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BHEKI MKHIZE POLITICAL SCHOOL BULLETIN



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STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE ORGANIZATION TO DEFEND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, DEEPEN CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AND ADVANCE INTERNATIONALISM



Introduction of the Bulletin

The national union is convening a Bheki Mkhize Political School from the 15th -19th July 2024, at Birchwood Hotel, Boksburg, Gauteng.

The political school is convened to develop a comprehensive political programme to respond to the political changes arising from the 2024 general elections. The political school will thoroughly engage on our revolutionary theory – Marxist-Leninist theory as our theoretical arsenal by which we can understand the world and continually renew

our organisation to change the world.

The school will clarify the relationship of the union with the struggle of socialism and redefining our participation in the broader working class revolution which includes our role in formulation of left popular fronts in the context of building A Powerful Socialist Movement of workers and the poor.

The national political School will be a platform to theoretically empower and capacitate the leadership structures of the union to

understand the political changes in relation to our union, the federation and the movement broadly.

The national political school is attended by 250 delegates drawn from structures of the national union as well the Alliance, Progressive Youth Alliance and our sister unions. The political school received addresses from the Alliance [ANC, SANCO, SACP, and COSATU].



OPENING ADDRESS – PRESIDENT, CDE MICHAEL SHINGANGE



PRESIDENT, COMRADE MICHAEL SHINGANGE

Comrade Chairperson of the session, the national office bearers, guests to this seminal political school of our national union, leadership of the organisations that make up our revolutionary alliance, leadership of the organisation of the mass democratic movement, comrades, friends and delegates to the national political school, on behalf of the NOBs of NEHAWU please receive our revolutionary greetings.

We stand here comrades to say a few words to mark the opening of this political school and share some words with you in the name of our common revolutionary programme with the hope that that these words over the next four days will serve as a foundation and guideline in our collective attempt to dissect political matters of the day, to assist organise our thoughts in unpacking the political moment we are confronted by and to galvanise our collective spirit to withstand and ultimately defeat the opponents as a class.

This political school is no ordinary political school. Political schools are ordinarily about the teaching and learning activity; a knowledge exchange process; a process related to information development and information sharing, political schools are usually more concerned with understanding written information and explaining of such

information purposes of comprehension of the concepts and data contained therein. However in the NEHAWU context political schools have been treated differently because they play a different role to that we ordinarily see in other settings.

As a matter of practice and organisational strategy, in NEHAWU we have always utilised the platform of a political school at critical moments in the life of our organisation and at different intervals in the revolution and at each of the profound intervals we have sought to use the platform of the political school to understand the nature of each interval and to anticipate the upcoming realities in the evolving political environment; to debate among ourselves and with those who share our ideas the nature and substance of different intervals in our ongoing revolutionary project; to reflect on a picture of balance of forces at such a time relative to the ongoing political requirements of our revolutionary project and to make an evaluation of both the subjective and objective conditions pertaining to the revolution and its prospects. This political too has the function to help the union make sense of the political picture taking shape on the political surface in our republic. Although this political school is about learning and debate on the material and presentations prepared; it is also, at the same time, about our collective

effort to position the union in the political reality that is currently taking shape in South Africa. To position the union in this sense is to locate the organisation appropriately and identify a task or a series of tasks for the working class movement in a rapidly evolving political terrain. In that sense the union is required to take a political posture because, by its very design, it is a political union.

The union is not a passenger in the political discourse of the republic of South Africa and from its foundation it has never been a distant observer of the social discourse.

On the contrary, the union was founded on the principles of activism, resistance, struggle and deliberate political bias rooted on revolutionary objectives opposed to conforming to the status quo.

The purported political neutrality that the right-wing unions profess is unnatural in class struggle and contradict the foundational principles of NEHAWU not because political neutrality is false in a class struggle only, but because the record of NEHAWU is clear testament to its political inclination, to its tendency of radical activity. In the immediate aftermath of its founding in 1987 NEHAWU as a union embarked on a rolling national public service strike whose impact fundamentally



altered the labour relations framework of the public sector forever, so much so that the existing structural setup of the public service is related to that 1991 public sector strike. Our political tendency also has manifested on several other actions that have continued to radicalise the trade union space leading to the present time. So the positions that the union has taken and the political alignments that have characterised the union in the past 37 years are not a series of accidents that occur randomly. Rather these positions and alignments are a result of a dynamic and conscious political discourse that is both internal and external to the structures of the union all combining to produce a tradition in which we stand.

The tradition in which we stand is a tradition oriented towards activism, anti-status quo political alignment, a tradition of national democracy and progressive nationalism, a transformative political tradition, left oriented political and ideological alignment, a socialist oriented tradition, a tradition rooted in struggle rather than submission to capitalist authority, tradition based on working class solidarity and conscious political partisanship. In that context this political school is about asking this fundamental question: in the face of a changing political terrain in South Africa how can we use our political and theoretical tools of analysis to help the union respond to the emerging political realities in favour of the working class while cementing our tradition and perspective as a class oriented and revolutionary union? Put differently: how can we use Marxism-Leninism as a practical weapon to wage the immediate and evolving working class battles in South Africa with the view to protect the political gains of the motive forces at large while defending the progressive character of our national political dispensation?

In answering this question we are positioning ourselves as an organisation against the emerging political dynamics, we are organising ourselves to respond to the manifesting shifts of the terrain of struggle, we are sharpening our tools of analysis in the objective space of class battles and we are lastly building a working class solidarity more concretely by pushing against the right-wing political shift by maintaining a relentless fight back in the territory of the ideological struggle.

Having made all the points above our

intention is to highlight that the political school has a strategic function for the union in the current conjuncture and that it not learning for the sake of learning; our intention is to highlight the intricate relationship of national and international political discourse and the foundational mandate of the union and how political discourse and theory is a tool through which the class and the union in particular has always been a key instrument for our political progress.

Everything for the revolution and nothing against it

Our starting point as an organisation is that we are engaged in a revolution together with a contingent of political and class forces whose political orientation is similarly revolutionary as ours. A revolution is a conscious and deliberate act or process and not an accident or a series of accidents occurring from no particular purpose. The actions of a revolutionary are conscious and purposeful because it is his social consciousness that propels him to act in a revolutionary manner. The positions we take, the programme and activities we embark upon, the associations we build and maintain, the cadreship we cultivate are all purposefully oriented in the direction of a revolutionary cause intended to give birth the total emancipation of the oppressed as a desired social outcome. Our understanding of the political terrain and our analysis of it are such that we must always position ourselves in the best position possible to sustain our revolutionary forward march as part of the whole body of revolutionary forces. The ideas, the strategies and the tactics we employ in the forward march of the revolution are intended to ensure that we manoeuvre the political environment competently so that the cause of the revolution is not defeated by our adversaries but is rather consolidated to guarantee our victory.

The advances and victories we score in the short-term must accumulate overtime creating the opportunity for the ultimate long-term victory of the revolutionary cause. The setbacks and losses we incur are objective proof that the forces counter to the revolution are as equally deliberate and determined in their own cause. Some of the failures of the revolutionary forces to advance as desired also reflect inappropriate and incorrect strategies and tactics relative to the concrete material conditions of the terrain

of struggle. The revolution thus composed of both the opportunities for an advance and opportunities for setbacks. What sets apart a successful revolutionary from an unsuccessful one is a proper or improper interpretation, understanding and manoeuvring of the objective and subjective conditions. The revolutionary cause is the standing principle unites us as the revolutionary forces and the purpose for which we labour to organise the motive forces. In a sense; we do everything for the revolution and we expect all among us to do nothing against it.

Revolution in the present time

In this context an act against the revolution and its aims is an act against the forces of progress and an act in favour of forces of reaction. It is our duty to deny any and all prospects to the forces of reaction. To that end this political school should help us propel the revolution forward, to protect what remains of it in the present moment so that we further pave way for its continuation. To do so is to fight against those who fight against the revolutionary cause. The revolutionary organisations that carry out revolutionary programme also serve as the source of knowledge, inspiration and perspective for the activists. Revolutionaries thus have the standing responsibility to preserve and revitalise these institutions and maintain their functionality and relevance to the revolutionary cause of the under classes.

To preserve the organisational integrity of these organisations is to preserve their fighting spirit which assures the longevity of the revolution itself. When the organisations and institutions of the revolutionary kind have independent capability to plan their own future they have the undeniable opportunity to pursue the cause to the logical conclusion. Balance of forces in the present time

In the spirit of working for the revolution and never working against it we are required to look at the balance of power among the political actors on the political stage in South Africa so as to evaluate properly the opportunities for our revolutionary advance as well as obstacles. This political school gives us an ample opportunity to understand where the revolutionary cause stands relative to the movement of our adversaries. The starting point is to state that at all material times there is always movement and contest in the political space. There are no moments



where there is a perfect balance indicating lack of contest. To think in those terms is to be unscientific.

For as long as the political reality forces have existed in different shapes and interests there has been a continuous jostle for prominence between the political forces populating the political stage. When the revolutionary forces appear more prominent there has still been activity of the opposing forces. For as long as we have existed in class society the struggle for hegemony and power has been in motion. To understand therefore the position of the working class and the revolutionary forces is to understand the objective dynamic of power and hegemony among the political actors on the political stage.

For a class stand point the balance of forces that count in favour of the bourgeoisie and

not the proletariat. Form a balance of forces stand point the historic hegemonic position of the working class influence over the National Democratic Revolution has been is on a steady downward turn and it continues to be so at the present moment too; therefore as a motive force the class has effectively lost its requisite influence over the transformation project. This downward spiral has reached the lowest point manifesting in the electoral outcome of 2024. The balance of power thus places the working class in a position of disadvantage.

The political forces that created the Polokwane consensus against the 1996 class project have overtime disintegrated suffered a historic collapse therefore stagnating the intended replacement of the Neoliberal agenda of the 1996 class project. Instead of this there was an emergence of conservative

tendency moving from Mangaung to NAREC 2 which included the state capture core and the radically liberal so called new dawn. This trend has put the NDR as our fundamental project in positions of defeat. The progressive forces have been strategically incoherent and politically ineffective.

The ability or inability of progressives to unite and cohere the motive forces around the medium term and long-term goals of our national transformation project (the popular forces in particular) reflects the sustainability of our struggle or the potential to see that struggle placed in a position of decisive defeat. The legitimacy and effectiveness of the NDR hinges on the ability of the liberation movement (the leadership core) to rally the motive forces behind it and unite the country as a whole behind clear development objectives rooted on progressive principles.

SETTING THE TONE AND OUTLINING THE CONTEXT OF BHEKI MKHIZE POLITICAL SCHOOL - GENERAL SECRETARY, COMRADE ZOLA SAPHETHA



GENERAL SECRETARY, COMRADE ZOLA SAPHETHA

Introduction

We, the union born 37 years ago in a Church, in Soweto, the union of Bheki Mkhize and Yure Mdyogolo, founding President and General Secretary respectively of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union, NEHAWU, are convening this ideological

training session as a class oriented trade union affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions, the WFTU. Driven by its theoretical orientation, the union has been convening national political schools beginning with its first one in the first ten years of its existence in 1997 that produced our first Strategic Policy Framework (SPF) to serve as a policy guide

to its action. Followed by the second school in 2006 and the third that was held in 2009. Each one of these historic political schools made an indelible mark on the orientation and practice of our union.

This 2024 political school is convened nine years after the last political school held





in 2015. It is being held immediately after the unprecedented 2024 general elections in which the ANC led Alliance for the first time in 30 years since the 1994 democratic breakthrough could not secure an outright majority thus resulting in the ANC forming a government of national unity that includes the self-avowed enemy of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) – the DA.

Gathered here is the different leadership structures of the union made up of the regional, provincial and national leadership. Also in our midst we have representatives from the Alliance partners (the SACP, COSATU, SANCO and the ANC) including the PYA (the SASCO, YCL, COSAS and ANCYL). The aim is to ground each other in Marxist-Leninist theory and the NDR and thus apply concrete analysis of the concrete conditions to inform our strategic way forward under the present conditions.

We are undertaking this ideological and political task not because we project or assume the responsibility of a vanguard Party of the working class. Nor do we seek to take the posture of workerist (insists on a perspective of an immediate struggle for socialism) or anarcho-syndicalism (confused type of unionism believes that trade unions can alone overthrow capitalist class rule. We undertake this ideological and political work simply because we are a trade union driven by the necessity to define its relationship with struggles of socialism, as dictated by its class character. This character is largely drawn from its ideological and political orientation which demands of it from time to time to undertake proper analysis of the prevailing material conditions so as to redefine its strategic role in society as well as in the state as its location and terrain of struggles.

It is important to further inform the school that NEHAWU recognises its membership as members of society first and foremost before becoming workers and ultimately members of NEHAWU. This recognition compels us to accept that workers are part of the broader working class and see and frame their workplace struggles in the broader context of the class struggle.

NEHAWU also recognises what Engels said decades ago that trade unions and the strike weapon in particular, are “schools of war” which train workers in class struggle, as a

necessary precondition to their own self-emancipation. These strikes decide nothing, it is true, but they are the strongest proof that the decisive battle between bourgeoisie and proletariat is approaching. They are the military school of the workingmen in which they prepare themselves for the great struggle which cannot be avoided and as schools of war, the unions are unexcelled.

The trade union movement is a school or training ground of the proletariat in a less warlike sense too, including that of preparing cadres of workers capable of administering society. Engels pointed out that ‘the working people, in the management of their colossal Trade Societies’ also prove themselves fit for administrative and political work.

It is our belief that union leaders and shop stewards should therefore understand that trade unions as workers’ front line of defence against their employers under capitalism but also as crucial vehicles for struggle to the future self-emancipation of the working class. In the same vein, it is important to note the contradictory character of unions, but a progressive union negotiates the terms of exploitation of workers under capitalism while providing the vehicle for struggles that prepares the working class for revolution. Indeed, the exploited classes need to establish their own political rule in order to completely abolish all exploitations.

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”

Unlike other forms of trade unions, NEHAWU as a progressive trade union understands that this is a correct conceptualisation of the world informed by the materialist conception of history that all human societies’ progress through class struggle - splitting into two great hostile camps, directly facing each other - Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

Practically, this means that the world is in a conflict between owning class that controls production and a dispossessed labouring class that provides labour for production hence the revolutionary struggle against class exploitation. It goes without saying that the world is characterised by two antagonistic and irreconcilable contradictions hence changing the world requires revolutionaries who are willing to and must understand the world as it is, not as they think or wish it to be.

This implies that the working class must consciously venture into a real revolution for fundamental social change by asserting its hegemony in society. NEHAWU as an instrument of the working class by virtue of mobilising the most organised contingents of the working class in five sectors must have a shared responsibility in elaborating its direct relationship with the struggles of socialism and in building socialism now for future directly under the leadership of the vanguard Party – the South African Communist Party – SACP.

“Without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement” Karl Marx

Borrowing from the basic tools of analysis which will be dealt with in detail by a presentation on Marxist Philosophy at the beginning of the school as instruments helping the union not only to interpret but to change the world. With the appreciation of the basic tools of analysis, the union got to realise the Marxist analytical method that every revolution has objective and subjective factors regarded as a total sum of the revolution.

The objective factors helps us to understand the material conditions based on the nature and history of the conflict, and how the conflict has shaped, by political, economic, social and cultural foundations of that society in order to inform the strategy and tactics for revolutionary movement because every revolution has a particular objective conditions under-which it upholds and that determine the necessity as well as limits and possibilities for advance or retreat in each given moment.

While subjective factors helps us to understand the forces involved in the conflict - those who defend the status quo and stand for change. Their strength and weaknesses depend on their relationship with the masses. The side that wins their hearts and minds wins the war. It is correct therefore to understand that the revolutionary movement is always seeking to gain the confidence and trust of those social forces that objectively stand to benefit from the revolutionary transformation – the motive forces- and must mobilize and lead them. It is the fact that the working class is the leading social force among the masses. It is within this context we strongly argue that theory is nothing but the synthesized



collective experience of the working class movement, nationally and internationally, which becomes purposeless if it is not connected with the revolutionary practice. Indeed, the correctness of this understanding affirms Marx's view that "practice without theory is blind and theory without practice is sterile".

It is true that, the world we live in is dominated by capitalism and its highest stage - imperialism imposing an unjust and unsustainable international order, intensifying exploitation and worsening the conditions of the working people and the working class as a whole on a daily basis.

It is also a fact that the bourgeois political system defends the interest of monopolies and corporations, manages the systematic crisis of capitalism for its own benefit and attempts to control the growing social discontent of workers and peoples through pressure and violence.

It is therefore imperative for conscious working class formations and class oriented trade unions to always know and heed the warnings that capitalism sustains itself through human miseries, pains and exploitation thus worsening the plight of the working people at all material times.

This reality dictates that trade unions like ours must continuously analyse and engage with the various ways capitalism manifest itself nationally and internationally, including grappling with features of imperialism so as to strategically position themselves in the struggle to overthrow the inhumane and barbaric system of capitalism to usher in socialism.

Indeed, the battles of the working class against the capitalist system of exploitation requires, in the first place, the working together of the working people and the working class movement with social and popular movements in order to strengthen the class struggle against the bourgeois and imperialist plans, and for the construction of a genuine world peace, justice and social equity.

Equally, we draw strength and revolutionary hope from the commitment expressed by the real workers' parliament under the banner of the class oriented trade union, the WFTU

which was held in May 2022 and affirmed the need to undertake a revolutionary fight for the new world order based on the abolishment of exploitation of man by man, mutual beneficial relations between states and peoples, peace, sustainable development for the satisfaction of social needs, justice and solidarity.

In summary, the 1848 Communist Manifesto logical conclusion on the relationship between bourgeois and proletarian provides the working class with the inescapable motive to unite through a popular slogan "Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains" whose essence means that members of the working class in each country and throughout the world engage in united action to defeat capitalism and imperialism in order to achieve victory in the class struggle.

It is in this context as the union grounded on Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory, a family member in the class oriented World Federation of Trade Unions, has taken a share of its ideological responsibility to grapple with imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism and struggles for socialism given its strategic location in society - the State - the organ of class rule or instrument that drives ideas of the ruling class in society.

Our union understands clearly that any humble contributions it makes, either through collective bargaining or transformation of the state, tempers with the comfort of the ruling class at the helm of society. It also understands that its struggles happen in the context of broader working class struggles, and its success or failure is tied to the success or failure of the working class as a whole.

Thus, it is our view that consciousness is the state of being awake to ourselves, to our world and to the people it affects hence the need to keep up with our ideological and political responsibility to better appreciation of our task at hand. In the final analysis, political conscious can only arise under conditions of political practice - without acting on our world, and being acted upon by it we learn very little from it, and we can never fully understand it. NDR and the working class

Within the Alliance and the broader democratic movement it has often been assumed that the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) is a uniquely South African theory and practice for the national liberal struggle. This is true

in terms of the particularity of the historical and material context, but this assumption has been taken advantage of by right-wing opportunism within our movement as it has been able to successfully reduce the NDR to just another form of the struggle for freedom or independence - not dissimilar to what has transpired in other countries in Africa and elsewhere.

In other words, the NDR could just be another freedom struggle without an inherent class determination and ideological orientation, as long as the plight of the poor would be addressed and their living conditions lifted at the end of the day.

It has always been a correct understanding and our starting point in this political school to theoretical reclaim and reassert that the origins of the National Democratic Revolution - NDR emanates from the discussions of the Communists for instance in 1920 at the Second Congress of the Comintern, when Vladimir Lenin was clarifying the relationship between imperialism and colonialism laid the theoretical foundation and the SACP in 1928 through the "Black Republic Thesis contextualised the South African struggles linking it to the international Marxist-Leninist debates on the colonial question in the worldwide struggle against capitalism in the highest stage - imperialist but also when addressing the questions of non-racialism and of majority - the relationship between national oppression and class exploitation in our domestic political reality leading into the adoption of the Strategy and Tactics in 1969 at Morogoro Conference culminating into a common understanding in the ANC and its allies that the working class remains a main motive force of the revolution.

Of course, the debate continued and evolved over decades guided by material conditions prevailing at different times, the ANC in its Conference in Mafikeng, 1997 in which the working class was positioned, at least theoretically, as a primary motive force and others as secondary motive forces as a result of the gains registered which benefitted the selected few, economically.

The ANC Mafikeng congress position on the working class as the primary motive force of the NDR was informed by the universally accepted premise that every revolution has its custodians who are willing to do and sacrifice



everything in the long march to victory, they do so because they have no choice but to struggle until the ultimate victory of the revolution because the alternative is a wretched life that can only get worse the less the prospects of a revolutionary progress or victory becomes.

So, the primary motive forces of the NDR are the natural custodians of the revolution; they earn that honour not merely because – like everybody else – they stand to benefit from the triumph of the revolution but rather because of their historical position in relation to the moment or epoch that history has decreed. The role of revolutionary custodian that is played by the primary motive forces of the NDR is determined by class struggle – the driver of change and history – and the class position of these primary motive forces in relation to the other secondary motive forces. The consistent pursuance of an undiluted radical revolutionary programme that seeks to transform the historic relations in society is in the material interest of the primary motive forces precisely because of their class position that defines their wretched existence and exploitation. They have no choice but to carry the revolution to its logical conclusion if they hope to escape their miserable existence.

What distinguishes the primary motive forces, therefore, from the other motive forces is not only the fact that they stand to benefit the most from the ultimate victory of the revolution, after all, the success of the socialist revolution will benefit society as a whole to the maximum that is why it is desirable instead of the status quo, rather, as the most oppressed class that finds itself at the bottom of society – it also stand to lose the most from the failure or distortion of the revolution through reformism or counter revolution either from within or from outside.

Notwithstanding the vacillations of the other class elements in the revolution, the primary motive forces have no choice but to remain true to the struggle for the ultimate victory of the revolution because their class position in society can only change for the better under the victory of the revolution and the resolution of the question that gave rise to their struggle in the first instance. Therefore, the primary motive forces of our revolution, of which we form part of as a trade union, do not have the luxury of placing their fate in political organisations and/or processes in

which they are not in full control of as a class. No class but the working class itself can free the working class.

Unlike the struggle for socialism led by the Communist Party – the vanguard party of the working class – where the alignment of contending class forces is clearly defined and the enemy is unmistakable, the NDR as led by the ANC in the current conjuncture poses a number of difficulties with regard to clearly identifying alignment of the contending forces and the clear conceptualisation of the enemy, internally and externally, of the NDR. The question then arises as to who the vanguard of the NDR is, as the ANC as an organisation is a broad church that caters for various, and sometimes conflicting interests of different classes and strata of society?

The ANC's own conceptualisation of the intended beneficiaries of the NDR says its blacks in general and Africans in particular and we also know that this broad category of intended beneficiaries of the NDR also finds expression in class and gender terms through the history of the economic development of our country and our colonial past.

Given that the historically dispossessed and marginalised who represent a disproportionate majority of the poor, unemployed, workers and the rural masses are the main intended beneficiaries of the NDR as expressed by its open bias towards their plight, is it not true then that the ANC can only stay true to their plight if they continue to hold it accountable and keep its daily life relevant and responsive to their plight. For the ANC to remain relevant to its core constituency and remain true to its ideals, it must look at the world through the eyes of the proletariat and engage it using working class tools of analysis.

The NDR objectives can only be obtained if the ANC remains a mass based organisation that is rooted among our people and continue to be an ally of the formations of the working class i.e. the Party and COSATU. This unity and the relationship with the broader MDM formations is what gives the ANC and the alliance as a whole the moral authority and legitimacy in the eyes of our people to lead the struggle for change in our country. And the primary motive forces i.e. the forces that stand to lose the most from the failure or distortion of the NDR and gain the most from its ultimate victory are the ordinary working people, the rural poor, and the unemployed

– in short: the working class!

Having said all of the above, we must guard against conflating the NDR with the ANC or mistaking the prospects of the NDR with the political prospects of the ANC. The existence of the ANC, or the alliance for that matter is not a precondition for the existence of the revolutionary situation that pertains in our country. The revolutionary situation is brought about by the history of colonialism, colonialism of a special type, imperialism and neo-colonialism that continue to define the lives of the oppressed and marginalised in South Africa – these factors exist indecently of the existence of the ANC and the alliance.

Equally, when we say the NDR is the road to socialism, and at the same time talk about that NDR as led by the ideologically ambiguous multi class ANC, we must be clear how such leadership will ultimately lead to socialism and not to distortions and reforms. Even if one argues that the ANC is the leader of the alliance, and not the NDR, that contradiction remains because the alliance that supposedly drives the NDR is led by an alliance partner with no clearly defined class character or ideology. Working class organisations have historically dealt with this contradiction by insisting on and ensuring the leadership role the vanguard Party plays in such revolutions. In our case this was mitigated by the thesis on liberation movements and colonialism of a special type which led to the present tripartite alliance configuration. But does reality still dictate this configuration in the 21st century, 30 years after the defeat of apartheid?

Strategic outlook

So, what is our short and medium-term strategic outlook in the current conjuncture? Going to the 14th Congress of the federation, the COSATU in September 2022 we had this to say "It is instructive to say that already our own resolutions from previous congresses provide adequate answers both on the short to medium-term challenges that we face in the current conjuncture. We simply have to look within rather than imagining fashionable or a fancy way-forward and the total sum of the posture arising from our previous resolutions amount to the following strategic outlook":

- Firstly, our immediate strategic outlook and task is to resist the deepening of the Neoliberal - trajectory and to fight for an alternative



developmental path around the perspective of the Developmental State. This means that we must resist and oppose the unfolding offensive on collective bargaining, pay-cuts and widening wage-gap in the public and private sector at the workplace, campaign against the current wave of austerity - budget-cuts on public and municipal services and fight against corruption and for accountability at the centre of these issues.

• Secondly, recognising the reformist limitations inherent in the alternative developmental path around the perspective of the Developmental State, we must combine this short-term posture with our anti-capitalist agitation and ideological offensive. Our critique of Neoliberalism must be combined with practical campaigns on issues and demands that place socialist solutions at the centre and thus challenging the capitalist logic and the system itself.

Our answer to the weighty question on our tasks in the current conjuncture must not necessarily mean that their execution should be sequential or in stages, even though some are preconditions of others and dialectically reinforcing. Nonetheless, based on our previous resolutions our strategic tasks in the current conjuncture are fivefold – building and strengthening COSATU and affiliates, building unity in action with other unions and federations, building and strengthening the socialist-axis, building campaigns with mass-based organisations and progressive NGOs and fight for the renewal of the ANC.

In addition to these pointers going to the 14th congress, given the new political challenges imposed by the recent 2024 national election outcomes resulting into the formation of Government of National Unity (GNU) due to failures of the Tripartite Alliance as led by the ANC to secure outright majority presenting now possibilities of either a full blown liberalism to worsen the plight of the working class characterised by suffocations and miseries or

class struggle to totally liberate the working class a whole.

Having understood the possibilities, the union of Bheki Mkhize and Yure Mdyogolo wishes to affirm that it is on the side of the working class and will do everything in its power and resources to remain resolute and committed to the working class revolution hence is getting ready to mobilise the South African working class in particular and abroad to really venture into a real revolution – class struggle hence this political school grounding and empowering structures and leadership with the revolutionary theory of the working class.

Our fivefold tasks are captured in this directive and we outline them thus:

- Building and strengthening COSATU and affiliates
- Building unity in action with other unions and federations
- Building and strengthening the socialist-axis
- Building campaigns with mass-based organisations and progressive NGOs
- Building and fighting for the renewal of the ANC

Conclusion

The political school therefore is tasked to elaborate concretely and in details on the task at hand including giving a practical meaning on left popular fronts as a conceptualisation of Communists and clarify the modalities particularly on economy, education, health, crime and corruption including strongly redefine the public service delivery campaign and organisational imperatives that helps us to building a capable organisation to carry-out these mammoth tasks expected not only by members but by the working class as a whole.

The organised working class also needs to be clear on its attitudes on the various methods

of struggle of the working class; what is our position on insurrection, mass mobilisation, parliamentary and progressive reformism (i.e. transformation). How and through what methods (or combination of methods) do we aim to advance the struggle for socialism under the present material conditions? Working class organisations cannot afford to be confused or ambiguous on these crucial questions that must of necessity inform our daily analysis, planning, action and theorising. Given the gradual deterioration of relations among tripartite alliance partners over time, the neoliberal detour of the ANC that began with abandonment of the RDP and the adoption of GEAR, and the many failed attempts of the left to reconfigure the alliance or effectively influence government policy; what political avenues are there to mobilise and wield the revolutionary power of the masses for their own emancipation?

A failure to honestly engage and answer these many questions confronting the progressive movement today, will condemn the alliance and the working class to a more abysmal condition than the position it finds itself in today. As Karl Marx said "Philosophers have only interpreted the world, the point, however, is to change it".

It is hoped that the school will serve as a platform to begin to answer these questions and many others and thus equip NEHAWU leaders, shop-stewards, trade unionist and revolutionaries for the tasks that lie ahead in the current conjuncture.

In the words Mao Zedong: "Letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend is the policy of progress...". We hope that in addition to serving as an educational platform, this political school will also serve the purpose Mao talks about in the quote above.



AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS ADDRESS TO THE BHEKI MKHIZE POLITICAL SCHOOL



ANC SECRETARY GENERAL, COMRADE FIKILE MBALULA

All leaders of NEHAWU present here today
All delegates present, from the length and breadth of our country.

I take this opportunity to convey the greetings of the ANC leadership, as led by President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa.

I must first and foremost congratulate the leadership of NEHAWU for convening this very important National Political School. This National Political School comes at a time when indeed we need to go back to the basics, the theoretical foundations of our national liberation struggle as articulated through the National Democratic Revolution. Of key importance, is what over the course of our struggle we have conceptualised as tools of analysis, which is at the core of Marxism Leninism. Historical and Dialectical Materialism remains the foremost approach in understanding history, particularly on why things happen the way they do.

Accordingly, in it was Marx and Engel who famously asserted in the Communist Manifesto, and I quote:

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."

This assertion echoes the challenge we are faced with today as the revolutionary movement. The opportunity that we are faced with is the "revolutionary reconstitution of society at large" and the threat being the "common ruin of the contending classes".

As we conducted the negotiations, we were fully conscious of the dialectical disposition of all the contending political forces involved, and this informed the conclusions that we made.

Speaking to the Union of Young Communists of Cuban, the celebrated Che Guevara

asserted in characterisation of a revolutionary: "It will be so because you are Young Communists, creators of the perfect society, human beings destined to live in a new world where everything decrepit, everything old, everything that represents the society whose foundations have just been destroyed will have definitively disappeared. To reach that goal we have to work every day, along the lines of improving ourselves; of gaining knowledge and understanding about the world around us; of inquiring, finding out, and knowing why things are the way they are; and always considering humanity's great problems as our own."

The great Vladimir Lenin also made similar remarks on the first tasks of the youth when addressing the Third All Russia Congress of the Russian Young Communist League in October 1920:

"And so, in dealing from this angle with the tasks confronting the youth, I must say that the tasks of the youth in general, and of the Young Communist Leagues and all other organisations in particular, might be summed



up in a single word: learn."

Comrades, our meeting here on the occasion of the NEHAWU National Political School is testament to the fact that learning has no age limit. In fact, one of the most profound lessons in life, is the fact that failure to learn would result in redundancy and irrelevance. That is what is meant by the negation of the negation, which is one of the three laws of dialectics.

We therefore learn important lessons from the history of revolutionary struggle, that it can lead to triumph of the progressive forces, or the mutual ruin of the contending classes. Internationally we have seen that through the Arab Spring, which led to the ruins of countries such as Libya, simply because the uprising was not led by sound theory. Here at home, we have seen many organisations mushroom in a hurry, out of anger and so forth, and that too not helping any revolutionary course.

This National Political School therefore seeks to take on the bull by the horns, as we appropriately sharpen our theoretical understanding as basis for all practical implementation of our revolutionary course.

Marx, Lenin, Che Guevara and many others, have given us blue prints on how to navigate complex challenges, informed by the contending forces and dialectical dispositions of their times. Ours is to analyse the conditions we are in, and reach original conclusions, and not cut and paste past solutions that spoke to different conditions than we are faced with today.

The importance of revolutionary theory cannot be underestimated. Even more important that such theory must find expression in a revolutionary movement. NEHAWU will undoubtedly be stronger with its cadreship steeped in the theoretical foundations that this National Political School has sought to unpack. And this will help strengthen the revolutionary movement and the labour movement. And ultimately it is the masses of our people that will benefit from such theoretical clarity.

Hence the importance of Che Guevara's insistence importance of "gaining knowledge and understanding about the world around us; of inquiring, finding out, and knowing why things are the way they are; and always

considering humanity's great problems as our own".

I am certain we are here today, because we have indeed considered humanity's great problems as our very own. Again it was none other than Che Guevara, who further attested to this when he declared that: "At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality."

When you love your people, you find personal political alignment with the ANC Oath of Membership, which stipulates that we join the organisation freely and not for any material gain. When you have this mindset inculcated as the root of cadreship, then you have won half the battle on corruption.

I therefore believe that this National Political School will help us fight corruption, which I believe would be won with political consciousness. We have seen many comrades whom when they have lost the radar of political consciousness, then justify things that cannot be justified. They then seek short cuts that give pretence to radicalism and militancy, when as we know, it is their stomachs doing the thinking and no longer their brains or political consciousness. That their own gut feeling is indeed about their own guts, which is to say their own bowels or stomachs.

It is lack of political consciousness that even the conscience to know the difference between theft and lawful material gain becomes blurred. Recently I had the honour of addressing a meeting of SAMWU, where I implored them that as public servants at the coalface of service delivery, they can help all of us attain the objectives of service delivery which would result in either the "revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes".

Likewise, as NEHAWU, you are at the forefront of service delivery on a broad scope of the public service. None know the rules of public sector engagement than you, the PFMA and so on. I believe therefore that this National Political School will help ensure that we are on one page on the importance of what must accrue to workers as they discharge their duties, such as decent work for all, but equally important, service delivery.

Following the outcome of the elections, we have characterised that as a "significant setback". And it is practical steps such as this National Political School that will determine whether or not as the ANC and as the Alliance we shall recover from this significant setback. Nothing is automatic, the forces of counter revolution will also seek to seize the moment. As the ANC and the Alliance, we will study the outcome of these elections, the causes and effects, and mostly importantly how we ensure we regain our political hegemony in the Executive and the legislatures, nationally and provincially. We will do so because we seek to strengthen our execution of the revolutionary course as informed by the historic mission of a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, equal and prosperous society.

As the ANC, we have over the past three decades led on service delivery, whose record is unprecedented in the post-colonial era. Yet we failed to garner enough votes to ensure a decisive democratic mandate, partly because the propaganda waged against us seemed to win the day.

As NEHAWU members, you are the foot soldiers of the revolution, in many respects, hence we are very happy that we have this engagement today, on the common challenges we face, and how to theoretically engineer a better life for all our people.

From you we expect clarity and solutions on how we can advance the revolution, both in terms of the struggle of workers as well as improving the lives of all our people. I believe this National Political School will become the backbone of such clarity and solutions. I believe through the leadership of NEHAWU at all levels, we will succeed in our revolutionary course to reconstitute society to mirror the end objectives of the National Democratic Society, as opposed to the common ruin of the contending classes that Marx and Engel cautioned us about.

We are all in strange territory, and we all have an obligation to up our game, on how we conduct ourselves, particularly through the collectives of the ANC, the SACP, COSATU and its affiliates, as well as SANCO. The GNU demands of us to re-strategize, as we can no longer rely on the assumptions of yesteryear. I hope this National Political School therefore become an ongoing process, factoring in the



lessons we would have acquired under the new terrains.

We will strengthen our planning, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. All members of the executive both nationally and in the provinces must know they must account for the work they do as per the electoral mandate. Even though we suffered a significant setback, we are nonetheless still the largest expression of the people's democratic will.

I am confident that we will emerge here with

a fresh appreciation of the meaning of the three laws of dialectics, on the struggle and unity of opposites, on quantity to qualitative change as well as the negation of the negation. And how these laws apply both in the national and international conditions. But most importantly, what are the conclusions we must make informed by these tools of analysis to spearhead our revolutionary course.

As the ANC will steam ahead and implement the elections manifesto as derived from the

ANC National Conference resolutions. We too shall go back to the drawing board on both theoretical and tactical issues to reposition ourselves in the current conjecture. Working together we will triumph of the current setback.

Once more, I take this opportunity to thank you and wish you well throughout this very profound National Political School programme.

Amandla!

ADDRESS BY COSATU PRESIDENT, COMRADE ZINGISWA LOSI – BHEKI MKHIZE POLITICAL SCHOOL



COSATU PRESIDENT, COMRADE ZINGISWA LOSI

President of NEHAWU and 1st Deputy President of COSATU, Cde Mike Shingange, Leadership of NEHAWU and the Federation, Leadership of our Alliance Partners; the ANC, SACP and SANCO,

Most importantly the delegates of our glorious militant NEHAWU,

Good afternoon comrades,

Thank you for inviting COSATU to be part of this important school. There can be no more important than now for such a moment on introspection, critique and most critically determination on the way forward. Not only

for NEHAWU and its membership but indeed for the working class and the liberation movement as a whole.

Ours is not merely a union movement to negotiate the improvement of the conditions of service at the workplace but in fact to transform the material conditions of the working class as a whole, to challenge the failures of capital and to set the course for the building of a socialist society.

Amilcar Cabral wisely reminded us that workers want to improve their living conditions so that may uplift their families and ensure that their children live better lives

than themselves.

The purveyors of neo-liberalism never cease to remind us of Francis Fukuyama's statement of the end of history with the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, time has proven the fallacy of such notions as the crises of capitalism multiply and voters across the world have come out in their masses time and again to defy and reject austerity budget cuts, privatisation, neo-liberalism and the hollowing out of the state.

Latin America from Bolivia to Nicaragua has rejected this false notion of the supremacy of capital, as have the voters of Greece and



Spain, of Senegal and Namibia, of East Timor and Nepal, and indeed here across South Africa.

The neo-liberal political parties are silent about the failures of capitalism to end a crushing unemployment rate of 42% and a youth unemployment rate of 59%, entrenched levels of poverty and inequality. They are silent upon the failures of privatisation to roll out essential services to the historically marginalised and to build an inclusive economy that uplifts the poor and the marginalised.

They are silent upon the successes of the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, who all odds have lifted millions of people from the most dire forms of poverty and hunger, given dignity to their people, created a developmental state geared towards the needs of their masses and who are today able to stand on their own two feet and withstand any neo-colonial pressures from the West.

The crisis facing the working class in South Africa is a crisis of capitalism.

The convening of this historic school could never be more appropriate than a mere few weeks after for the first time since 1994, the liberation movement failed to achieve an outright majority nationally and in Gauteng as well as the painful losses of KZN, the Northern and Western Cape.

If we to rebuild and replenish the movement and to set ourselves back on the path towards a majority, then we must correctly analyze the material factors that led us to this unprecedented crisis for the Alliance and the forces of the left.

Yes, we are in this crisis because of the decade of state capture and corruption. But we are also in this juncture because of the failures of pursuing neo-liberal macro and micro-economic theories, of imposing reckless austerity budget cuts across the state, of decapitating key organs of power, of allowing a parasitic bourgeoisie to treat government as its personal means of accumulation.

This is what has led us to a stagnating economy that has deindustrialized, shed thousands of manufacturing jobs, created ghost towns and reduced us to an importer of cheap goods from overseas.

If we are to turn the economy around, then we need to rebuild and capacitate the state. We need to decisively shift resources to investing in and uplifting working-class communities. The state's macro and micro-economic policies, including the Reserve Bank, must be geared towards growing the economy and creating decent jobs.

We must not allow ourselves to be dictated to by the World Bank or the IMF, nor by their right-wing political parties who have never won the confidence of the masses. We should not repeat neo-liberal policies imposed by the West across the continent, which they themselves have abandoned in America and Europe.

It is critical that we as the Alliance assert our ideological clarity as the forces of the left, to defend the gains of the National Democratic Revolution and the democratic breakthrough of 1994.

Equally we must diagnose and identify our failures from GEAR to our fiscal policies and excise this from the path set for the 7th administration. We can no longer afford to believe that repeating the mistakes of the past will yield different results for the future.

Our task as the Left Axis of COSATU and the SACP, must be to buttress the ANC as a movement of the left that is multi-class yet biased towards the working class and the rural poor.

We must not be ashamed about building the foundations for a socialist society, from delivering the National Health Insurance to Comprehensive Social Security, from free education to subsidised public transport and housing, from the state controlling key levers of economic development from rail to electricity.

The state must be cleansed of corruption and decapitated to empower the working class and not to hand over the tools of emancipation to a wealthy elite.

If we are to win back the faith of the masses, to ensure that they are mobilised to come out in their numbers in support of the ANC and SACP at the 2026 local elections, then we must ensure a radical departure from the failures of the past.

Equally we must build the left popular front as had been done successfully during the UDF and MDM. We must engage and win over progressive civil society from churches to mosques, from student formations to NGOs, from civics to cooperatives.

We must avoid the dangers of being inwardly focused and seek to enlist progressive forces. Failure to do so, risks these spaces being occupied by pseudo and populist formations, many of whom are little more than aspirant fascists and tenderpreneurs whose objective is the liquidation of the democratic movement.

It is critical that actively contest the political terrain internationally, from WFTU to ITUC, from the ILO to SATUCC, from the BRICs to the L20.

The challenges facing workers across the world may vary but the principles remain the same. Workers from Palestine to Western Sahara, from Cuba to Venezuela, from eSwatini to Zimbabwe, are looking to us as COSATU to give them that same solidarity which played such a crucial role in our own liberation.

We have done well to expose the apartheid regime in Israel and the hypocrisy of global capitalism. As we chart the terrain of the political landscape post May 29, we must ensure as the Federation, that the victories we have won on the international front are defended and intensified under the GNU.

We can only achieve the tasks we will set ourselves at this school, if we strengthen the Federation and Affiliates as the political detachment of the working class.

We must be united not only in spirit, but also in practise and ideological clarity. It is the working class who pay the price when we are divided.

We must ensure our machinery is well oiled, our leaders are on the ground, our organisers and shop stewards are trained, our members are serviced and defended, workers are recruited and mobilised. We cannot be a movement of t-shirts and calendars.

We must live the call of Elijah Barayi and unite the working class, build one union, one industry, one federation, one country. It



is only the employer who is the victor when workers are divided.

We must claim our victories from the NHI to the Minimum Wage, from the Two Pot Pension Reforms to the formalisation of Community Health Workers, to recruit and mobilise workers, to build momentum and to consolidate.

We must ensure that the voice of workers is

not only heard in the SACP and the ANC but that it sets the political trajectory and that government at all levels, is held accountable for the implementation of the ANC's elections manifesto. Deployees who fail to deliver must be held accountable and recalled where necessary.

Comrade leadership, allow me to conclude here by wishing you well over the next few days. We look forward to hearing the important

outcomes of this historic school at the next CEC of COSATU and most importantly to working side by side with you to ensure their full implementation.

Thank you. Amandla!