



Global Labour News

For Labour Internationalism and Globalizing Resistance

Quarterly Newsletter of the Global Labour University Alumni Association

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Introductory Note

by Harald Kröck / GLU Project Co-ordinator & LPG 1 alumni

In this issue Sheri expresses her hope about the outcomes of this year's summer school in terms of analysing and exploring different strategies and solutions to intervene in the recent worldwide struggles. In her "Call for GLU alumni testimonies" Luciole kindly requests to share our work (re)integration" experiences with new students; Angélica briefly introduces the current group of ENGAGE students in Germany; Mametlwe reports on and analyses the Mine Line factory occupation in South Africa which started in October 2010; Euan describes how Canadian unions intervene in elections and Paliani reminds us of a living hero of labour, Comrade Stewart Nkolokosa, one of the founding fathers of the fore-runner of Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU), and last but not least Stefanie comments on the energy turn in Germany which implies the end of the era of nuclear power production within Germany - hope, you enjoy reading.

For the next issue we - the editorial board - kindly ask all alumni and students to send contributions to labour related topics latest on **1. September 2011** to the following address: harald.kroeck@global-labour-university.org

Masses on the rise...?

*by Sheri Hamilton / GLU Summer School Co-ordinator 2011
& LPG 4 alumni*

As the summer school draws closer, the pro-democracy struggles -- beginning in January in North Africa and the Middle East -- appear to be receding, at the same time, new waves of protests and demonstrations against austerity measures are moving the European masses into action. From Spain where the movement of the Indignados have emulated the protests of the Tunisian and Egyptian masses in occupying the equivalent of their own Tahrir squares, to Greece where there have been numerous general strikes, to Britain where at the time of writing, workers from key sectors of the economy are preparing to come out on strike on 30th June in what one union leader has likened to what will be on the scale of the 1926 General Strike, workers are on the rise.

In southern Africa, the 'peaceful' Botswana has been changed forever by its longest and most militant public sector strike. In Swaziland, after the brutal clampdown of planned protests, workers are preparing to attempt another demonstration against the threatened non-payment of salaries of civil servants which has forced their government to request a loan of \$1 billion from South Africa after it was turned down by the IMF and African Development Bank. What all these struggles have in common is that they are a reaction to the world economic crisis which despite many optimistic forecasts of a recovery may yet worsen if warnings of a double dip recession are born out.

According to World Wealth Report by Merrily Lynch and Caggemini, globally, the wealth of the superrich grew by 9.7% in 2010 more than fastest growing economies in the world. Yet workers are paying for a crisis that is not of their making while the bosses continue to get richer? What is labour, the most organised force in society to do in these circumstances? What role has it been playing? What role should it be playing? Is there a convergence of all the various struggles that could develop into a world revolution or at the very least, coordinated action?

As Alumni of the Global Labour University representing countries from all the four corners of the globe and converging in the southern most part of the world, what collective wisdom can be brought to bear on what is taking place? How are these developments influencing our work? How are they shaping and informing our studies? We hope that the contributions at this year's summer school will draw inspiration from the events in Tahrir square that have ignited a world movement and illuminate our discussions and deliberations in ways that can contribute to analysing and exploring different strategies and solutions to intervene in these struggles.

A first draft of the programme for the summer school is now available on the GLU website

<http://www.global-labour-university.org/261.html> and on ILIAS (you have to log in first) at http://ilias.hwr-berlin.de/ilias3/repository.php?ref_id=147177&cmd=view.

A second version will soon appear reflecting further contributions that will form part of the agenda. Also on ILIAS a list of all those who have confirmed participation to help put together panels and research groups will shortly be available. Please forward your suggestions about the composition of either or both for the next version of the programme.

Call for GLU alumni testimonies!

by Luciole Sauviat / LPG 3 alumni

The "transfer" alumni working group is looking for testimonies about your work (re)integration" experiences.

After having completed the GLU-Programme, most of the alumni return to the organisation where they worked previously or they try to find a working occupation related to the new knowledge they have acquired. For some alumni this new step in life has been very successful; they have been able to initiate new projects or they have been promoted. However, for some it turned out to be remarkably difficult: there are no fields of action, projects, or posts in which the alumni can be involved, unions are sometimes not interested in the experiences the alumni gathered or the positions of the alumni have been occupied during his/her absence.

Based on these facts, new steps have been taken during the Alumni Applied Research School 2010 (AARS). On one hand, after a student has completed the programme, the GLU will send a letter to his/her organisation. On the other hand, an alumni working group on the transfer of GLU alumni back to their original organisations - or into the labour market - was founded. This working group has the task of making propositions to the programme staff and professors on how to support (re)integration into labour politics. Luciole (LPG3) and Tina (LPG5) are the actual group members.

The working group has defined some recommendations with other alumni of the AARS and sent them to members of the Curriculum development meeting (2010 during the AARS). The main points are:

- Testimonies from Alumni for students.
- A transfer strategy workshop at the start of the programme connected to other programme points (internship, thesis, etc.)
- Support from professors/staff with information
- A workshop on power relations at the end of the programme (for this one session of the one world seminar could used)

These recommendations will probably be discussed at the next steering committee. **Meanwhile** we are looking for testimonies to be put on ILIAS and distributed to new students. Positive testimonies can be inspirational; negative ones will have a warning effect. For the GLU and the transfer group they can also be used to analyse what kind of issues should be tackled in order to improve student transfer from study to the workplace.

In order not to damage reputations, the testimonies will be fully **anonymous (no person and/or names of organisations)**. They can be positive, negative as well as mixed. The testimonies should proceed according to the following framework:

- be one page long
- include a short description of the work you have done before the GLU programme
- a description of your strategies or what you hoped for when you came back
- a short story of your experiences, bad or good.
- at the end you can give the reader of your testimonies some advice or encouragement about how to deal with their future (re)integration.

Please use this link to hand in your testimony via the provided form: <https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dFdCSDEyaUZDZFE2dDNHNUFCR1Nfanc6MO>

We are anxiously waiting to read your testimonies! In case of further questions please contact Luciole at

luciole.sauviat@global-labour-university.org

ENGAGE Group 2011: Creating Real Commitment

by *Angélica Rocío Jara / ENGAGE 2011 student*

My colleagues, mentioned in this text, have given me the task of writing of our experience as a group. As such, this short article offers a brief look at what makes an ENGAGE group, i.e. the people who conform it.



Our group is very diverse in terms of nationalities and personalities; to illustrate, we have: Claudia, the only German, has greatly assisted the group in regards to our adaptation to the German culture and the best way of “working out” Berlin; in the Africa group we have people with completely different personalities: Mable of Zambia, it is impossible to avoid not seeing her because as a mother she so protective of every one; Mathilda of South Africa, is a very reserved person but has a great deal to say and she is very adept at analyzing situations; we also have Sawsan from Jordan, a person of infinite patience. She works in the airline industry which is probably the reason for such patience. Masha from Russia is a whirlwind of ideas and opinions, which she does not withhold from anyone, anytime. The Asian members are made up by Dom, the most peaceful person I have met in my life. He has the rare ability of explaining everything with perfect tranquility; Hein, a Vietnamese woman, of a very small petite stature, is always very friendly and affectionate but is so forgetful that one must help her so that she does not leave something behind wherever we venture. Someone who is not in the program but is without doubt very much a part of the group and who everyone loves for being so spontaneous, cheerful and helping us is Julia who is working for the GIZ as an intern. Finally, the writer (me) is Angelica from Paraguay.

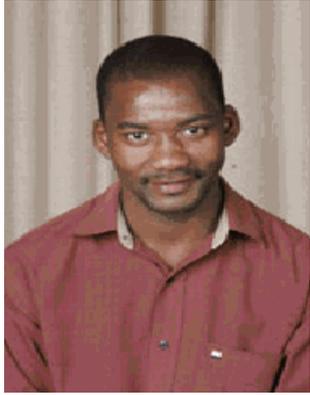
The two months in Berlin were enlightening in many ways, not only because we drew on so much knowledge of which we were not aware, concerning economic paradigms and how the financial world moves, thanks to the excellent classes of the professors Herr and Evans, but also because we learned a lot about ourselves as human beings and as union members, which is the most important part of this program, giving us the chance to connect with people and share experiences, learn about new cultures and promote links and networks between countries and causes linked by their similar struggles.

I would like to thank all the HWR team for their help because they made our stay in Berlin wonderful. Although we are far from experts in the German language, we all remember fondly the teacher that helped us, Mr. Rudiger; with his assistance, we could at least purchase what we needed at the supermarket.

Now a new phase is beginning for us in Kassel and then we have the great challenge of the internships ahead of us. There is still so much we have to learn and so much to live as a group and as individuals, after which we can take this knowledge back to each of our respective countries. Thanks to this enormous opportunity we have the possibility to ENGAGE and to change structures.

Mine Line factory occupation

by Mamehlwe Sebei / LD 3 student



In the move without recent precedence in South Africa, workers at Mine Line and Tap engineering occupied their factory to secure the factories against theft of former-owner and conspiracy of liquidators to further strip the factories of assets and deprive workers of their entitlements in terms of liquidation process. Workers took control of all factories of Mine Line to revitalize the companies under the democratic

management of the workers in order to recover unpaid wages, benefits and provide decent jobs to more than 100 workers who lost their jobs.

Mine Line and Tap Engineering are metal factories founded and formerly owned by the Mulder family since 1964. These factories are located next to Doornkop mine at Krugersdorp, in the West Rand of Johannesburg, and specialized in manufacturing of valves and locomotives for the mining industries

The factory occupation follows the application for the liquidation of the company by the ex-owner, Mr Wynand Mulder, who defrauded the company of millions of rands before voluntarily surrendering for liquidation. Key amongst his fraudulent activities was the R35 million loans he borrowed from ABSA (a South African bank) in the name of the company to pursue his other personal business interests elsewhere and buy fleet of lavish vehicles and a helicopter for himself. He further took R15 million in cash from the company accounts a day before applying for its surrender even when the company was already technically insolvent.

In obvious collusion with the liquidator, Mr. Mulder has been robbing workers and other creditors more. He has been taking assets from the factory and stripping it of whatever value remains of it. He is reopening the same company elsewhere, allegedly in Randfontein -as well in the West Rand- with the stolen machines and other assets. Workers are going to open a criminal case against Mr Mulder and have denounced the liquidating company for letting these things to happen. They have further expressed the loss of faith and have decided to take full control of the company. Whereas from the 20th October, workers have been guarding the assets, the full-scale and mass factory occupation started on the 22nd of October 2010.

The factory occupation having begun earnestly on the 22nd of October 2010 has become a serious mass, rolling public campaign to fight for the transfer of the company to the workers and expose

the crimes of the ex-owner. Workers have further resolved on the following demands to different stakeholders:

Government.

- For Industrial Development Corporation to procure the company in the interests of the workers and provide further capital investments necessary to start the operations of the company.
- For the Dept of Trade and Industry to provide Capital funding to take the company out of distress and capitalize the foundation of the workers cooperative.
- For MERSETA to place all the workers into Lay-off training Scheme to provide skills and capacity necessary for the workers to work and manage the company more efficiently.

Debtors.

- ABSA-to pursue Mulder for the fraudulent loan of R35 Million instead of the company.
- SARS- To cancel the R15 million debt owed to it or claim it from the previous owner in alternative to the company.

Ex-Owner, Mr Mulder

- To return all the monies unlawfully taken from the company.
- To return all the assets and machines stolen from the company premises.
- To stop trading on intellectual property of the company.

The liquidator:

- To immediately open all the books and inventory for perusal and verification of company assets by the workers.
- To open criminal charges against Mulder and lay claim for the return of all the monies and assets unlawfully taken from the company.
- To stop attempts to sell the company to any private investor.
- To transfer the full control to the workers cooperative.

The significance of Mine line Factory Occupation.

Since the onset of the economic crisis, the working class people everywhere across the world were confronted with torrents of savage attacks on the part of the bosses who were determined to off loading the burden on this crisis on the shoulders of the working class. In spite of the patriotic rhetoric of the ruling elites and trade union leaders of the need for a 'joint South African' response to the economic crisis, the workers and the poor of South Africa have not been spared the savage attacks which have become the common denominator everywhere across the globe.

Job losses, wage cuts, short-times and escalating casualisation and flexibilisation of the labour markets have been worse in South Africa than anywhere else in relation to the impact of the economic crisis. This once again confirms the worst, parasitic features of the South African capitalism and reveals the bankruptcy of the whole policy of 'National Democratic Revolution', which tie the working class, through its biggest mass organizations, COSATU and SACP into alliance with the bosses, for whom the ANC has become the main instrument of political domination.

It is for this reason, that the organized labour in South Africa, in spite of the level of organization, consciousness and militancy in their rank and file, has suffered some kind of paralysis in face of the massive retrenchments, lay-offs, wage freezes and other attacks, failing to put forward any serious strategy to fight back. The decision of the workers of Mine line to occupy their factory has taken place against this background and for this reason, has become matter of widespread political and intellectual interests for the workers and leftwing activists grappling with the challenges of the economic crisis.

In the course of the debate on the significance of the factory occupation, varying perspectives have emerged. Variations on the understanding of the significance of this factory occupation were not only a matter of varying shades of working class opinion. They also reflected varying class positions and fetishes of the middle class intellectual currents, particularly the leftwing academia involved in the Conference of the Democratic Left (Now called the Democratic Left Front). From this stratum, the most popular current of opinion view is that this occupation represents an offensive strategy threatening to undermine the very foundations of the capitalist system and present within the womb of the capitalist system, the revolutionary alternative to the privately owned monopolies.

The implications of this perspective are that we can and should keep occupying more factories. In that way, we are told, we can finally bring about the new socialist society, without a need for revolution and political organization of the working class necessary to lead it into conquest of political power through an armed insurrection. These perspectives are theoretically false and practically dangerous as they emasculate the working class, distracting them from the most urgent political tasks facing it today, which consist mainly in the creation of the mass political party of the working class on the basis of the socialist programme as the lessons of the revolutions sweeping Northern Africa and Middle East painfully remind us.

So our perspective, a Marxist revolutionary perspective is that this struggle is purely defensive and in no way it can be presented as anything more than this from the political and tactical point of view. Off course, In the course of this occupation, workers have in many ways, already illuminated in practice, the principles of democratic workers control and management which sheds a light not only into the governance of the future workers corporative, they want to turn the company into, but also a socialist future of humanity, in which the workers will control and manage factories, mines, banks and other commanding heights of the economy on the basis of the democratic participation and planning.

In this sense, the heroic struggle of the Mine Line workers, together with others, greatly assist in the theoretical clarification of those seeking a socialist, working class alternative to the anarchy, exploitation and oppression under capitalism, in spite of the fact that it remains purely defensive struggle. To overthrow capitalism requires foremost a general uprising of the working class, at the head of which is marching a mass political organization of the working class armed with clear, scientific perspectives and socialist programme and above all, a revolutionary Marxist leadership.

The Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM) tendency in and outside of MEWUSA constitute this revolutionary Bolshevik leadership in embryo. Mewusa and other mass organizations of the working class such as communities and student movements are for their part confronted most urgently with the task of campaigning for a creation of a mass political organization of the working class.

However, the greater significance of this factory occupation lies in the immediate alternative it provide to many workers fighting against mass redundancies, liquidations and other capitalist attacks on the working people. In the light of the political paralysis and grip of class collaborationist corporatism in the organized labour movement, the Mine line factory occupation represents a refreshing lesson in a struggle for militant and fighting alternatives for the working class.

The working class demoralized by policies of class collaboration and fatalism of the leadership of COSATU, NACTU and FEDUSA, which is best epitomized by their failure to mobilize even for a single general strike in spite of millions of jobs lost, thousands of factory closures and wage cuts, desperately need a fighting programme to repulse the ruthless attacks of the capitalists, who are resolute to restore profitability at the expense of the working people, thus making to pay for the price of capitalist economic recovery. Whereas this occupation cannot be a panacea for all the struggles challenging the whole working class it demonstrates to the workers that alternatives can be explored to respond to the job losses and precarious conditions of work that they are experiencing in the economic crisis.

What has been achieved so far?

After series of meetings and discussions, which reflected on the inspiring lessons of the Argentinean occupations amongst others, the workers decided on the 17th of October 2010 to undertake factory occupation, which started on the 20th October, 2010 when workers noticed in the course of their meeting, more trucks send by the former owner to load more assets. Since the meeting of the 17th October, 2011 which already included the Conference of the Democratic Left and its affiliated organizations, the workers decided to issue calls for solidarity from fellow workers, working class communities, student activists and other progressive forces.

Workers, together with activists from the community, particularly, the Landless Peoples Movement have since the 20th October, 2011 been occupying the factory, changing the locks and taking effective control of the factories and company offices. These workers have persisted in this heroic effort and struggle, taking turns to guard the factories days and nights long, transforming them at once into a democratically controlled and managed space for workers assemblies, revolutionary political classes, solidarity meetings and mass rallies. This on and by themselves are the most important achievements of the occupation.

The factory occupation has however managed to also bring together in a way that has not been realized by any recent struggle, progressive organizations and activists from varying arenas of the working class struggle. This occupation has demonstrated the immense possibilities of uniting the working class in struggle, not

merely leftwing organizations, the lack of which is the most tragic feature of the titanic struggles of the working class taking place today. The fact that activists from the communities, organized labour and universities have joined together in solidarity around the struggle of Mine line factory occupation is the single most important political contribution to the struggle for a working class unity and political alternative in this country which this occupation has managed to achieve.

Since the factory occupation started, series of mass demonstrations and public campaigning have taken place, including mass rallies, Radio, TV and Newspaper interviews. This includes two interviews with SAFM, one interview with Radio 702 and many other radio stations. There was also a TV interview with Cape TV. Other media such as film-makers and internet websites especially of leftwing and working class organizations have followed the occupation and popularized it greatly. There is even a film about this occupation which will provide a memory of the occupation and ensure that it live in the consciousness of the working class for a very long time to come.

The occupation has further mobilized the biggest international working class solidarity in support of any recent struggle in the past few years. The workers and MEWUSA have received solidarity message and some minimal financial support from the working class organizations and activists across the world through the union, CDL and DSM in particular. The publicity we received and the international support have greatly raised the political and international profile of MEWUSA than any other event in the history of this organization and for this reason alone, it justify all the sacrifices and exertions we had to make to ensure that this occupation take place and sustained.

The struggle is continuing and still faces challenges, but we can overcome them if we persevere. This include making sure that we exert pressure on DTI, IDC, Absa and other creditors meet the demands of the workers. Our main obstacles at the moment remain the subversive activities of the liquidators, who continue to sabotage every effort to get the necessary information required by IDC/DTI, Job Creation Trust and Merseta/CCMA for interventions we are seeking. It is however disheartening that the union seems to be pulling itself out of the occupation instead of intensifying its efforts to make sure that we ultimately win this battle for the sake of the whole working class masses in this country and internationally who will be greatly inspired by the lessons of this occupation in their struggle against job losses and lay-offs taking place everywhere today.

How do our unions intervene in elections?

by Euan Gibb / LPG 1 alumni

Results of this month's Canadian federal election are the very definition of bittersweet. Canadian voters just elected more social democratic members to federal parliament than at any time in the history of this country. Trade unionists are claiming a historic victory. Members supported by the union movement are the 'official opposition' for the first time. The inseparable bitterness inter-

twined with this victory is a Conservative majority government led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.



Elections force trade unionists to engage with the formal political process. Many of us would prefer to spend our time outside of party politics and electioneering. But the fact is – elections offer an extremely important opportunity to trade unionists and the left in general that cannot be ignored. During election campaigns millions of workers are thinking about, analyzing and talking about politics. This offers a genuine opportunity to

push analysis beyond rhetoric and to engage with key notions about capitalism and neoliberalism in particular. I spent about six weeks working with Canada's largest union – Canadian Union of Public Employees CUPE on the recent federal election.

How does the system work?

Like so many other nations across the globe, Canada is a recovering British colony. We only 'patriated' our constitution in 1982. Prior to '82 our constitution was a regular act of British parliament. Consequently, we inherited the Westminster model of parliamentary procedure and its 'first-past-the-post' method of electing Members of Parliament. That means that all of the votes cast for candidates that lost in each of the 306 Canadian federal 'ridings' count for nothing. The voting intention and desires of millions of Canadians do not translate into members of parliament in the capital. So we end up with highly disproportionate outcomes. Millions of Canadians vote for progressive candidates in elections but we don't end up with progressive members in parliament.

The conservatives took the majority (54%) of seats in this election with only 39.62% of the actual vote. Importantly, this means they will be able to govern for the next four years free from the burden of negotiation or compromise. Many of us are preparing for the coming battles. They've been in power for less than a month and they've already moved to legislate away the right to strike for our postal workers and airline workers. Both groups of workers were striking over preservation of retirement benefits – striking for future workers in order that they are not forced to accept the bill for the recent economic crisis they had no hand in creating.

Throughout Canadian history there have been two federal parties that have turned power back and forth from election to election. The Liberal party and the Conservatives. Both are neoliberal – with the Conservatives being the slightly worse version. We also have a social democratic party called the New Democratic Party – NDP. The NDP has never won sufficient seats to form a federal government but has led several of the 10 Canadian provinces and 3 territories over the years. The NDP was formed in 1961 by bringing together a progressive rural 'farmers' party with a socialist history and organized labour. Since '61, the NDP has been held up as

the 'party of labour'. To be clear – the NDP is a capitalist party but its proposals are less neoliberal than the current alternatives.

What was this election about?

Like so many national and sub-national elections across the globe in the last few years, this one was about who is going to pay for the crisis. The Conservative party's platform included massive corporate tax cuts (despite the Canadian corporate tax rate consistently being one of the lowest in the OECD), ending economic recovery stimulus, new spending on jails (despite falling crime rates) and buying fighter jets (turns out after the election that the price tag didn't include engines!). Behind the rhetoric we knew there were plans for deep cuts to the public sector.

How do we intervene?

So what do our unions actually do once an election date has been called? I've watched the full spectrum of responses in my 14 years in the labour movement. From unions that completely opt-out and refuse to take any positions to unions that promote active participation in the activities of the NDP and allocate significant resources to supporting members and staffers that run as candidates.

Many Canadian unions have historically used elections as basic opportunities for member education and engagement. A brief moment to talk with members about the importance of politics but not much beyond that. Putting this strategy into practice often means printing and distributing leaflets to be distributed to members. The leaflets would include some information about what the union leadership's position was on key election questions and a few of the union's demands or priorities. Many members would never see these leaflets as the priority within unions remains the day-to-day struggles and administration of collective agreements – regardless of the election. CUPE has used a strategy like this in past elections.

Things were different this time. The leadership of the union decided that instead of spending precious member resources on leaflets, they would hire organizers across Canada to talk to members about politics. As a CUPE member, I was one two organizers that worked the election in my city – Hamilton, Ontario. The work was interesting, engaging and exciting. CUPE is a public sector union and so many members intuitively understood that a Conservative government offers a direct threat to their working conditions and ultimately to their basic job security.

The work began with contacting and then going out to meet with the elected leadership of local unions in Hamilton. For example, the health workers' local, the municipal workers' local and the school board workers' local. CUPE is a union where the locals maintain a high degree of political and administrative autonomy. This fact led to two consequences for our work. First, many locals – particularly the larger ones already had significant capacity and resources. Second, we could not assume that decisions made at the centre of the union were supported at the local level. For these two reasons, hiring organizers to work the election made a lot of strategic sense. Organizers could connect active locals to

broader efforts and also put the time in to talking to locals that were not yet actively intervening in the election.

We spent time at the locals within CUPE organizing membership lists. We knew where some difficult political battles would be so wanted to know where CUPE members were living. We organized the membership lists by which riding workers lived in. We then organized locals to have staff, elected officials or volunteers making phone calls to members to talk about politics. We directly reached members in the thousands. This was a much more organized and systematic intervention than had been used in the past.

What was the result?

In my city we elected three NDP members to federal parliament – out of the four parliamentary seats available. I wish we could take full credit but all three of these candidates were incumbents that knew how to work hard and get elected. They all had extensive volunteer mobilization capacity. However, this organized strategy most certainly did make a more significant difference in other ridings across Canada. Finally, this federal election allowed CUPE to spend some serious time and resources on internal organizing. This forced the union to meet members where they're at – politically and geographically. This deepens members' connection to their union. It makes the union stronger. We made a contribution to a historic victory for progressive federal candidates in Canada.

(Photo credit to Joel Duff at the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL))

Nkolokosa: Living Hero of labour

by Paliani Chinguwo¹ / LD 4 student

One of the illuminating accounts in the history of Malawi that is seldom recognized and appreciated accordingly even within the labour movement, is the active and vibrant participation of workers and trade unionists in the struggles for freedom, human rights and political reforms both during the colonial regime and the one party dictatorship. For instance, as supported by Dr. Dzimbiri (2007) during the last stages of colonialism the trade union movement aligned itself to the nationalist interests with the belief that economic benefits to the working class and the nation at large would arise with political freedom. More so, some renowned trade unionists such as Lali Lubani and Lawrence Mataka were also leaders of the political party-Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) that was agitating for independence.

A direct link can also be traced between the struggle against colonialism and strike activity during the last stage of the colonial rule in Malawi. As analyzed by Dr. Dzimbiri (2007), the high strike record by workers which was registered in 1953 could be linked to the political protests against the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland which had been imposed during the same year by Britain amidst protests from Africans. Besides, among those that were arrested following the declaration of the state of emergency on 3rd March 1959 were trade union leaders who were suspected to have incited the workers to revolt against the colonial government through a series of strike activity. Among these trade unionists who were jailed along side other nationalists following the declaration of the state of emergency, was Comrade Stewart Nkolokosa.

In June 1956, Comrade Stewart Nkolokosa was one of the founding fathers of the fore-runner of Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU) called the Trade Union Congress of Nyasaland (TUCN). Upon his arrest following the declaration of the state of emergency in March 1959, he was the president of Nyasaland Railways Workers Union (NRWU). Again barely four weeks after Malawi attained independence, he was regarded as an enemy of the state. At the time of the cabinet crisis in 1964, while serving as the Secretary General of Trade Union Congress of Nyasaland (TUCN), he was forced to flee into exile in Zambia where he stayed for 30 years.

Comrade Stewart Nkolokosa was born on 18th February 1928 in Blantyre at a place where the Nkolokosa suburb is located today. Soon after completing grade 6 at Malamulo Mission in Thyolo, he proceeded to do a two year teachers' course at the same mission. In 1950, instead of pursuing a career in teaching as he wished, he picked up a job at the treasury department in Zomba as a clerk. A year later he switched to the customs' department in Limbe before moving yet again to Chiponde in Namwera. One year later, 1954, he was posted to work at the customs office in Blantyre where he picked up a fierce quarrel with his racist white boss. Because he could not withstand the racist attitude of his boss, he resigned and in the same year he was offered a job by Nyasaland Railways as security officer. It was at Nyasaland Railways where he was exposed to trade unionism and eventually became a union leader. Having shown outstanding leadership qualities on the onset, in the same year while travelling to Salima on official duties, a congress for the Nyasaland Railways African Workers' Union which was underway elected him president in absentia.

Following the declaration of a state of emergency in March 1959, Comrade Stewart Nkolokosa was among a few unionists who were arrested on suspicion that as union leaders they had agitated the workers to rise against the colonial government in support of the nationalist cause. He was sent to Kanjedza prison where he met with other nationalists such as Willie Chokani, Bwanausi brothers, David Rubadiri among others. Mean while, upon receiving the breaking news that Nkolokosa had been arrested, African workers at Nyasaland Railways in Blantyre staged a violent strike in protest. A few days later, he was among the few who were picked as 'hard cores' and moved to another prison in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). In 1960, he was granted bail which required him to report to the police station every Sunday and restricted him from travelling outside Blantyre. In the same year, he received a letter from International Federation of Plantations and General Workers requesting him to relocate to the tea plantations in Thyolo and establish a trade union to represent workers in the tea plantations. In 1961, after successfully acquiring a clearance from police, he moved to Thyolo district. In the same year, he set up structures of a union called Plantations Agriculture Workers Union and he became its first General Secretary.

In 1962, Comrade Stewart Nkolokosa became the president of Nyasaland Trade Union Congress (NTUC). The following year at a congress, he was elected the Secretary General of NTUC, a position which saw him travelling to a number of countries across the

world including Brussels and Geneva to attend international conferences and workshops representing the workers of Nyasaland.

Around 1963, with evidence of impending independence from Britain, the self government under Malawi Congress Party (MCP) swiftly changed its position vis a vis workers' interests. Its attention was turned towards national unity and economic development. It was this shift that widened the gap between the workers and self government (Dzimhiri, 2007). Barely two months after attaining independence on 6th July 1964, Malawi experienced a cabinet crisis. This was a disarray within the first cabinet of post independent Malawi which was created by abrupt expulsions of some ministers from the cabinet and subsequent resignations by other ministers following an irreconcilable and growing rift that had developed between the then prime minister Dr. H.K. Banda and cabinet ministers on administrative and policy issues.

At a cabinet meeting held on 5th August 1964 the ministers seized an opportunity to express their discontent towards Dr. H.K. Banda's policies and why they could not effectively contribute towards national development in an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and mistrust. Having failed to resolve the rift and following the resignation of one cabinet minister Collin Cameron, on 3rd September 1964 Dr. H.K. Banda dismissed Kanyama Chiume, Orton Chirwa and Augustine Bwanausi from the cabinet. In protest to these dismissals Yatuta Chisiza, Willie Chokani and John Msonthi resigned from the cabinet. John Msonthi withdrew his resignation a few hours later. When Masauko Chipembere, education minister returned from Canada a few days later, he announced his resignation in parliament on 9th September 1964. Immediately after Dr. H.K. Banda gained an overwhelming vote of confidence in parliament from members of parliament, he set out to tour the central and northern regions to publicly castigate and consolidate his victory over the ex-ministers. Meanwhile, in the then Capital City Zomba, the ex-ministers addressed gatherings of disgruntled African workers mostly civil servants and other dissident factions to justify their position in the rift. "These meetings led directly to clashes between groups of civil servants and some villagers from neighboring rural areas on one hand and members of Malawi Young Pioneer (MYP) and League of Malawi Youth on the other hand" (Pike, 1968).

Trade unions which had felt greatly sidelined by the post colonial government for some time took a hard line position in favour of the ex-ministers. A delegation of trade unionists led by the then Secretary General of Nyasaland Trade Union Congress Comrade Stewart Nkolokosa met one of the ex-ministers-Masauko Chipembere at his residence in Blantyre to present a trade union statement in support of the dissident ministers. In November, after being tipped of his impending arrest for associating and siding with ex-ministers who had then been declared 'enemies of the state', Comrade Stewart Nkolokosa sneaked out of the country to a neighboring Zambia where he stayed for almost 30 years separated from his family. That marked the end of his 10 year career as a trade unionist which commenced in 1954 when he joined Nyasaland Railways as a security officer.

While in Zambia, he lived as an asylum seeker under the protection of United Nations Human Rights Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for a year before picking up a job at a construction firm as Accounts Personnel. It was the then Zambia's Minister of Home Affairs Mr. Chagufu who was a former trade unionist with whom he had interacted at various trade union international workshops/conferences, who assisted him to get proper documents enabling him to permanently stay and work in Zambia. He came back to Malawi for the first time for an official launch of a political party called United Front for Multi party Democracy (UFMD) which was formed in Zambia by exiled Malawians. There after, he travelled back to Zambia and returned to Malawi for good in June 1994. Later, feeling neglected and sidelined by the current trade union movement and its leadership while at the same time contended of his sacrifice and contribution to the struggle for independence and freedom, he settled at his home village at Manjawira in Ntcheu where he earns a living as a farmer.

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The energy turn in Germany – a historical chance?

by Stefanie A. Wahl / LPG 5 alumni



The catastrophe of Fukushima is going to have long lasting effects on the German society. It is not only the rise of the Green Party and the first Green Prime Minister of a German state, but it has major effects German energy policy. Germany as an industrialized country - with an energy-intensive economy - decided to shut down all nuclear power plants until 2022. And so far the new law includes no way to withdraw this

law. On the 30th June the German Bundestag is going to end the era of nuclear power production within Germany.

The law means the final exit from nuclear power use within Germany and is a real “energy U – Turn”. Just in October 2010 the Merkel government had decided to withdraw the exit that the Red – Green Government under Schröder established in 2000. Mass protests couldn't avoid the deal with the nuclear energy industry in Germany and an extension of the use of nuclear power from more 10 years up to 22 years. But after Fukushima, a wave of mass protests and successes for the Green Party in state elections, especially chancellor Merkel pushed forward the discussion about a re-entry into the nuclear power exit. Just a few days after the earthquake and the nuclear catastrophe the conservative-liberal government decided to shut down the seven oldest nuclear power plants due to safety reasons. The new law defines that they will never be restarted again. While the four big energy companies were complaining and stoking fear about an electricity crisis in case of turning the plug by the government, a German wide discussion started about the energy future of Germany. The main question was: how can Germany compensate the loss of 23% of its total energy production? The answer was already on the surface when the discussion started: renewable energies.

So far the main focus in the public discussion is still about the exit itself, whether it is right or not, and whether it should be done faster than suggested by the government. The four major energy companies, namely RWE, E.on, EnBW and Vattenfall, try to recover from the shock of being “defeated”, but have their focus on fighting the governmental decision. Opposition parties, anti nuclear power movements and some trade unions are criticizing the pace of the exit. “Successive exit by 2022”, so the suggestion by the Merkel government. But successive is not really successive – not till 2021 the 9 left nuclear power plants are going to be shut down and the final exit date is 2022. IG Metal argues that the environmental ministry presented a study which suggests 2017 as the final year for the shutdown.

But the most important question should be: How to double the amount of renewable energy production from 17% now up to 35% within a period of maximum 10 years? The government and the energy industry are pushing forward the concept of big offshore wind parks in the North-Sea and the need of more efficient electricity supply networks that are able to transport the energy from the North down to the big industrial areas in the South. Clear is that the state is going to invest a lot of money in the reorganization of the energy sector. Therefore it would make sense that this public money would be invested in public sector not in the private. Energy back in public hands would be almost revolutionary within the European Union where privatization was the major slogan in the past decade. With a policy of decentralized energy production and recommunalisation (de-privatization at the local level) the energy turn, would become even a societal turn. Germany has a good starting position, because besides the big four energy companies so called “Stadtwerke” (municipal utilities) are responsible for local energy production. This level could be strengthened by a strategy of decentralization of energy production and pushing forward the process of recommunalisation. And it is the right time, because ten years after the liberalization of the energy market the concessions are expiring in the upcoming years and the state and the local level could gain more influence again. Additionally, in the rural areas cooperatives could be founded and develop energy concepts by using solar energy, wind energy and bio energy that is available (a lot of cooperatives are already very successful). Therewith it would be possible to establish an energy production that is healthy, environmental friendly and demand-oriented and that underlies a democratic and transparent process. To reorganize the energy production is an enormous project, but for this project we don't need powerful energy companies. The German people itself can be an active part of this project and gain power again. In a reorganized energy production energy should be a public good that can be accessed by all citizens regardless their income or social position. It is going to be a political decision whether this energy turn is a change for more participation and a strengthening of the democratic structures and the public sphere or at the end just another victory for the private energy industry and capital.

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