



Trade Unions in the Liberation Movement

Designed as a half-day political school, in two halves.

Part 1, The History of Work up to the threshold of Socialism

(Part 2 is from Page 9 of this booklet, onwards)

- **History of class struggle** (Primitive communism, Slavery, Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism)
- **Work** as successive relations of production, corresponding to the successive class-conflict systems, each one superseding and dominating the one before.
- The imposition upon South Africa of a fully-developed **monopoly-capitalist system** without prior organic development of that system within the country

The relations between human beings have always been, and still are, relations of production.

All human interaction is mediated by artefacts – things that are made, or are being made – whether these be words, or things for use or consumption.

Changes in the social relations between people have come about as a result of changes in the nature of production, leading to changes in the relations of production.

Frederick Engels gave an account of the many changes that occurred in human society leading up to, and following on from, the development and spread of animal husbandry and agriculture during the most recent ten thousand years of its existence. This account is in Engels' book called "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State", first published in 1884.

Slavery, feudalism and capitalism

In the beginning, what was made and used in common was common property. Human relations were fully human. This is the classless relation of production that is known as “primitive communism”.

When cattle were tamed and bred, and when agriculture followed, it became possible to have a surplus of production, and to trade. Engels explains how this led to the enslavement of people by other people. Further changes in the technology of production led to further social divisions, and the creation of a nobility, and then a peasantry bound to the nobility, so that there was feudalism.

After many centuries of such feudalism, new changes in production, once again stimulated by changes in the techniques of production, gave rise to the conditions for capitalism, and then the conquest of the whole planet by capitalism. This process took off in the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain in the second half of the 18th century. By the middle of the 19th Century it had become possible to see this new phenomenon clearly.

The changes were described by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, in 1848, in Chapter 1 of “The Communist Manifesto”. It describes in broad terms how feudalism was superseded by capitalism, and how capitalism grew to dominate the world, only to have to confront its own gravedigger, the proletarian class that capital created as its subservient counterpart.

We are not saying, any more than Marx and Engels were saying, that all history in all places is the same. In fact, all of the classes that in some places succeeded each other, can still be found in parts of the planet, or were to be found within living memory. In South Africa, there is still a peasantry and there are still nobles, whom we call traditional leaders. But it remains true that the dominant relation of production, is capital.

We consequently find ourselves today “on the horns of a dilemma”, or, in other words: “damned if we do, and damned if we don’t”.

We are damned if we don’t find work, in the form of a job. Those who do not work, neither shall they eat. But the form of work under capitalism is the kind that strengthens and perpetuates the system. It feeds the oppressor. Hence we are damned if we do.

Abolition of the wages system

Karl Marx saw this dilemma and wrote, in “Value, Price and Profit” (1865):

*“By [the working class] cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement... At the same time, they ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects... Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!" they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, "**Abolition of the wages system!**"*

In 1867, two years after Karl Marx spoke these words to the newly-formed first International Workingmens’ Association (the “First International”, of which Marx was *de facto* the first General Secretary), Erasmus Jacobs discovered a diamond (the “Eureka” diamond) on the banks of the Orange River at Hopetown in the Northern Cape, not far from Kimberley, where bigger deposits were soon afterwards found.

This led to a diamond rush, which was soon followed by a gold rush to Barberton, and then, less than 20 years after the discovery of the Eureka Diamond, the great gold rush to the Witwatersrand after the discovery of gold in Langlaagte by George Harrison, in 1886.

The coincidence of the mineral discoveries in South Africa with the expansion of capitalism from its British source meant that unlike Britain, which had spent centuries incubating the conditions for capitalism, and the United States of America, where capitalism also had a relatively organic origin, in South Africa, imperialist monopoly capitalism arrived fully formed, as an import, imposed upon the country regardless of the wishes of its inhabitants.

The parachute-like descent of monopoly capitalism – in its highest form of Imperialism – upon South Africa had consequences. One of these is that there is arguably nowhere to go for our country, except forward to a different, and post-capitalist, set of relations of production. We do not have any other way of doing capitalism. We struggle with massive unemployment and a low growth rate. These are features of the global system that was forced upon our country.

The way out, even if it would be an alternative, more humane but still capitalist way out, involves going up against the Imperial power. The chances of success are not favourable. Hence the argument that says that we should not aim for a “fair” kind of capitalism, but for the abolition of this system in our country and its replacement with another one, the one we refer to as “socialism”.

What is Socialism?

Socialism is a very broad term. In its broadest sense, it means a society which is fully organised as a single system where each individual is dependent upon all of the others. In this very broad sense, capitalism is a socialist system, because workers under capitalism are inter-dependent. There is, if not in practice, then at least in idealised capitalism, division of labour within the nation such as to create a full mutual interdependence. Under capitalism, production is socialised, whereas under feudalism it was atomised.

We know that capitalism is also subject to periodic crises and to perpetual and large-scale unemployment. We know that the ownership of the means of production is not socialised, even if production is socialised. We can say that all of these problems of capitalism are ineradicable, within capitalism. The hope for improved, problem-free capitalism is a vain hope. There are no examples of such. In terms of poverty worldwide, capitalism has failed. It is not the fault of the victims, but it is the fault of capitalism itself. We may also mention here the problem of constant war that is inherent in capitalism.

If capitalism is itself a form of socialism, then we need a more precise way of differentiating between capitalism and the form of socialism that must replace it, so that we may expect the vast problems that persist under capitalism worldwide and particularly in South Africa, to be diminished until altogether done away with.

The key difference, as Karl Marx could see as far back as 1865, is in the relations of production.

We are not going to be able to describe the relations of production that can supersede capitalism, after the “abolition of the wages system”, in this class. That is a project for a course on advanced philosophy, which is not this course.

Small business is not a solution

What we can do is first have a very brief look at the existing alternatives to the present kind of capitalism. We have already noted that the sudden imposition of monopoly capitalism on South Africa precluded the development of intermediate forms to the extent that they exist in other countries.

We can also note that South Africa is doing its best to re-create those intermediate forms, in the way of small business (with now a new Ministry of small business), BBEEE, entrepreneurship, EPOS, resettlement of land and small-scale agriculture.

We can further note that Karl Marx was disparaging of such efforts. In Chapter 32 of Marx's "Capital", Volume 1, Marx wrote:

This [small-scale] mode of production pre-supposes parcelling of the soil and scattering of the other means of production. As it excludes the concentration of these means of production, so also it excludes co-operation, division of labor within each separate process of production, the control over, and the productive application of the forces of Nature by society, and the free development of the social productive powers. It is compatible only with a system of production, and a society, moving within narrow and more or less primitive bounds. To perpetuate it would be, as Pecqueur rightly says, "to decree universal mediocrity."

In part of the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels wrote:

"The lower middle-classes, the small manufacturers, the shopkeepers, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle-class... they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history."

We do not have to take what Marx and Engels wrote in a dogmatic spirit. Policies and programmes which assist individuals to survive are not harmful to the nation. But we do have to concede that the dominant form of production, whether capitalist or post-capitalist, is in South Africa already large-scale, and will have to remain so.

"The transformation of the individualized and scattered means of production into socially concentrated ones" of which Marx writes in Chapter 32 of Capital, Volume 1, has already happened in South Africa, for better or for worse, whether we like it or not, and there is no proposal to reverse this in favour of a return to small-scale production as the dominant form. Those days are gone forever. The prospect of a petty-bourgeois utopia (such as was advanced by early ultra-left opponents of Marx like Pierre-Joseph Proudhon), is not part of anyone's programme in South Africa today.

The capitalist relation of production

Karl Marx repeatedly stated that his reason for writing “Capital”, Volume 1, was to discover “the secret of the self-increase of capital”.

The secret is revealed in Chapter 6 of that book, and in the first lines of Chapter 7.

Marx says that the only source of the self-increase of capital is the purchase of labour-power, which is a worker’s potential to work, at its minimum price, which is that amount of money that can allow the worker to survive and reproduce.

When the worker is put to work, the products of the labour all belong to the capitalist, as every worker knows. It is up to the capitalist to make the worker produce more than what it cost to purchase his labour-power. If the capitalist succeeds to do this, then the capitalist will have extracted Surplus Labour.

The capitalist must then sell the product in order to realise Surplus Value.

When the state is the employer, we as teachers know that the job-form is taken and copied straight from the capitalist pattern. Salaries are constantly being driven down to the level of mere survival and basic reproduction.

Marx in the “Critique of the Gotha Programme” and Engels in “Socialism, Utopian and Scientific”, both insisted that surplus value would continue to be extracted by the state, even if production is nationalised.

In the second Chapter of the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels briefly allow themselves to imagine the relations of production that would succeed capitalist ones. They say that:

*“In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have... **a vast association of the whole nation... in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.**”*

Communist Manifesto, 1848, Chapter 2

This quotation also helps us to understand what development really is. Development is the freedom of every person to develop. True development is not infrastructure or consumer goods – it is human development, of which we may note here that teachers are the professional practitioners. Human development is our business.

Limits of the job relationship and consequent limits of trade unionism

Capitalist relations are built into the job relationship. Capital is what employs labour.

The more jobs there are, the more capital there has to be.

Karl Marx in the last chapter (Chapter 33) of “Capital”, Volume 1, says:

“Capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons, established by the instrumentality of things.”

Trade unions exist to negotiate better wages within the parameters of the wages system. In this most fundamental sense, all trade unions are reformist in nature. They exist to negotiate the best possible deal within the existing system, and not to overturn the existing system.

Trade unions are institutions of capitalism, brought forth by the necessity, imposed by capitalism, of collective bargaining of the market price of human labour-power.

The bare fact of doing this type of business in the capitalist human meat-market brings trade unionists up against the nature of that system, and poses the necessity of overturning it, as Marx pointed out in 1865 in “Value, Price and Profit”, as we have noted above.

But trade unions are not able to transcend their own definition. The furthest they can go is to recognise the necessity for the revolutionary vanguard party of the working class to exist, and then to support it to the best of their ability, when it does exist.

In the second, final part of this school, we will look at the history of trade unionism in South Africa, with this in mind. We will note that there have been two schools of thought. The Communists maintain an alliance with the trade unions and with the liberation movement. From time to time, from 1919 through the 1970s and 1980s and in the present time, others have opposed this arrangement, on the basis that the workers can stand alone. These ones we call “Workerists”.

Summary

What we can draw from the above is that the nature of capitalism places the workers “on the horns of a dilemma”. To maintain their position, workers must participate in the workings of the system that oppresses them. Even their own defensive organisations, the trade unions, are part of the system. They must bargain the sale of labour-power, in a relation that defines and reproduces the system, and they must militate for the expansion of employment (i.e., for more jobs), which inevitably means more capital.

This dilemma is what gives rise to the need for the revolutionary party. In our colonial circumstances, we also must have a mass, democratic, revolutionary liberation movement, which is the ANC.

The alliance of democratic organisations is what comprises the National Democratic Revolution. At this point it is as well to mention Joe Slovo’s 1988 document called *The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution*, which is too large a document to read and discuss in the time we have available.

What we know at this stage is that the relations of production must change, if there is to be a qualitative change in the capitalism that we live in. Until that has been achieved, the working class must defend and make the best of its allotted position within capitalism. The defining quality of the achieved, emancipating revolution will be new relations of production.

Hence, tactically, the working class maintains two different organised responses to capitalism. These are the reformist trade unions, and the revolutionary vanguard party. This tactical arrangement has been won in struggle, and repeated struggle, against the arguments of the workerists and the syndicalists. This struggle has broken out several times since 1919 in South Africa, and in the movement of Marx and Lenin, it broke out earlier, and several times acutely, from the 1840s onwards.

We will look at the South African part of this history of struggle against workerism in the second part of this political-school module on Trade Unions in the Liberation Movement.

Trade Unions in the Liberation Movement

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Part 2, Trade Unionism and Workerism in the SA Revolution

- **The ICU** – One Big Union
- The **1946 Mineworkers' Strike**
- **SACTU** and the Freedom Charter
- **The Gang of Four** ultra-leftist infiltration in SACTU
- **FOSATU** – Syndicalism
- **COSATU**, 1985
- The struggle for legalisation; The **Democratic Breakthrough**
- **Jim-nastics** – Workerism all over again

In the first paragraph of Rosa Luxemburg's 1900 book, "Reform or Revolution?", she remarks as follows:

"Can we contrapose the social revolution, the transformation of the existing order, our final goal, to social reforms? Certainly not. The daily struggle for reforms, for the amelioration of the condition of the workers within the framework of the existing social order, and for democratic institutions, offers to the Social-Democracy an indissoluble tie. The struggle for reforms is its means; the social revolution, its aim."

Before we look at the chronological history of the South African trade union movement, its defining relationship with the liberation movement, the ANC, and with the revolutionary vanguard party of the working class, the SACP, it will assist us to reflect in a more general way upon the matter of reform versus revolution.

Contrary to what is alleged by the workerists, the revolutionary path does not shun the existing institutions of the state and of the broader so-called civil society of capitalism. The revolutionary road is not a back road but it is a high road, and it drives proudly straight through the middle of society.

The revolutionaries insist on being present everywhere and in all *fora*, right up to the highest. “Nothing about us, without us,” we say.



Moment of self-legitimation: SACP banner at Cradock 4 funeral July 20, 1985. © Gille de Vlieg

For this reason the struggle is against bannings, and it is why bannings are the weapon of the counter-revolutionaries. We do not ban ourselves or go voluntarily into the bush or into exile. On the contrary, our struggle takes us in the opposite direction, towards legalisation and towards involvement, including involvement in parliament and in government. We insist on this.

For an example of the legitimisation of the legitimisation of the communist party, we can take the funeral of the revolutionary teacher, Matthew Goniwe in Cradock, when the SACP “came out” and effectively legalised itself. Less than five years later the Party was officially unbanned and the exiles were streaming home.

For examples that are more familiar to trade unionists, we can take the basic struggles for recognition, which continue to be fought, factory by factory, and farm by farm.

The struggle to be part of society continues. We must still legalise the teaching of our revolution in schools and in universities, where the history and nature of our struggle still remains a taboo subject, more than 20 years after the democratic breakthrough.

This very political school, which is done at the expense of the movement, and others like it, whether done by the ANC, COSATU or the SACP, can as yet hardly be

presented in any publicly-funded institution, including the public broadcaster, yet the bourgeoisie can preach its doctrines everywhere, to adults and children alike, without any such hindrance.

We insist on inclusion, and we reject those who would drive wedges between the COSATU affiliates and the ANC, on the basis of opposition to the working class taking part in the mass democracy, right up to the level of national government. This is what the liberation struggle was for, after all. Nothing about us, without us!

With all of this in mind we proceed to review the South African history of the struggle for institutional inclusion, and against those, including some who purport to be on our side, who have advised the suicidal course of self-exclusion.

The ICU

The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) was formed in South Africa in 1919 by Clements Kadalie, a Malawian migrant worker. It became the biggest mass organisation the country had yet seen. At one stage, around 1927, it had 100,000 members.

The ICU was a "One Big Union" type of organisation, similar to the syndicalist "Wobblies", or "Industrial Workers of the World", of the USA at the time.

Meanwhile the Communist Party of South Africa was formed, in 1921, in accordance with the rules of the Communist (Third) International (the Comintern). It was the first non-racial political party in South Africa.

The Party quickly became predominantly black in membership, and the black cadres soon exercised a leading role in mass organisations, of which by far the biggest was the ICU.

The segregated, white, Labour Party had been formed in 1908, and the African National Congress in 1912, but the ANC was relatively small in numbers at its beginning and for many years, only surpassing the ICU's historic maximum about thirty years later, in the 1950s.

The communists had leading positions in the ICU, but in December 1926 they were expelled. Among them were J.A. (Jimmy) La Guma, ICU General Secretary at the time; E.J. Khaile, ICU Financial Secretary; and John Gomas, the Cape Provincial Secretary.

The expulsion of the communists from the ICU was done under the influence of a Scottish trade unionist, William Ballinger. But perhaps it had as much to do with the

syndicalist nature of the ICU, and with the inherently anti-communist nature of syndicalism. As it turned out, the Communist Party (CPSA) survived, but the move was fatal for the ICU. By 1928 it was collapsing, and in January 1929 Clements Kadalie resigned or was expelled, after a dispute with Ballinger.

Meanwhile in 1927, Josiah Gumede had been elected ANC President. Gumede travelled to meet the top leadership of the Soviet Union on the tenth anniversary of the Russian revolution. He went with Jimmy La Guma, a member of the CPSA, secretary of an ANC branch in Cape Town and recently-expelled leader of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). In that very same year, Khaile was elected Secretary-General of the ANC at its national conference in 1927.

In 1928, the alliance of the SACP and ANC was endorsed by the Sixth Comintern Congress in the famous “Black Republic Thesis” resolution, which said among others:

“The Party should pay particular attention to the embryonic national organisations among the natives, such as the African National Congress. The Party, while retaining its full independence, should participate in these organisations, [and] should seek to broaden and extend their activity.”

We can sum up this episode by noting that while the attempt to ally the communist party with a syndicalist trade union was not a success, that movement (the ICU) was not able to survive on its own. Whereas the alliance of the communist party with the national liberation movement was a success.

The alliance became more of a success in the period after Moses Kotane’s famous “Cradock Letter” of 1934. Kotane became General Secretary of the CPSA in 1939, and held that office for nearly 40 years until his death. He had a good relationship with Chief Luthuli and with O R Tambo in particular, and with the ANC in general, serving as treasurer of the ANC for some time. These were productive years for the ANC, when among others, the African Claims, the Freedom Charter, and the Strategy and Tactics were produced.

African Mine Workers’ Strike, 1946

A lot of organising was done in the relatively more favourable conditions in South Africa during the anti-fascist war of 1939-45. Among the structures that came into existence were the Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU), and the African Mine Workers’ Union, one of whose leaders was J B Marks, a communist.

The historic African Mineworkers’ Strike took place in September, 1946.

Writing in 1976, M P Naicker described how the African Mineworkers’ Strike changed everything, both within South Africa, and also externally:

“The African miners’ strike was one of those historic events that, in a flash of illumination, educate a nation, reveal what has been hidden, and destroy lies and illusions. The strike transformed African politics overnight.

“Dr. A. B. Xuma, President-General of the African National Congress, joined a delegation of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) sent to the 1946 session of the United Nations General Assembly when the question of the treatment of Indians in South Africa was raised by the Government of India. He, together with the SAIC representatives - H. A. Naidoo and Sorabjee Rustomjee - and Senator H. M. Basner, a progressive white ‘Native Representative’ in the South African Senate, used the occasion to appraise Member States of the United Nations of the strike of the African miners and other aspects of the struggle for equality in South Africa.

“Dealing with this visit the ANC, at its annual conference from December 14 to 17, 1946, passed the following resolution:

"Congress congratulates the delegates of India, China and the Soviet Union and all other countries who championed the cause of democratic rights for the oppressed non-European majority in South Africa."

“The brave miners of 1946 gave birth to the ANC Youth League's Programme of Action adopted in 1949; they were the forerunners of the freedom strikers of May 1, 1950, against the Suppression of Communism Act, and the tens of thousands who joined the 26 June nation-wide protest strike that followed the killing of sixteen people during the May Day strike. They gave the impetus for the 1952 Campaign of Defiance of Unjust Laws when thousands of African, Indian and Coloured people went to jail; they inspired the mood that led to the upsurge in 1960 and to the emergence of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) - the military wing of the African National Congress.”

This was not syndicalism. This was in fact the building of a National Democratic Revolution, or in other words a class alliance, represented by many different democratic structures, both National and International.

SACTU

After the relative success of the CNETU, and the forces that it had unleashed, the next step up was the formation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), in March 1955, three months before the Congress of the People and the adoption of the Freedom Charter, of which SACTU was one of the five signatory

organisations. As such, of course SACTU was not at all a syndicalist trade union federation. It was an independent mass democratic trade union centre, in voluntary alliance with other democratic forces for freedom, national sovereignty, and not least, for the death of apartheid.

SACTU was the first national, non-racial trade union federation in South Africa, and was the real fore-runner of COSATU. SACTU was hounded in the years after it was formed and many of its cadres were forced into exile.

Staying with SACTU, we now fast-forward to the end of the 1970s when, in London especially, the idea of an exclusive “Worker’s Movement” had taken hold of the minds of a small group of white SACTU members, including the editor of its magazine, “Workers’ Unity”, Rob Peterson, and an academic, Martin Legassick, who is still active, in Cape Town, in this year of 2014. These two, together with David Hemson, were expelled from the ANC some years later, after which they came to be known as the “Gang of Four”.

We can also correctly call these former comrades ultra-leftists, syndicalists and workerists, but what is more important than the branding, is the essence of what they were attempting, in their dreams, to do. It is important because the same idea of workers “going it alone” as a “Workers’ Movement” has arisen again, first within FOSATU, and again in the early nineties, when the “Socialist Conference for Reconstruction and Development” of November 1994 foundered upon the same rocks. Now, once again, in 2013/14, we have NUMSA’s workerist Special National Congress resolutions, and the attempt to form what they call a “United Front”, but which is only the same “Workers’ Movement”, re-treaded for another trial run in the 21st century.

Writing about the SACTU dissidents, in 1980, in an article called “Role of Trade Unions in the South African Revolution, an article **[given in full in the pack]** in the African Communist summed up as follows:

“Implicit in, and underlying the entire document, is the “workerist” conception that the political struggle grows directly out of the immediate struggles at the point of production. For them, the wage struggle leads directly to the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of apartheid and capitalism. It is not possible here to discuss this issue at any length. It is clear, however, that despite the direct intrusion of the political into the economic, there are structural conditions which tend to limit the horizons of the trade union struggle and it is quite impossible to reduce the complexities of the general revolutionary political struggle to the trade union struggle.”

“For one thing, the revolutionary struggle is never fought by the working class alone even though that class is the foundation of the struggle. It is significant, however, that because the document accords to the workplace the sole source of revolutionary struggle, it is unable to conceive of the role of other classes. Indeed, it barely mentions other classes and makes no reference at all to the “rural poor”. For the document, other classes are simply passive entities to be drawn behind the active, working class.

“Thus, from the starting point that the working class is the leading force, the document moves more or less to the position that the working class is the only force in the revolutionary struggle. From that position it is a short step to the view that the political organization of the working class must occur within the factory and from that notion to the idea that the trade union movement (rather [than] its revolutionary wing) is the political organiser and leading organization of the entire revolutionary movement on all its fronts.

“It is clear, however, that the political leadership of the revolutionary movement must be in a position to organise the unity of all oppressed classes on the basis of a broad revolutionary programme. Such a task cannot be fulfilled by an organization of trade unions, though it can of course play a part in it.”

FOSATU

After the SACTU episode, the next occasion when the “Workers’ Movement” idea had a strong billing was the 1982 speech of Joe Foster, then General Secretary of FOSATU, a short-lived federation that gave way to COSATU in 1985, when COSATU was founded.

Foster’s speech was responded to, again in the African Communist, in 1983. **[The article in full is included in the pack].**

We can usefully include some words from that article here:

“...the thinking behind [Foster’s speech] emerges quite clearly.

“It is the belief that the trade union organisations and trade union struggles can suffice for all the needs of the working class; that in the unions and through union struggles the working class will achieve unity, it will learn politics, it will acquire the skills needed to take over the guiding reins of society, manage the whole of industry and society, and reconstruct it on a new socialist base. It is a belief that socialist consciousness can develop

spontaneously from the union experience, and that the affairs of society and state can be best managed from the 'grass roots' democracy of the shop floor.

“Political theorists would probably describe this type of ideology as "syndicalism." The label itself is of no importance. What is important is to establish whether it is well founded and therefore valid for the South African working class ...

“Our accumulated experience tells us that the trade unions alone, the workers' struggle alone, will not of itself pass beyond the limits of economic struggle against the employers. To pass beyond that limit, there is need for a clear socialist theory, which understands the nature and the course of development of capitalist society, and which can thus point the way in which socialism can be reached, and the steps that have to be taken to get there.

“Socialist theory and ideology we have in plenty, bequeathed to us by great thinkers of the past like Marx, Engels and Lenin and many others, added to daily by profound thinkers in many countries including our own who have constantly enriched our fund of knowledge out of new experiences of our own times. All this cannot be discovered instinctively, grasped from the air by even the most militant worker. It has to be learnt through study; and it has to be applied deliberately by conscious decision making – not hoped for as a miraculous consequence of spontaneous action of revolt or resistance.

“It is for this reason that Marxists have always understood that there are limitations to the trade union role in changing society – limits beyond which it cannot advance without the aid and co-operation of a detachment armed with an advanced theory and with a dedication and discipline which will enable it to impart consciousness to the class – a detachment called a political party.”

The final document is former SACP General Secretary Joe Slovo's article on The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution, of which we will give a short version in hard copy, while the full text is available in PDF.

“The entire strength of the modern labour movement rests on theoretic knowledge.”
– Rosa Luxemburg, Reform or Revolution?, 1900, Introduction.
