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Red Alert

DA desperately scrambling for relevance – SACP statement

Over the past several weeks in the midst of our novel coronavirus (Covid-19) lockdown the DA has been desperately scrambling for relevance. The DA has clearly been deeply miffed that President Ramaphosa's initial announcement of a lock-down and his subsequent appearances have generally been met with overwhelming public support, not least in the middle-class suburbs the DA believes are its own.

Having heard President Ramaphosa indicate that changes to regulations affecting exercise and e-commerce are imminent, what does the DA do? Its leader, John Steenhuisen jumps on to the bandwagon and announces it is taking government to court to enforce changes to exercise and e-commerce lock-down regulations. Having heard Ramaphosa announce that within two weeks the country will move to alert level three, what does the DA do? DA Western Cape premier Alan Winde calls for level three to be implemented.

For weeks Winde (now under self-quarantine at home in Cape Town) has been insisting against all the evidence that Cape Town is not the current epicentre of the pandemic, despite recording around half of all the Covid-19 deaths in South Africa. We are not remotely suggesting that Cape Town is the current epicentre because it is under DA administration – that would be just as facile as Winde's attempts at denial. What we are pointing out is that a response to the pandemic requires rising above pathetic attempts at petty party political one-upmanship. It requires a common concerted South African and international effort.

It requires an understanding that globally we are dealing with a virus about which much is not known. Getting the right balance between lockdown and re-opening the economy is never going to be an exact science. There will inevitably be debates and differences, including among the scientific community itself and, for that matter, within national government itself. But the DA should have the honesty to have a deep look at itself before pointing fingers. One of their court challenges relates to the current nightly curfew. But who was the first to call for a Covid-19 curfew? It was none other than City of Cape Town DA councillor (and effective mayor) JP Smith.

While we should all condemn human rights abuses by the police and defence where such occur, the City of Cape Town administration still insists (notwithstanding a court decision to the contrary) that its metro police were within their rights in cruelly demolishing shacks in Khayelitsha in the midst of the lockdown. It persists in seeking

to prevent Human Rights Commission observers from monitoring the confinement of homeless people, claiming that this Chapter 9 institution, answerable only to parliament, must first ask the administration permission to do so.

Let us all work to flatten the curve of the pandemic, not each others' party political popularity curve.

We need social cohesion across all walks of life and maximum compliance with the hygiene standards recommended by the World Health Organisation, as well as with the associated lockdown regulations enacted by government to flatten the Covid-19 curve.

In the same vein, the SACP reiterates its call for zero tolerance against abuse and acts of irregular and corrupt conduct allegedly committed in the fight to contain the spread of the deadly coronavirus. In combating such social ills and tackling the dangerous twin dangers of populism and opportunism, we need to continue building maximum unity against the scourge of gender-based violence which also stands in our way in the fight to contain Covid-19.

LET US MAINTAIN PHYSICAL DISTANCING WITH SOCIAL SOLIDARITY.

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Human Solidarity is the answer to pandemics

Walter Mothapo

'The dialectical method therefore requires that the phenomena should be considered not only from the standpoint of their interconnection and interdependence, but also from the point of their movement, their change, their development, their coming onto being and going out of being.' Stalin, J. (1938)

A pandemic such as the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) is not unprecedented in history, given the misnamed 'Spanish-flu', that is the H1N1 virus disease of 1918-

1920. However, it has a greater propensity to ravage the modern cyber-civilisation that the world has become. Given the bi-polar globe comprising mainly China and the United States (U.S.) that centres around advancement of the fourth industrial revolution, our take on the pandemic cannot escape the contextual location of the international politico-landscape and the imperialist crisis accompanying it.

It is very important to develop a class perspective on Covid-19 so that, as the famous dictum goes, 'we don't let the crisis go to waste'. This means we have to scientifically understand the phenomenon that Covid-19 is in order to develop lessons that will contribute towards our leap into socialism. As Thomas Sankara says, 'theoretical study deepens our understanding of developments, clarifies our actions, and forewarns us against being presumptuous on many things'.

The Covid-19 crisis and the ignorance of the West

The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the three problems afflicting the world, which are military aggression, environmental degradation and hunger. In South Africa, we have always pointed out to the triple crisis of unemployment, inequalities and poverty. There are many conspiracy theories governing the origins of Covid-19 as postulated by Donald Trump and his ilk including the virus being produced in a Chinese Laboratory in Wuhan and being linked to the production of 5G technology.

However, scientific evidence points to the periodic recurrence of pandemics with the last being the 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak. It is against this backdrop that Trump's own advisors warned of a threat of a similar or more destructive pandemic, which Trump fervently ignored.

The United Nations Environmental Advisor, Inger Anderson, says the destruction of the eco-systems brings about the birth of new viruses and this relates to climate change.

The measures prescribed by governments also relate to socio-economic disparities. Self-isolation was not easily complied with in informal settlements and townships, given condensed habitat patterns. Workers in the informal economy were the first casualties of the lockdown in terms of income generation.

Imperialism and its accompanying social ills

The pandemic signals the intense crisis of imperialism. The level of denialism was unprecedented and exacerbated the crisis in various Western countries. Italy appealed for international assistance, hence the intervention by Cuba. However, Cuba also offered 1 610 medical doctors to the U.S. during the hurricane of September 2005. Cuban President Fidel Castro said that Cuba could have offered more help had it not been for the pride of U.S. government. Cuba is assisting 23 countries in the fight against Covid-19, despite their own economic hardships because of the blockade imposed by the U.S. The virus has reaffirmed the importance of human capital over the markets and other traditional economic models.

In the U.S., African Americans have been disproportionately affected. Africans in China were being discriminated against – the Chinese government took steps to deal with the issue. History demonstrates warm relations between the peoples of South Africa and China dating back to liberation struggle days. Some do not comprehend this history and ideological context so they fall prey to anti-Chinese venomous propaganda. There is a distinction between state sponsored violence or xenophobia by some backward elements of society.

South Africa's international posture

South Africa cannot shy away from taking a bold and progressive international posture. Indeed our orientation during the struggle for liberation tended more towards the Soviet Union. The West led by the U.S. and the United Kingdom (U.K.) have been collaborators with Apartheid, providing resources for the South African Defence Force. This was to protect their loot in Africa and to secure the apartheid regime as an ally in the imperial war for domination of Africa. Oliver Tambo in a statement to the Non-Aligned Movement in 1970 stated that 'the merger of South African capital with international finance has been a specific feature of South African penetration in the economies in many countries in Africa and elsewhere'. Tactically, we would be naïve to dismiss the West and its institutions and financial systems that govern the capitalist world we live in but as Govan Mbeki advises, 'He who sups with the devil must have a long spoon if he is to keep out of reach of his clutches'.

The interconnectedness and interdependence of aspects of society and the global terrain as explained by Stalin was further espoused by Che Guevara who in his address to the United Nations General Assembly stressed the importance of levelling the international political playfield, and the need for co-operation and multilateralism for peace and development among nations.

Che remarked; 'as Marxists we have maintained that peaceful coexistence among nations does not encompass coexistence between the exploiters and the exploited, between the oppressors and the oppressed'. Modern civilisation is threatened by the financing and manufacturing of military equipment, narrow nationalism, economic protectionism, hunger, rising xenophobia, environmental degradation and resultant pandemics. All these call for a bigger resolve among the left forces globally to fight for a more just world based on human solidarity. Interventions such as aid, handouts, grants and loans are reactive approaches to a crisis that emanates from humanity's lack of resolve for solidarity and the quest for an egalitarian world.

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