

'Expropriate without compensation'

The Star, page 9, 03 July 2017

THE LAND question in South Africa has, as elsewhere in the world in struggles for independence, always occupied a central place in the demands of the oppressed. The Pan Africanist Congress broke away from the ANC in 1958, among others, on this question. Citing the words in the Freedom Charter's preamble, "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white", the PAC accused the ANC of having betrayed the aspirations of the African majority and surrendered the struggle to reclaim the sovereignty of the subjugated and the dispossessed. The ANC for its part rightly insists that it has fulfilled the promise of the Freedom Charter – that the minerals under the soil would be returned to the people – has passed legislation to that effect and mining can only be undertaken under licence and by approval of the state.

In his key work, *Capital*, published in 1867, Karl Marx explained that "the expropriation of the mass of the people from the soil forms the basis of the capitalist mode of production". The colonial white capitalists found that people would not sell their labour to them if they could make a living from the land. They needed to be forced to work and thus involuntarily enter into a capital-wage dynamic. So, everywhere, land dispossession has been necessary for capitalism to create a class of wage workers, the exploitation of whom is the source of all capitalist profit. Marx described land dispossession (or "primitive accumulation") as capitalism's "original sin".

In the chapters of *Capital* dealing with the question of land, Marx explained the

tendency of capitalism to centralise capital and concentrate ownership. This economic process is at work on the land in South Africa. In 1996, there were 60 938 commercial farms, shrinking rapidly to 45 818 by 2002 as a result of the ANC government's neo-liberal economic policies. Today, there are estimated to be 36 000 commercial farms, expected to fall to just 15 000 within 20 years. As Marx explained in *Capital*, "one capitalist always kills many." But further, in 2002, just 1 348 commercial farms (five percent of the total) received over half of all commercial farm income. These are the big capitalist farmers that monopolise farming – barely a thousand individuals.

The discovery of gold in South Africa in the 1880s coincided with the maturing of European imperialism. Only the imperialist monopolies could supply the huge amounts of capital needed to make gold mining profitable. Its entrance into South Africa was a decisive watershed, transforming the entire economy, including the social relations on the land.

In the late 19th century, despite the existence of small and wealthy land-owning elite in the Western Cape, the white Afrikaners were overwhelmingly a peasant class. The output of their farms was often at little more than subsistence level and relied on family labour and semi-feudal labour relations with black tenants. To establish their economic dominance, British imperialism not only crushed the remaining independent African nations, but defeated the independent Afrikaner republics militarily in the 1899-1902 South

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need their land
returned, taken from
white hands after it
was stolen in 1652,
writes Andile Lungisa

African War.

African and Afrikaner societies were both reconstructed to serve the interests of British imperialism. The need for vast numbers of low-paid wage workers in the mining industry could be supplied by the dissolution of tribal African societies. This guaranteed that land dispossession accelerated. The demarcation of the "native reserves", culminating in the 1913 Land Act, meant that for the African majority, access to land would in the future be fully on the terms dictated by capitalism.

The dislocation of the South African War and the economic laws of capitalism worked their destructive power on the Afrikaner farms too. Before 1890, 90% of Afrikaners lived in rural areas; by the 1930s, it was less than 50%. They were increasingly pushed into towns, dispossessed of land stolen by their forefathers.

However, it is not just big commercial farms that control the land. In 2002, three multinationals controlled 90% of the maize, wheat and sorghum markets; in 2008 three multinationals controlled 86% of the fertiliser market; in 2007 80% of food processing was monopolised by four big businesses; in 2010 the big retail chains controlled 68% of the food retail market. These white capitalist monopolies exploit their black workers, squeeze consumers through their influence over prices and push small and medium farmers out of business by monopolising the market for farm inputs and the market for processing, marketing and selling farm produce.

In its dying days the apartheid regime began to dismantle the enormous state support that had protected white farmers. This was a move calculated to put the wealth of one of their core constituencies beyond the reach of the state they were about to lose control of. But the ANC government continued the "normative economic model", one neo-liberal measure started during apartheid. For example, legislation passed in 1996 ended the state marketing system and privatised the grain co-operatives. These and other neo-liberal counter-reforms further consolidated the agricultural sector as a monopoly.

The ANC government has redistributed eight percent of farmland through its land redistribution and restitution policies. Up to 250 000 rural households are thought to have benefited in some way.

The ANC government's neo-liberal economic policies have placed such limitations on its commitments to land reform

that the restitution process has resulted in minimal redistribution of land. One of the first restitution victories was the landmark case of the Kranspoort Community in Limpopo against the Dutch Reformed Church. The case, used to define what was meant by the concept "community", was won in 1999. To this day, the community has been unable to develop the land.

The Land Claims Court ceded the title deed to the land to the Kranspoort Community Property Association on condition they produced a viable development plan. Although through its own efforts, the community was able to raise the finance to produce a report to the satisfaction of the court, the community has been left to its own devices to raise the funds for its implementation. It has encountered numerous obstacles in securing the support of provincial government and district municipalities, showing the lack of synergy between the three tiers of government.

The Vhembe District Municipality argued that it was prohibited by law from providing bulk infrastructure for electricity and water on the grounds that the farm Kranspoort was classified as private land, whereas the entire restitution process and legislation giving effect to it, classifies the land as communal property with private disposal specifically prohibited.

Actual and potential future beneficiaries, therefore, are confronted not only with a lack of financial resources, or back-up from the State in other respects such as farming expertise, but a lack of "co-operative" governance between national, provincial and district municipalities.

palties in effecting land restitution. As in the rest of the non-agricultural sector of the economy, white domination survives.

Strategy and Tactics of the ANC (1969) says: "In our country – more than in any other part of the oppressed world – it is inconceivable for liberation to have meaning without a return of the wealth of the land to the people as a whole. It is therefore a fundamental feature of our strategy that victory must embrace more than formal political democracy. To allow the existing economic forces to retain their interests intact is to feed the root of racial supremacy and does not represent even the shadow of liberation."

Landlessness is the chief predictor of poverty, underdevelopment and backwardness in the post-colonial world. It is in this context that we propose to amend Section 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to make provision for the expropriation without compensation of property, particularly land, for equitable redistribution in our country.

As I have said earlier, the land question in South Africa has, as elsewhere in the world in struggles for independence, always occupied a central place in the demands of the oppressed.

The issue of land claims should be opened beyond the 1913 Land Act because our people's land was dispossessed as early as 1652, when the settlers arrived in this land of our forefathers.

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