



Johannesburg, 23 April 2019

Open Letter to the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party

Comrades,

For the past few years, we have been following the developments around NUMSA leaving the Tripartite Alliance and laying the groundwork to launch the SRWP. From the beginning, we have openly raised our criticisms of the NUMSA leadership, while noting the potential significance of the decision to withhold support for the ANC. Although the SRWP's programme does not represent any fundamental break with the Stalinist-derived reformism of the SACP, you appeal to the desire among sections of the working class for a party that represents the proletariat's class interests against the capitalists. In light of this, and without minimising the fundamental political differences we have with the SRWP, we are considering giving critical support to your party's campaign in the upcoming elections as a means of expressing class opposition to the ANC, EFF and other bourgeois parties. Necessarily, the basis for any critical support is class independence from bourgeois formations like the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance and the EFF. But your draft election manifesto takes no position on your attitude toward voting for these formations or entering coalitions with them. Where do you stand?

The preamble of the SRWP's draft election manifesto points out that "the experience of all former imperialist colonies and our post 1994 experience" has demonstrated that "it is impossible to resolve the national, gender, race and class question in South Africa and the rest of the post-colonial world without simultaneously defeating capitalism and imperialism and establishing socialism". While this is absolutely true, the leadership of NUMSA, including SRWP chairman Irvin Jim, along with the likes of SAFTU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, were for decades a loyal pillar of the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance that has administered the neo-apartheid capitalist state—thus perpetuating the superexploitation of the mainly black African proletariat, along with its coloured and Indian components, by a predominantly white capitalist class; national oppression of the black majority; hideous oppression of black women; and all the other evils of "our post 1994 experience". The betrayals committed by the NUMSA leaders in service of the Tripartite Alliance include knifing workers strikes—from Mercedes-Benz in 1990 to Volkswagen in 2000—and backing Jacob Zuma's bloodstained presidency for a second time just months after the August 2012 massacre of striking black mineworkers at Marikana. Marikana shows that cops have no place in the workers movement.

Together with our comrades of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), Spartacist/South Africa has consistently opposed voting for the ANC, EFF or any other bourgeois parties, or giving any political support to the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance—a nationalist *popular front* that serves to subordinate the working class to its class enemy. This principled position flows from the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution, expressed in South Africa by our call for a *black-centred workers government*. The bourgeois-nationalist forces of dependent countries are incapable of solving any of the fundamental problems posed by imperialist domination because of their subordination to imperialist capital and mortal fear of their own proletariat. Only working-class power can resolve these problems, posing the need for socialist measures and the extension of proletarian revolution to the advanced capitalist countries. This is counterposed to the schema of "two-stage revolution" (a.k.a. the "National Democratic Revolution") which has been pushed by the SACP to alibi the Tripartite Alliance.

We have consistently opposed voting for workers parties that are part of the popular front. Opposition to popular fronts is the tradition of Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin, whose intransigent opposition to the Provisional Government (the popular front of its day) following the February 1917

revolution was decisive for setting the Bolshevik Party on a course toward the working-class seizure of power in October.

Despite the fact that the SRWP claims to stand in the Leninist tradition, on the critical issue of coalitions with bourgeois parties, and in particular with the ANC and EFF, it is evasive. While the EFF uses left-sounding populist rhetoric, both of these are bourgeois-nationalist parties that represent the class enemy. In November 2018, *Business Day* reported that Zanoxolo Wayile, then interim chair of the SRWP, “said the party would not rule out possibly working with parties with the same ideological outlook, such as the EFF, but has not yet entertained such discussions” (“Numsa workers’ party hopes to shake up the left in SA”, businesslive.co.za). A December 2018 document on the SRWP’s attitude towards the 2019 national elections states, “We only consider alliances with organizations of workers, small farmers and the poor, not any capitalist or reformist parties”, without naming these parties. As already mentioned, the SRWP’s draft election manifesto makes no mention at all of the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance or the EFF, much less stating the SRWP’s attitude toward them.

The question of the political organisation of the proletariat, independent from and in opposition to all capitalist parties, is central for genuine communists who would fight for socialist revolution in South Africa. So, comrades, where do you stand: would you vote for, or form coalitions with, the ANC or EFF? This is a question of vital importance to all class-conscious workers. For our part, we are prepared to give critical support to your campaign, and would call on such workers to vote for the SRWP while maintaining our own Leninist-Trotskyist banner, but only if your answer is a clear “no”.

Comradely,

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