, intelligence and logistical information to Israel.

It is also well-known that Britain, which held a League of Nations mandate to rule Palestine after World War 1, granted Israel as a homeland to the Jewish people in 1948, land which belonged to the Palestinian people. This was sanctioned by the United Nations.



This served Britain well because Israel would look after its interests in the Middle East. With time, as Israel bought more interest and backing in the West, the United States and Europe made common cause, where the land of the Palestinians became part of their Imperialist colonial project.

The significance of this is made evident by the impunity with which Israel has been rolling out its own brand of Apartheid in the country, discriminating against the indigenous Palestinians, dispossessing them of their homes and farms and driving them into an open-air prison called Gaza. (Note: Apartheid South Africa was eventually chastised for doing the same things.)

This indemnity and lack of accountability are now most apparent in the impunity with which Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. More than 45 000 people have been killed and yet even the feeble attempts to stop it are vetoed by the United States.

As complex as regional geopolitical issues could be, one could simply conclude that the reason for the events in Gaza could be that the colonisation of Palestine is part of the Imperialist colonial project of world resource control. This becomes easier to comprehend against the background of acknowledging that racism is the ideology of Imperialism. Since the initial days of colonisation, the mindset of the colonisers was one of superiority. Whoever they encountered in their avaricious search for raw materials, were deemed as inferi-

or, of lesser being and liable for conquest and dispossession.

This mindset of privilege and entitlement is also what lies behind the faux concern for the plight of the Palestinians. Governments express concern but the killing continues. Responding to the debate on a resolution by the Oxford Union whether Israel was an Apartheid State responsible for genocide, acclaimed Pal-

estinian novelist Susan Abulhawa may have had this in mind when she concluded that if the world were watching the systematic annihilation of Jewish people instead of Palestinians, the Oxford Union would not still be debating whether the carnage in Gaza constituted terrorism or genocide.

Before reminding the Zionists that the Palestinians let them into their homes when their own countries tried to murder them and everyone else turned them away, that Palestine would be free one day and that Zionist Jews would finally learn to live with others as equals, she made brave to say:

“..... if the roles were reversed – if Palestinians had spent the last eight decades stealing Jewish homes, expelling, oppressing, imprisoning, poisoning, torturing, raping and killing them; if Palestinians had killed an estimated 300 000 Jews in one year, targeted their journalists, their thinkers their healthcare workers, their athletes, their artists, bombed every Israeli hospital, university, library, museum, cultural centre, synagogue, and simultaneously set up an observation platform where people came to watch their slaughter as if a tourist attraction; if Palestinians had corralled them by the hundreds of thousands into flimsy tents, bombed them in so-called safe zones, burned them alive, cut off their food, water and medicine;

if Palestinians made Jewish children wander barefoot

with empty pots; made them gather the flesh of their parents into plastic bags; made them bury their siblings, cousins and friends; made them sneak out from their tents in the middle of the night to sleep on their parents' graves; made them pray for death just to join their families and not to be alone in this terrible world anymore, and terrorised them so utterly that their children lose their hair, lose their memory, lose their minds, and made those as young as 4 or 5 years old to die of heart attacks;

if we mercilessly forced their NICU babies to die, alone in hospital beds, crying until they could cry no more, died and decomposed in the same spot; if Palestinians used wheat flour aid trucks to lure starving Jews, then opened fire on them when they gathered to collect a day's bread; if Palestinians finally allowed a food delivery into a shelter with hungry Jews, then set fire to the entire shelter and aid truck before anyone could taste the food;

if a Palestinian sniper bragged about blowing out 42 Jewish kneecaps in one day as one Israeli soldier did in 2019; if a Palestinian admitted to CNN that he ran over hundreds of Jews with his tank, their squished flesh lingering in the tank treads; if Palestinians were systematically raping Jewish doctors patients, and other captives with hot metal rods, jagged and electrified sticks, and fire extinguishers, sometimes raping to death, as happened with Dr Adnan al Bursh and others;

if Jewish women were forced to give birth in filth, get C-sections or leg amputations without anaesthesia; if we destroyed their children then decorated our tanks with their toys; if we killed or displaced their women then posed with their lingerie.... If the world were watching the live streamed systematic annihilation of Jews in real time, there would be no debating whether that constituted terrorism or genocide.”

Such is the scale of modern-day settler-colonialism: every bit as evil as its predecessors; a mindset that preaches equality, fraternity and liberty but fails to extend the same ideals to others because of their “race”, colour or creed. This mindset, according to Brian A. Wilson (member of the Unity Movement) in his year-

end message, feeds its people fake news and lies via its slavish media, so that they do not comprehend the



heinousness of their connivances.

Our support for the people of Palestine against settler-colonialism is underscored by our opposition to Imperialism and an understanding of the crude mindset of its proponents. Though presented as inevitable, Imperialism can be overcome and an alternate world is possible.

An Electoral Coup in Namibia?

Shaun Whittaker and Harry Boesak

Namibia had her 8th general election. The results of the National Assembly elections held in November 2024 were: Swapo (53%), the Independent Patriots for Change (IPC) (20%), the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) Movement (7%), the Popular Democratic Movement (PDM) (5%), the Landless People's Movement (LPM) (5%), Swanu (1%), the Namibian Economic Freedom Fighters (NEFF) (1%), etc. In the presidential election, the Swapo candidate, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, got 57%, while the IPC's Panduleni Itula secured 26% (29% in 2019).

Namibian citizens came out to vote in large numbers. There were 13% more registered voters than in 2019 and altogether 90% of the 1.4 million voters registered.

The majority were youth who were undoubtedly inspired by Botswana and South Africa, namely, that it is possible to get rid of the corrupt ruling elite. It was therefore the most crucial election after political independence as it was first and foremost an anti-corruption election. Secondly, the youth are sick and tired of unemployment and poverty. These were the main issues of the election. That is why, prior to the balloting, the Namibia Statistics Agency released a report without the unemployment statistics to try and hide the enormous joblessness rate among young people. But the disaster of mass unemployment is seen everywhere.

If the official results are to be believed, Swapo obtained 53% this time, down from 65% in 2019. It lost 12 seats, including that of Utoni Nujoma, who was the minister of labour, industrial relations and employment creation. The critical change, however, is that Namibia has a new opposition party, the IPC, which was formed in 2020. It succeeded in presenting itself as an inclusive and non-ethnocentric party with a leadership connected to the grassroots. The IPC picked up 20 seats, but – together with some opposition parties – refused to recognise the official outcomes and will go to the electoral court to challenge it. It remains to be seen though if the Swapo-dominated judiciary will deliver justice. In 2009, the electoral court called for a recount of votes although the government claimed that the ballot boxes were apparently destroyed by rain seeping into a warehouse, while in 2019 that court declared the electronic voting machines as unconstitutional but did not proclaim the election as null and void. Thus, a cloud hangs over the electoral court. The second biggest opposition party



now, the AR, has a base among the youth, but will unfortunately not join the court challenge. Likewise, the LPM and Swanu will also not. Personality differences weaken the opposition. It might also be mentioned that, surprisingly, Swanu managed to acquire one seat, despite having been wracked by

internal bickering and ideological deterioration.

Voting was marred by widespread irregularities. In opposition areas such as Windhoek (Khomas region), Walvisbay, Swakopmund (Erongo region), Keetmanshoop and Luderitz (IKaras region) the ballot papers ran out after a few hours on election day. An estimated 113 000 voters could not vote in the Khomas region on 27 November. With the two-day 'extension' on 29 and 30 November, only one polling station was provided for the Khomas region, and none for Erongo and IKaras – without any proper explanation from the Swapo-controlled Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) to date. In the end, the total votes in Khomas were about 187 000. Only 4 900 made it to the single polling station in Windhoek over the two days. So, there was about a 66% voter turnout in Khomas, compared to around 77% nationally of registered voters. Was this voter suppression? What about Erongo and IKharas that could not continue to vote? In fact, only 8 out of 121 constituencies voted on the extra days. Needless to say, this was such a flagrant and brazen violation of the democratic rights of Namibian citizens, and undeniably qualifies as voter suppression. The ECN did not even bother to consult the opposition parties about the extension. In addition, the final outcomes for hardly more than one million voters were only announced on 3 December, several days later, after the drip feeding of results while people were voting during the extension.

On the other hand, the Swapo-dominated northern rural regions of Namibia showed a remarkably large number

of voters were able to vote. It is noteworthy, however, that the results of polling stations in those regions were not reported separately by the ECN, only as an entire region. Take for example Omusati (12 polling stations) (Swapo 102 561, IPC 15 337), Ohangwena (12 polling stations) (Swapo 94 217, IPC 18 465) and Oshana (11 polling stations) (Swapo 58 774, IPC 30 324). This means that most – if not all - polling stations in those rural areas had very high voter turnouts on 27 November and did not have too many problems with ballot papers or verification devices like in opposition areas. In the Ohangwena region, for instance, 10,355 people voted on day one at the Engela polling station and Swapo got 7,518 of the votes, while in Okongo a total of 12,363 voted in the presidential election of which the Swapo candidate received 10,715. Another unusual result was Rundu Urban (Kavango East) where 22 948 voted in one day (Swapo 15 143, IPC 3 951). Can the ECN therefore provide us with the number of votes at each polling station? These high numbers do not make sense, and it is hardly unreasonable to say that the suspected foul play must be thoroughly investigated. In Omusati, where there were seven polling stations for those two extra days, a mere 131 people voted. So where did those extreme figures for that region come from? In the Okatyali constituency (Oshana), the 7 polling stations processed 4 voters over the extended period. Again, no explanation from the ECN. Was the extension a smokescreen to try and justify the abnormal numbers in those areas?

Of course, if it is considered that the ECN printed an additional 400 000 (29%) ballot papers, instead of the standard 5% extra, then it must be assumed that the unavailability was deliberate. The argument that citizens could vote anywhere still does not explain the huge shortages. Could the electoral body therefore produce the unused ballot papers? What exactly happened to the 400 000 ballots? If anything, it seems like a sophisticated strategy of ballot stuffing and voter

suppression was implemented, not necessarily by the ECN.

A report from the Southern Africa Human Rights Lawyers (SAHRL) Election Observer Mission, focusing on voting procedures at 219 polling stations all over Namibia, indicated that most of the stations did not have the necessary voting material and were unprepared to start. There were no voters' rolls displayed at any station and shortages of ballot papers from as early as 11h00 am on voting day. Professor Talent Rusere, a High Commissioner with the SAHRL, speaking on Kosmos Radio news on 3 December, was scathing in his criticism and called the election a scandal. He asserted that Angolans were brought into Namibia to vote, and that Zanu-PF was involved in the sham. In fact, both leaders of the AR and the LPM were similarly of the view that the Zimbabwe ruling elite were implicated behind the scenes. The NEFF accused Swapo of bringing in two busloads of voters from Angola to Oshakati East (Oshana).

The manipulation of the ballot papers made the rigging of the Namibian elections subtle and largely invisible. But the elections were clearly not credible and must be declared as invalid as soon as possible. Namibian citizens should demand a re-run, but it would have to be supervised by a different electoral body. The electoral coup must be reversed to protect democracy in Namibia.

(The authors are members of the Marxist Group of Namibia.)

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