

# ZABALAZA

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**"FROM EACH ACCORDING TO ABILITY, TO EACH ACCORDING TO NEED!"**

## Around the World...



## ...WE ARE RISING!

CHIAPAS 1994, OAXACA 2006!: A demonstrator stones the hated Mexican Federal Police who failed to reassert state control over the city of Oaxaca in southern Mexico. The city is being run by community organisations including the ZACF's sister organisation, the Indigenous Popular Council of Oaxaca - Ricardo Flores Magon (CIPO-RFM). What started out as a teacher's strike turned into a full-blown Magonista uprising against the "revolutionary" Oaxaca state government and for community self-management, a key anarchist demand.

see [www.anarkismo.net](http://www.anarkismo.net) for more



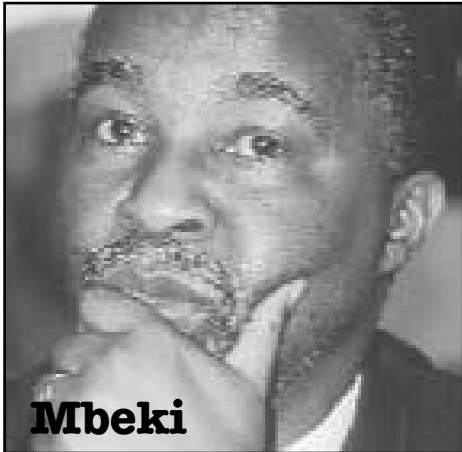
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# AFTER 10 YEARS OF GEAR: COSATU, THE ZUMA TRIAL AND THE DEAD END OF ALLIANCE POLITICS

by Lucien van der Walt



**Mbeki**

South Africa's transition, as we stated in *Workers Solidarity* in 1998, went sour a long time ago. Overthrowing apartheid was a tremendous victory, but not enough. It was soon overshadowed by the ANC's neo-liberal policies, which built on those adopted in the last years of the apartheid regime.

## LOST IN TRANSIT

As an increasingly multiracial ruling class consolidated its position, the working class retreated. This retreat was - and remains - fundamentally a question of politics and strategy: COSATU and the SACP had no idea how to deal with the new situation. Having spent years believing the ANC would, like Moses, lead the people out of bondage in Egypt, they now found themselves in a strange new country. Apartheid was gone, but slavery was not. The supposed Moses now looked a lot like Pharaoh, but COSATU and the SACP remained part of the Tripartite Alliance.

## ALL GEARED UP

The miserable conditions in the townships continued, mass unemployment - which started in the 1970s - continued to grow, and neo-liberalism accelerated. 30% of TELKOM was privatised in 1996 and a further 20% was listed in 2003, and ESKOM and the SA Post Office were commercialised. While the GATT (now the World Trade Organisation) required tariff protection on telecommunications to fall to 20%, the government set itself the target of zero protection, and also opened up other controls over trade and capital movements. These approaches were consolidated in the 1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR), but did not start with it.

The unproductive financial sector shot up

to 20% of the entire SA economy, although it employed only 1% of the workforce, while manufacturing and mining shrunk, with perhaps 1 million jobs lost in these sectors plus agriculture. The electricity and water grid was expanded, but with cost recovery applied, 10 million people suffered water cut-offs and 5 million were evicted.

## SAVING THE ANC'S SOUL

In this situation, COSATU and the SACP chose to try and save the unhappy marriage with the ANC. Afraid of being isolated from the seats of the mighty, flattered by pats on the head by ANC leaders, tempted by job offers, and unable to break with an almost religious loyalty to the ANC colours - and a well-established tendency to uncritically worship ANC leaders - union and Party policy makers spent fruitless years trying to redeem the ANC.

Reinforcing this approach was the long-standing, and seriously flawed, view that South Africa must have a two-stage "revolution": a "national democratic stage," led by the ANC, to end racism, followed by a "socialist stage," in a vague future.

"Intervening" in the ANC, "contesting" it, "saving" its soul: these were the terms used to justify this approach. The fact that the ANC was - and always had been - a capitalist party that aimed to open up, as Nelson Mandela stated back in 1956, "fresh fields for the development of a prosperous non-European bourgeois class," was ignored.

## BEE-Ilionaires

The fact that the major debate within the ruling ANC after 1994 was on how to link neo-liberalism to Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) - the deliberate creation of the "non-European bourgeois class" - was ignored. The fact that the ANC had struck a deal with the apartheid-era ruling class, and had now joined it, was ignored.

COSATU and SACP positions moved from the naïve (the idea that the ANC would drop neo-liberalism if only it would let COSATU provide good advice) to the paranoid (there was a conspiracy against "transformation"). For organisations

that spoke in the language of class struggle, there was nothing in the way of a class analysis of the realities of the situation.

COSATU and the Party were ignored by the ANC, and periodically insulted - except at election times, when their financial support and influence were eagerly sought. After elections, of course, it was business as usual, with South Africa's particularly vile brand of capitalism flourishing. By 2006, the economy was booming, reaching 5% growth, the number of families with more than \$30 million each shot up four times, but the income of the bottom 40% of the population fell by nearly half.

## ZUMA AND COSATU

This situation has played out in the Jacob Zuma controversy. Zuma, a leading ANC member, deputy president of South Africa, and head of the State-sponsored "Moral Regeneration Campaign," was found to have been involved in corruption around the arms deal. His associate, Durban businessman Shabir Shaik, was found guilty in 2005, and Zuma himself now faces charges.

Mbeki, not a man to tolerate rivals in the ANC, used the opportunity to oust Zuma from office. Another bombshell followed, when Zuma was accused of raping a close family friend who, it transpired, was HIV-positive.

Now, it was fairly clear that corruption was not the main factor in Zuma's dismissal. His replacement in office, Phumzile Mlambo-Nguka, was almost immediately involved in a scandal. She used a Falcon 900 executive jet of the SA Air Force to take her husband, children and friends on a holiday to the United Arab Emirates. It was also clear that Mbeki, an autocrat of the first water, was more than happy to use the judiciary and the State intelligence services



to resolve internal disputes in the ANC.

## COSATU'S POSITION

There was also nothing surprising in the fact that Zuma used every trick in the book to whip up support at the rape trial, ranging from crude Zulu nationalist appeals to a legal team that effectively put his accuser on trial. Mobilisations outside the courthouse drew in a wide range of groups, with many reactionary features, ranging from slogans like "Burn the Bitch" to placards saying "No Woman for President."

A whole cult was built up around Zuma. The Friends of Jacob Zuma stated: "We, the people, will ensure that this man of honour, who dedicated his life to liberating us, will finally have the right to defend himself." One protestor carried a cross, with a Zuma picture, claiming that this "man of honour" was being persecuted "just like" another "man of honour," Jesus Christ. This seems ridiculous, but it was typical of the Zuma mobilisations.

What was most surprising - at least at first glance - was COSATU's almost uncritical support for Zuma during 2005 and 2006. The SACP was a bit more divided, but its Youth League was in the forefront of the Zuma mobilisation and the Friends of Jacob Zuma organisation.

## STRANGE FRUIT

This seems strange at first, but it is the logical outcome of the dead end in which COSATU and the SACP find themselves after ten years of "engaging" the ANC, after ten years of futile complaints about GEAR, after ten years of COSATU policy documents gathering dust at Shell House.

Unable to break with the ANC, and unable

to change it, the union and the Party placed their hopes in Zuma. Zuma had never uttered a word against GEAR, against capitalism or against neo-liberalism but he had one good point: he was **not** Mbeki, and it was hoped that he might be a new Moses to lead the people. After all, according to COSATU and SACP thinking, there must always be a great leader: the masses need to be led.

The "support for Cde Jacob Zuma," Blade Nzimande of the SACP recently told the NUM, exposed popular opposition to the crises of corruption, factionalism and personal careerism in the ANC, "crises" that were "inherent in trying to build a leading cadre based on capitalist values and the symbiotic relationship between the leading echelons of the state and emerging black capital." The Party Youth League grandly stated that "Our defence and support for Jacob Zuma is the defence of the constitution."

Meanwhile, speaking of the upcoming Zuma corruption trial, Zweli Vavi of COSATU called for Zuma to be reinstated in his positions: "We will ensure that whenever comrade Zuma appears in court, our people will demonstrate en-masse."

## EXODUS WITHOUT A MAP

Nothing can better express the bankruptcy of the political outlook of COSATU and the SACP than these positions. Zuma is no different to Mbeki: another rich politician, another false Messiah who misleads the working class, another ANC scoundrel who would implement GEAR as much as Mbeki. In no way whatsoever would he break with the ANC policy of developing "a leading cadre based on capitalist values"

and a "symbiotic relationship between the leading echelons of the state and emerging black capital."

However, there is nothing surprising about the COSATU and SACP position. Bound to the ANC by fear, flattery and a failed strategy - the two-stage theory that the ANC will open the door to socialism - and blinded by its traditional devotion to Congress and its leaders, the two organisations remain in a dead end. The fact that many of their leaders are only too eager to join the ANC leadership at the capitalist feast does not help either. In this situation, support for Zuma is certainly tragic but almost inevitable.

Support for Zuma allows the ANC to remain sacred and untouchable, and the politics of relying on a saviour untouched. A hard look at the nature of the transition can be avoided, and a serious struggle against capitalism postponed, yet again. All problems could be blamed on Mbeki and his faction: Zuma has been discovered to represent the shining soul of the ANC; Mbeki became Satan overnight. In return for COSATU and SACP backing in the Alliance and internal ANC battles, the structures hoped Zuma might - just might - be nicer than Mbeki and might - just might - listen to the working class for a while.

This is what the pro-Zuma mobilisations by working class organisations mean. The outcome of a disastrous politics, they don't take the working class out of the dead end that loyalty to the ANC involves. The only way out is a break with the ANC, not a false choice between Mbeki and Zuma. The ANC is not the solution: it is a large part of the problem faced by the workers and the poor.



# COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BY RIOT: ELECTION DAY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Seeing the police move on a single column of smoke rising from two burning tyres over rebellious Khutsong, south-west of Johannesburg, on March 1, local government election day, I was reminded of the Native American warrior in Dances With Wolves remarking of the distant fire of a frontiersman that he would not tolerate "a single line of smoke in my own country".

The ANC-led government in similar fashion had determined that Khutsong would not explode on voting day; that the mockery of the vote that occurred would be "free", albeit an enforced peace in a township that had driven ANC leaders out, revolting against an administrative transfer out of Gauteng province to an uncertain future in the poverty-stricken North-West.

## FIRE IN KHUTSONG

So two armoured Nyalas lumbered over to the smoking tyres where photographers were vainly trying to get a dramatic shot - but Khutsong was virtually deserted on the morning of the vote.

The fire-gutted Gugulethu community centre was already defaced by crude sexual, gangster - and, in what is a hopeful sign, anarchist - graffiti. The presiding officer at the government's Independent Electoral Commission tent set up next to the ruin glumly told me he did not expect a single soul to turn out to vote that day.

He proved right, with barely more than 200 out of 29,000 registered voters exercising their hard-won right. Khutsong resident Albert Mamela stood near the smouldering tyres and told of his dream that the people of Khutsong - whether Zulu, Xhosa or "foreigner" - could "be like the Bafokeng" - the tribe that owns platinum mines near Rustenburg - and take ownership of Khutsong's nearby gold-mines, the riches of which seldom finds its way into local pockets.

Community ownership of the mines would render local government irrelevant, he said: "because then we will take care of development ourselves". There is some healthy anti-capitalist sentiment here, but it is also confused. The Bafokeng royal house controls the mines in question, and exploitation carries on as before. A king makes the economic decisions: this is not the working class ownership and control

anarchist-communists advocate.

Khutsong Residents accused councillors of nepotism, the provision of toilets that did not work and, worse in their view, not living in the areas they supposedly represented, a common complaint. Mamela claimed that councillors said R1,2-million had been spent on the road to the Khutsong graveyard, whereas he knew it had only cost R800,000, suggesting the councillors had pocketed the rest.

He suggested that Merafong mayor Des van Rooyen had, unlike previous mayors, acquired bodyguards "because he knew what he was going to do" in "selling" Khutsong to the North West province.

But despite the powerful emotions circu-

[although in Motsoaledi, this was later reversed following an internal struggle].

Ngwane's movement won a paid position as a councillor, based on 4,305 votes.

Ngwane did not take the seat as expected, but the OKM councillor who did will have her lone left-wing voice drowned out by the 75 ANC and 31 DA councillors. Working class power lies in the community and in the workplace, not in the forums of the ruling class. Ngwane was ousted a month later at the Anti-Privatisation Forum annual general meeting as APF chair by Bricks Mokolo of the Orange Farm Crisis Committee - a key figure in the anti-electoral faction of the APF. This is a hopeful sign, for Mokolo has helped build a viable, anti-electoral strategy in that poor settlement.



## THE OTHER HALF

Houghton is old, genteel Joburg, replete with bowling greens, high walls and lanes of poplar trees and oaks, gated with booms and security guards. The old and new elites, with their black maids in tow, were smartly lined up to cast their ballots: no burning tyres here; only the worship of Mandela - the architect of post-apartheid neo-liberalism - as some sort of living saint of the wealthy.

From Houghton, I drove north-east to the small diamond-mine and prison town

of Cullinan to the east of Pretoria. There, the local Freedom Front Plus branch - Afrikaner separatists - was hoping to oust the incumbent Democratic Alliance neo-liberals from the Nokeng tsa Taemane Municipality. The ANC won, but the only real excitement on the day was when Afrikaner singer Valiant Swart happened to pass through town.

## THE APF AND ELECTIONS

I had far to travel, so bypassed Pimville in Soweto where the Operation Khanyisa Movement (OKM) was contesting the elections. There was a fierce debate in the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) over the question of elections. Trotskyist leader, APF organiser and Soweto activist Trevor Ngwane jumped the gun, forming the OKM as a party and political vehicle for his career and his politics without an APF mandate. In stark contrast to the social movements in areas such as Motsoaledi, Orange Farm and Sebokeng stood firmly by a "no services - no vote" position

## MPUMULANGA

From Cullinan, I drove out to Siyabuswa in Mpumalanga, the former capital of the apartheid-era homeland of kwaNdebele, because here, the Ministry of Provincial and Local Government had promised me, was an example of a municipality that, while not wealthy, was exceptionally well run.

Siyabuswa means "we are governed", but I found that the way that governance works sadly conforms to the patterns of endemic corruption so well established in apartheid days.

Residents such as Amos and Elisabeth Msiza and their friend Petros Mhlangu - all in their fifties - complained that their water-supply (charged at a rate guessed by the council because their meters didn't work) was intermittent and that they lost their pre-paid electrical power whenever it rained.

"If you have money, this government helps you - but not those who struggle," Mhlangu said.

The three residents blamed unelected municipal manager George Mthimunye for Siyabuswa's shoddy service delivery.

Their view was supported by ex-ANC independent candidates such as July Msiza who told me that Mthimunye faced not only criminal charges of having sexually harassed his secretary, but was also accused of having stolen council funds to pay for two friends of his to be trained as traffic officers (one of whom allegedly crashed a council vehicle she was illegally using for her own purposes, in far-off White River). So much for well-governed Siyabuswa!

## TWELVE YEARS ON

Fast-forward to April 27, "Freedom Day", twelve years down the line from what Archbishop Desmond Tutu memorably called the "Rainbow Nation" waiting to make their mark in the first post-apartheid ballot.

And what a mark it has been: from the heart-rending wail of Fort Callata's mother at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings to the ascendancy of the Black Economic Enrichment phalanx into positions of capitalist and state power; from the collapse of the neo-fascist AWB to the rise of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka as a possible future president thanks to the axing of Jacob Zuma.

Trevor Manuel is the darling of this elite and its middle-class praise-singers, for whom fiscal discipline is a golden calf and equality a sin. This mutual admiration society has decreed a perpetual round of expensive parties to praise the near-feudal conditions on which their empires are built, a perpetual celebration so to speak (I'm reminded of Jello Biafra's phrase "the happiness you have demanded is now mandatory!").

But millions look set to be unemployed for life and HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, malaria and ailments of malnutrition such as kwashiorkor and marasmus - usually associated in the popular imagination with famine in Sudan or the Horn of Africa - stalk the population.

Last May, at the second annual National Security Conference, two analysts from very different sectors had a dire warning for

the country: COSATU chief economist Dr Neva Makgetla and Standard Bank credit policy and governance director Desmond Golding agreed that a highly educated but permanently unemployed "underclass" constituted the country's biggest security threat. The working class is retreating, but not defeated, and it haunts the imagination of those who rule this country.

## UNFREEDOM DAY

Further rioting and arson in Khutsong attended the elevation of councillors to office on the basis of a 2% poll - an election that Human Sciences Research Council society culture and identity specialist Dr Mncedisi Ndletyana rightly described during a TV interview as "illegitimate".

The official celebration was declared an "unFreedom Day" by the poor in Durban



who decried the evaporation of the dream of equality the 1994 elections had promised, but which the elites had betrayed. They demanded an end to evictions, cut-offs and forced relocations, saying they were fighting for unconditional access to the resources fenced off by the rich.

Local government specialist Greg Ruiters of Rhodes University told me that the yawning chasm between the developmental promises of neo-liberalism and the grinding poverty of South Africa's sprawling shackland (three out of every four South Africans now lives in urban areas) would increasingly see people take to direct action.

"The key problem for all parties contesting the local government elections," Ruiters said, "is that citizens have discovered another, more direct, channel for giving voice to their needs: 'collective bargaining by riot' may become more common than waiting to vote."

The key problem for all the poor, however, is that electoral, representative politics is so limited and disempowering. As Sheila

Meintjies of Wits University's political studies department put it, "there is a growing sense that the councillors don't necessarily hold all the power, that the officials are really, if anything, to blame for a lack of service delivery."

These unelected municipal officials, she said, were directly lobbied by very powerful big-business interests that short-circuited the country's bourgeois-democratic process and skewed development in favour of the rich.

A grim example of this powerful bureaucratic class is eThekweni (Durban) municipal manager Mike Sutcliffe, an ANC strategist and die-hard opponent of the Abahlali baseMjondolo (Shack-dwellers' Movement), whose protest marches he illegally tried to ban.

In March, Sutcliffe and his ideological cohorts suffered two key court defeats - by the Abahlali baseMjondolo and the Soweto Concerned Residents - which confirmed the absolute right of people to gather and to demonstrate without requiring police permission. This is a big victory for the social movements that they should fully exploit.

## WORKING CLASS DEMOCRACY

We anarchist communists would go further than Meintjies, underlining that it is simply impossible for the country's 400 Members of Parliament to truly represent the interests of 46.9-million people. It is even less likely that 37 very wealthy party-political Cabinet Ministers, tainted by the elitist idea of "democratic centralism" will bend over backwards for the working class and poor. Both our Westminster-style parliamentary democracy and the ANC's "democratic centralism" are anything but democratic.

The elections of 1994 were a huge victory inasmuch as apartheid's doom was sealed. But there were not enough, and could never be enough, and their achievement is increasingly overshadowed by the grim neo-liberal class war being waged by the ruling elite. Capitalism, with its class system, will always benefit the few at the expense of the many.

Activists in Swaziland and Zimbabwe should take heed. Real popular empowerment and real economic and social equality can only be achieved by well-organised, mass-based, directly-democratic, community-controlled action against the parasite class. "Collective bargaining by riot" is a good start, but we must build working class power until we can move onto the offensive, and remake the world.

# THE ANTI-LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

This is an edited version of a talk given by veteran communist Alan Lipman who participated in drawing up the Freedom Charter in 1955, about why he left the Communist Party and the ANC, subsequently becoming an anarchist. He was addressing a two-day workshop held by the ZACF at the invitation of the Anti-Privatisation Forum, on class, capitalism, apartheid, neo-liberalism and the ANC, which was held at the headquarters of the Orange Farm Crisis Committee on May 21 this year. The talk was given in English and translated into seSotho.

I joined the Communist Party of South Africa in 1948 as a Wits student. Before then I had just accepted that the way things were was normal. Then I went to Italy which had a very strong Communist Party and the feeling was that it would seize power any day. The US Third Fleet was patrolling the Mediterranean at that stage and we asked ourselves what they were doing. They were trying to prevent communist take-overs in Italy, Greece and to a lesser extent Spain.

One day I saw a huge crowd running towards me, being chased by the police who were beating them with truncheons. I ducked into a doorway and the shopkeeper took me inside and explained it was a communist meeting addressed by Palmiro Togliatti [the head of the Italian Communist Party]. They were protesting the American presence and I saw how they were treated.

Later when I returned to South Africa, I joined the CPSA under Moses Kotane, Yusuf Dadoo and JB Marks because it was then the only organisation where people from all races came together... In 1955, messages were sent out to community leaders - which was itself a problem, that it was only the leaders - to consult the people on what they wanted from a free society. Thousands of scraps of paper came back, mostly from poor people, saying things

such as they wanted to send their children to university. Rusty Bernstein of the SACP [the renamed CPSA] turned all the demands into "The People Shall Govern..." because he had that poetic ability. Whatever its faults and problems, the Freedom Charter was a people's document.

## THE COMMUNIST BETRAYAL

But in 1956, the Soviet Union invaded Hungary. The whole thing seemed mad to me: I wondered how a people could oppose their own government, and a communist government at that?

The Soviets said they were defending Hungary from the reaction, an argument that they would later use regarding their interventions in Czechoslovakia and Poland, but the more I read about the situation, the more I realised this was not true. My communist ideas were suddenly in danger and my questioning led me to question the ANC which we all then regarded as the "Big Daddy" of the liberation movements, as our father.

At that time, I worked for New Age, the SACP and ANC newspaper that changed its name several times (each time it was banned we relaunched it under another name until they finally banned us from doing so). My wife worked as a journalist

campaign. Bunting initially refused to publish it, only later printing it in a very censored form.

At that stage I worked on New Age with Mac Maharaj, but he was away doing something. I met some very fine people in the Communist Party and they introduced me to the world and taught me philosophy... At that time I was - and I don't think I'm being boastful here - quite an influential member of the Party.

But later, when the Soviet Union invaded Poland and Czechoslovakia, you'd find there was always someone in the local Party who would explain it away as a good thing. I came from a middle-class family but it was members of the Party who were my friends. Then when I began to criticise the Soviet Union, which was where we believed there was real socialism and people were equal, my friends began freezing me out.

I became isolated: socially, economically and intellectually. I started reading other material and came out of communism, though it was later my son who turned me into an anarchist: which shows that you often learn more from your children than your parents!

[After leaving the SACP, Lipman and a few other disaffected members successfully firebombed the office where the apartheid state held the records that were being compiled to include black women in the hated pass-law system that so severely restricted black men's movement. For a year, he fought alongside the African Resistance Movement which conducted several anti-apartheid bombings, but became disenchanted with its "feeble liberalism" and left it].

## THE DIVISIONS OF APARTHEID

One strange story is that one day when I lived in Hillbrow... Detective-Sergeant Johan Coetzee - later General Johan Coetzee, the head of BOSS [the secret police agency, the Bureau Of State Security] knocked on my door and he and his policemen searched my flat and took all the books and shook them out to see if he could find anything hidden in them.

He found a poem by Eugene Marais,





which is good for a winter day like today: "O koud is die windjie en skraal / En blink in die dof-lig en kaal...": "Oh cold is the wind and thin / And shining in the dusk and naked..." He was surprised that I, a Jodse komunis [Jewish communist] read Afrikaans poetry. He asked me if I liked the poem and I said of course. He said "It's a wonderful poem."

Then he found another poem, where I'd written in the margins that it was Boy Scout rubbish: "Gee my 'n roer in my regterhand; gee mey 'n bok wat vlug oor die rand..." ["Give me a rifle in my right hand; give me a buck that flees over the ridge..."]. He said he didn't like that one either. He found my rugby clothes and asked me what team I played for. I could see he was wondering what someone like me was doing playing his game.

He then found some papers that my wife Beata had hidden under some shirts. He looked at them, then looked at me, then called out to his men that they were finished the search. I never knew why he did that. Perhaps under other circumstances, Johan Coetzee and I could have been friends.

Later at the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission, held 10 years ago], I saw him there, but I didn't talk to him, because I was there to support [ANC member] Marius Schoon whose wife Jeanette and six-year-old daughter Katryn were blown up in a bomb planted by [Security Branch spy] Craig Williamson's people...

[Lipman later said that Coetzee was the one who had tipped him off that he was on a list of militants targeted for arrest in what became the Rivonia Treason Trial. Lipman, having passed on Coetzee's warn-

ing to the liberation movements, was out of the country at the time of the 1963 Rivonia raid that netted Nelson Mandela and other top ANC and SACP leaders. Lipman thus narrowly escaped becoming a long-term Robben Island political prisoner. He said he never discovered why Coetzee tipped him off.

[After fleeing into exile in the United Kingdom where he sat on the national council of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). After being attracted to various libertarian socialist critiques of Stalinism, he became an anarchist. Lipman, who returned to South Africa in the early 1990s after 30 years in exile and wrote his memoirs, which will soon be published by the ZACF, is a living link between the generation that rejected the ANC and SACP's false vision in the 1950s - and those like the ZACF who reject it today.]

## THE PARTY FEARS THE PEOPLE

I always liked the phrase from the feminist movement: "The personal is the political and the political is the personal." In other words, your economic oppression is your personal problem - but it is also a real public issue. For example, hundreds of golf



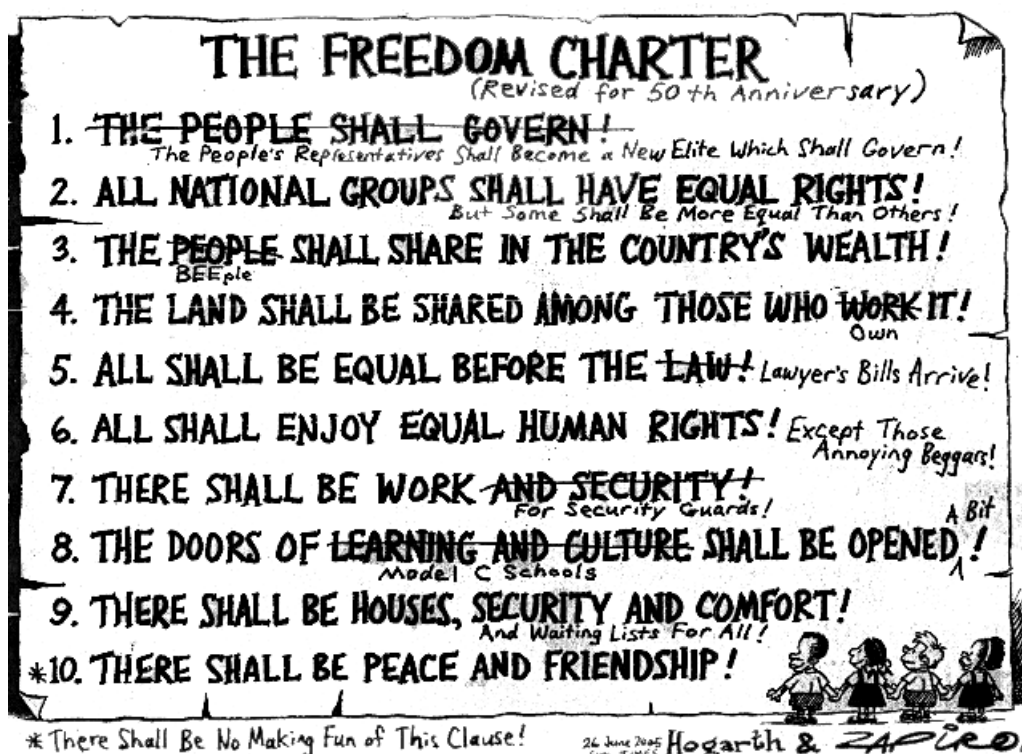
courses have sprung up after 1994 and they consume so much water, yet you are battling to get clean water to drink in your homes.

I left the "official" liberation movements for personal reasons, but I still support the real liberation. [President Thabo] Mbeki's a clever man, but I don't trust him as far as I can throw this building. I've seen too many forced evictions from this supposed "world class city" of ours where those who have remove those who they say make dirt or who don't look smart. We live in a country in which the hopes of the past have been pushed into the dirt. I guess I'd be seen as an "ultra-left" in Mbeki's terms.

My philosophy used to be the Christian "Do unto others as you'd have them do unto you," which is not a bad rule for life. But as an anarchist, to me, the most impor-

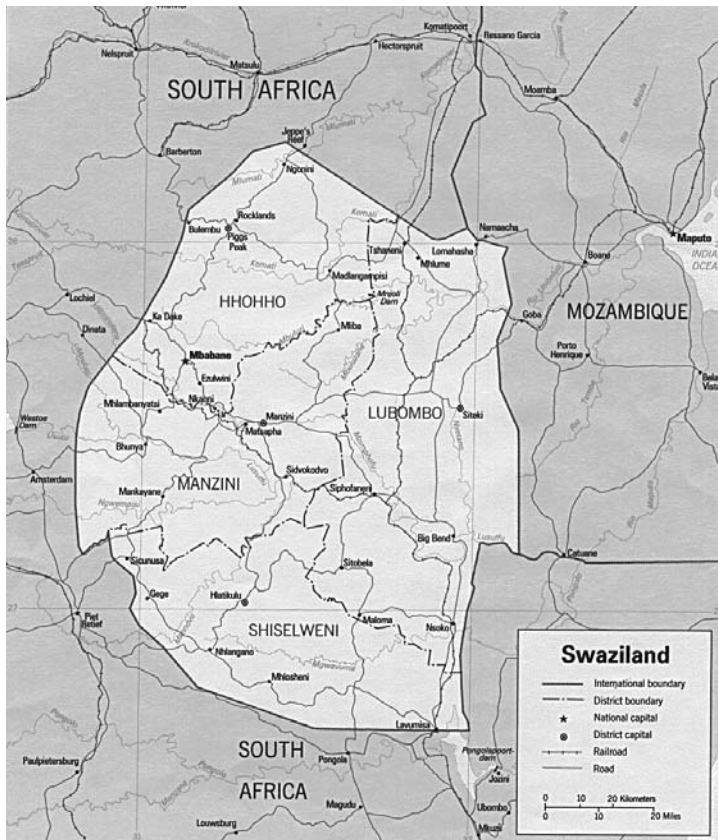
tant truth is that humans can manage their own affairs. You don't need leaders; leaders are mostly dangerous people. The reason that the Communist Party today is the same as any other party and behaves in the authoritarian fashion it does is because it doesn't trust the people. I also believe that what you do to get what you want is as important as what you want.

The newspapers are owned by big corporations and they tell the stories they want to hear. But although the newspapers have behaved disgustingly over the Zuma affair [the acquittal in May on a rape charge of ANC deputy president Jacob Zuma], there is no real difference between Mbeki and Zuma. It won't be better under Zuma. I spent 35 years of my life supporting the liberation struggle but the ANC is now an anti-liberation movement. Now we need a real "People's National Congress" - under people's control - to take back real liberation forward.



# SWAZILAND AFTER THE BOMBINGS

by MK (ZACF, Swaziland)  
and Michael Schmidt



In December and January, the royal dictatorship of Swaziland was rocked by a series of 17 petrol-bombings of state targets by pro-democracy militants. No-one was seriously injured in the attacks, but the paranoid state overplayed its hand, arresting several militants and charging them with treason, which normally carries the death penalty, for an offence that at most amounted to damage to private property.

## THE ZACF POSITION ON INSURGENCY VERSUS MASS ORGANISING

The independently-owned Times of Swaziland was quick to place the blame for the bombings on the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation (ZACF) which is organised clandestinely in Swaziland - the only significant left force in the country after the collapse of the Swazi Communist Party, but hardly an organisation "even mightier than PUDEMO [the outlawed main opposition Peoples' United Democratic Movement] or SWAYOCO [the Swaziland Youth Congress]".

In a January 15 article headlined "Zabalaza's claims of bombing police van," the writer, Mduduzi Magagula, falsely claimed that the ZACF had "stoned and petrol bombed a police vehicle in Manzini

during a PUDEMO organised demonstration recently." The false claim perhaps arose from a misreading of a ZACF report from Manzini on the bombing of an armoured police "hippo" by young comrades.

Nevertheless, the Times was professional enough to publish in full a denial of involvement in the bombings by the ZACF - including the federation's stated aims in the country:

1) The ZACF, which operates in both South Africa and Swaziland, supports the pro-democracy movement in Swaziland, but it does so real-

ising that the Swazi political system can only be changed democratically by the bulk of the Swazi popular classes organising en masse to change it at grassroots level into a form acceptable to themselves. A few people running around with petrol-bombs is both insufficient to change the system and is an anti-democratic substitution of shadowy unaccountable individuals for democratic mass action.

2) Therefore, the ZACF as a whole has no policy of petrol-bombing state or capitalist targets, and its membership in Swaziland have denied to our annual regional congress in December 2005 to having taken part in any such bombings. The report carried on our website of the attack on the hippo has been misread to suggest that ZACF members participated in the attack. The reference to "comrade-controlled" territory simply implies territory controlled, at least at the time, by comrades of the pro-democratic movement, not necessarily ZACF members.

3) The ZACF remains committed to the struggle for mass participatory democracy for all people resident in Swaziland (and more broadly in southern Africa) but, as The Times of Swaziland article correctly reported, "agitates to go beyond the usual bourgeois betrayal and involve a destruc-

tion of the Swazi capitalist state and its replacement by decentralised popular assemblies" of the working class, poor and peasantry.

## INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AT THE TREASON TRIAL

Still, the bombings awoke the Swazi populace from their traditional political timidity. After the bombings, the masses throughout the country have now realised that with the support of internationalism, they can do anything against the system. It's as if before the bombings, the majority had the belief that the decisions of the royal family, cabinet ministers and the parliament were always final. The proof of the system's weakness is their over-reaction, threatening suspects with 25 years in prison for treason.

Those accused are: PUDEMO secretary-general Ignatius B. Dlamini (41), Mduduzi E. Mamba (34) of Sipofaneni, Robert Nzima (40), Sicelo Mkhonta (22), Goodwill Du Pont (19) of Matsetsa, Themba Mabuza (32) of Mbelebeleni, Vusi Shongwe (37) of Sidzakeni, Kenneth Mkhonta (32), Mfanawenkhozi Mtshali (31) and Sipho Jele (36) of Mshikishiki, Mfanukhona Nkambule (26), Sipho Hlophe (38) of Gobholo, Wandile Dlodlu (24) the president of the University of Swaziland's students' representative council, Mphandlana Shongwe (43), and Gibholo Mfan'fikile Nkambule (16) of Nkwilini.

After this decision by the government, everyone sympathised with the accused guys. But nobody voiced their disagreement with the decision because it came from the "master", someone who looks like and is known to be a monster, King Mswati III. The accused claim they were tortured in custody, as did Mduduzi Dlamini of Mhlosheni, who may be forced to turn state's witness after confessing to treason in February.

However, international interest in the trial of the alleged bombers - who the state has so far failed to prove guilty - proved crucial. On the final day in court, everyone was interested to see the power of the international supporters of the accused compared to the Swazi prosecutors and the different way they treated Swazi citizens.

When bail was granted to the suspects on March 15, most of the close comrades and friends of the accused came and congratulated us, expressing trust in the display of international solidarity. And I trust that everybody realised that they can take direct





action against these leadership sects, whether state, business or so-called revolutionary. For PUDEMO's stance on the treason trial, read Swaziland: Smoking Gun or Replica? online at: [www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story\\_id=2412](http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story_id=2412)

### THE MASSES START TO REGAIN THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS - AND THE ELITE START TO SQUABBLE AMONG THEMSELVES

The fact that the ruling class responded with such a heavy hand to the bombings forced a change in the people's mentality. This change is proven by the five key developments. Firstly, there is much movement on the ground: for example, the youth in Manzini are mobilising against the system of patriarchy that enables their elders to reserve all jobs for themselves without any going to the youth.



Furthermore, even the state-owned media has now started to take action against the corrupt national leadership - throwing the spotlight, for instance, on a cabinet minister who was caught with his pants down with a young woman not his wife. Now the ZACF does not take a moral position on adultery, but the point we want to make is rather that the media is no longer scared to take action against the ruling sect that believes it is always right.

Thirdly, there are even cabinet ministers who are currently banned from leaving the country after being suspected of corruption

- and all these suspicions were raised by working class people.

This shows that the masses of Swaziland have started to regain their feet, and their sense of self-confidence to challenge the autocracy. It also suggests that the Imbokodvo vehicle is becoming contentious, is beginning to break down and will eventually fade completely (the Imbokodvo National Movement is the sole legal political party, established in 1964 by Mswati's father, King Sobhuza II who outlawed all opposition in 1973).

Fourthly, within the cabinet ministers, a scandal has arisen around the Minister of Health and Social Welfare Mfofo Mkambule who organised some parliamentarians and citizens into a structure called the Inhlava Forum, which purports to be merely a discussion forum, but which has raised the eyebrows of the leadership who see it as the embryo of a political party. As a result, Mkambule was axed.

The Inhlava Forum's Manifesto called for a conventional bourgeois-democratic separation of powers between "parliament", the courts, the monarchy and Imbokodvo and for a constituency-based representative democracy that consults social organisations in pursuit of serving the needs of the Swazi majority. But it did not spell out how this would differ from the false representation already entrenched as the Tinkhundla system.

Under Tinkhundla, constituency MPs are nominated by loyalist local councils headed by tribal chiefs and the "parliament" to

which they are elected has nothing but advisory powers. Last year, the High Court ruled political opposition parties "non-existent" after they demanded a say in the revised one-party constitution of 2005. Now an apparently bogus political party, the African United Democratic Party (AUDP) has been allowed, under this non-party system, to "negotiate" with the parasitic elite. Clearly the elite is starting to feel the heat from the grassroots and is trying various strategies to squirm out of the trap it has painted itself into.

### THAT'S WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT! WORKING CLASS MASS DIRECT ACTION

Lastly, at Nhlangano in the southern part of Swaziland, the masses and the poor are doing things against their immediate class enemies. For example, there is one textile

company by the name of Zheng Yong with more than 2,000 employees, whose factory was burned to the ground. This factory produces the famous fashion brand Timberland. Initially, the workers had embarked on a strike for a wage increase and 30 days' maternity leave.

The case went to court and the courts performed their class role by declaring the strike illegal. The decision divided the strikers, with those who feared the power of the law returning to work. But those who stood by their rights as workers decided to take direct action and, recognising their employers as their immediate class enemy (capital, the monarchy and the state being more remote enemies), the source of their poverty and exploitation, burned the factory down.

This shows that the workers, a key component of Swazi society, for a long time politically inactive, have started to recognise their class enemy and start to do something to directly address the problem. Recognizing that the oppressed people of Swaziland have demands of their own, which we endorse provided they are progressive and democratic in nature, the ZACF demands the following:

- 1) A general amnesty for all political prisoners;
- 2) Freedom of association, assembly and speech, and full trade union rights;
- 3) The abolition of the pseudo-democratic Tinkhundla, Liqoqo (chieftains inner circle), royal and state power structures and their replacement by directly-democratic, decentralised popular assemblies of the working class, poor and peasantry which will be horizontally federated across the territory;
- 4) Equal rights for women;
- 5) Abolition of all chiefly privileges - especially the power to steal land from the poor;
- 6) Land redistribution in both commercial and traditional sectors;
- 7) Free and democratic education, with student representative councils at schools;
- 8) A living wage campaign in the plantations, factories and farms;
- 9) A ban on retrenchments, and well-paid decent jobs for all; and
- 10) an end to discrimination based on HIV/Aids status and free anti-retroviral drugs for all people living with the virus.

***They can arrest us, torture us, and beat us. Still they'll never ever defeat us!***



# A FREE WORKING CLASS NEEDS FREE MINDS: MAY-BEE ANOTHER DAY

Most workers know increasingly little about May Day. Many have simply forgotten it's meaning, and some are disillusioned. Instead of calling it "Our day" many mindlessly speak of "Worker's Day," and think "Long weekend". And the bosses give workers time off, appearing lenient and generous, making the workers seem ungrateful, with no excuses to complain.

## GET RICH ON MAY DAY

Taking advantage of the apathy, enterprising bosses cash in on soccer events, brewery production and other activities. They benefit from the pain of workers and their communities, and take control of the minds and lives of the masses, and distance them from discussing - and questioning - their endless miseries.

Yet the workers are the ones who produce everything, yet have neither control nor ownership of anything. We own our labour, but without food, cannot exist at all. So, we are bound to sell our labour for next to nothing, to the bosses who control everything we need to survive.

And the bosses have made it impossible for the working class people to think and do things independently through laws and media under their control. They use these as tools to protect and advance their interest at our expense. Social needs are distorted by profit and power; the wealth of society is not used to keep us alive, happy and healthy, but to divide us.

In recent years many entertainment enterprises have been booming, particularly in the south of Johannesburg region. The youth and the unemployed are drawn into immoral activities, and accept highly exploitative jobs just to make sure they don't miss the weekends, especially the long ones.

Drinking beer and being a soccer fan has become a national hobby, and used as a sign of patriotism: "love your country and be proud of the black government". Even commemorations of human rights milestones like Sharpeville, June 16 and Women's Day get drawn into the circle of unthinking entertainment, escape from hard realities and empty patriotism.

## KWAITO AND CLASS STRUGGLE

Community radio stations were set up to convey the views of ordinary people,



allowing previously disadvantaged opportunities to express themselves. The Kwaito music style seemed to be a promising weapon to raise issues and awareness, because of its origin within black townships and its reflection of our lives in the communities.

But this has not happened. Kwaito has been commercialised, and has nothing to do with advancing the minds and lives of the people. The everyday hardships of

communities are presented as a hip lifestyle choice, something to laugh about.

Instead of raising political issues, DJs and Kwaito glorify the hardships of people, and make a living - like soccer and media stars - ambassadors between the rich and poor, earning large amounts of money and middle class lives.

Major companies move in Nike, Sasol, Coca Cola, Absa, Vodacom, Nokia, MMW etc. - as sponsors, shaping people's minds, and leaving no stone unturned. The masses, particularly the youth, who adore these stars, take them as role models. But few can make it out of poverty, they end up frustrated, with time wasted and nothing achieved during a vital period of their lives. Rather than explore, improvise, demand and enjoy life to its fullest, they become mentally

crippled and caught up in social and family demands.

## UNEMPLOYMENT AND LOW WAGES

Those who are unemployed are faced with a pitiless situation of mental and physical slavery. Their families close doors on them, calling them loafers who belong nowhere in society. They are driven to the job market, with its crumbs and exploitation. Like sheep, they wait at the slaughtering pens, hoping to be next under the knife when the bosses need new blood.

Many dream of work, and slaves to capitalism. The bosses appear as kindly people who care and doing everything to save lives by doling out a tiny number of jobs. And their mask of sympathy soon falls away.

Workers are thrown on the street for asking for clarity on contracts, and the other workers learn to take care never to slightly upset their masters, because there are hundreds other unemployed workers waiting and starving, ever ready to jump to slaughtering pens. The workers fight amongst each other, and the bosses become kings and queens, on guard 24 hrs a day. The governments back up the bosses, and the workers demands for safety and a living wage are drowned out by the bosses'



demands for higher profits - despite already having sucked the workers dry.

The bosses are automatically excused for job losses and the workers are the scapegoats. We are constantly reminded to protect our jobs, and avoid trouble, because getting a job is almost impossible. Workers' rights are walked over: the bosses alone decide, because if their interests are not respected they will leave the country; other bosses won't set their foot in the country. This would leave the workers alone, and stranded, with no one to turn to and ask "Please, I want to be your slave".

Wages are cut, as an excuse to employ more workers, or as an excuse to retain existing workers. Workers' confidence is shattered, and their basic needs become unthinkable: women give birth at work to keep their jobs safe.

### IMMIGRANTS AND DIVID- ED LABOUR

It is common for bosses to prefer workers coming from countries devastated by civil wars and famine. These workers are desperate, rightless, often "illegal," and easy prey to bosses who can avoid any responsibilities to cover for workers' health and safety. The immigrant workers are not citizens, and the labour laws do not apply. This way bosses don't have to worry about the precautions and safety equipment and measures expected by the labour laws.

Because of these workers' extreme desperation, they have to accept anything the boss decides. They have no one to turn to. The government plays its part, smashing any possibilities for these people to raise their heads, by randomly harassing and arresting them for identity documents.

South African workers are pitted against the immigrants, told that they are lazy, and instructed to "ask Mandela" for a job. In a situation of mass unemployment, this provides breeding grounds for xenophobia and hatred from South African workers against their fellow workers from neighbouring countries. Blaming immigrants, rather than bosses, for their misery, some South African workers call the immigrants insulting names, and inform the police who the immigrants are, and where they stay. This behaviour is driven by the jealousy and hatred that is the by-product of poverty.

### ETHNIC CONFLICTS

But this is not only happening to the immigrants. Amongst the African workers there is a good deal of prejudice and distrust, especially in the townships, hostels

and squatter camps where migrants from different parts of the countryside converge to find jobs. Many treat their shacks as temporary camps, and long to return to the country.

The mindset of ethnic rivalry and the belief in a return to the country makes it difficult for these communities to challenge

xenophobia, but also with the view that the ANC is a Xhosa party, and that its capitalist policies were somehow caused by Xhosas - rather than the ruling class.

The chiefs remain powerful, and the politicians use ethnicity and other legacies of the past to lead the working class astray. This allows them to implement their neo-liberal policies, without collective questioning from the masses who vote these crooks into power. And all of this is presented as in the ordinary people's interest.

It is called democracy and gender-equality because a few wealthy black people drive fancy cars and mingle with wealthy Whites. The people are told anyone can get rich: "just listen to the your black government"; if you are poor, it is your own fault.

### FREE YOUR MIND

These mental illusions - "get rich quick," "the immigrants steal jobs," "the struggle is over" - must be identified and rooted out so we can become healthier and strong again. Surely we need to take care of things that benefit our communities at the end of the day, and leave aside anything that has a possible threat to our lives.

Surely the working class can take back its traditions, with community soccer teams and genuine community media controlled collectively by the people. These must be used

as weapons to defend and protect ourselves from the enemy.

Every human being must know and be aware on the tricks of the class enemy. Those who choose to become traitors must do so - but not at our expense.

### Workers of the World Unite!



the government policies affecting our lives. Ideas like "This is not our home, we are only here to work, as long as we have a place to sleep," and "There's no use to fight for people who'll turn their back on you tomorrow, and "We cannot be ruled by such-and-such nationality" are common enough. Such sentiments were the grim centre of the cloud that hovered above the ANC versus IFP massacres in the 1990s.

These ethnic divisions were also used during the rise of the mining industry, where jobs were allocated on an ethnic basis, and workers were housed in different ethnic hostels. People from a particular ethnic group were, for example, often mine police. The chiefs played a role too, recruiting people, providing written permission to work on the mines, and the government did not allow the workers to settle in town. They were always reminded that they belonged in the countryside and were harassed and arrested by the police for pass offences.

So working class people's identities were deeply shaped by where they came from, and the language they spoke. Whether immigrant, or Zulu, or Xhosa, the worker often saw fellow-workers as aliens stealing jobs, as traitors who stole the national wealth. Today we see this with

# THE NEW AMERICAN IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA

by Michael Schmidt

## AMERICA MUSCLES INTO "FRENCH TERRITORY"

Former colonial power France maintained the largest foreign military presence in Africa since most countries attained sovereignty in the 1950s and 1960s. But France reduced its armed presence on the continent by two thirds at the end of the last century, though it continues to intervene in a muscular and controversial fashion. For example, under a 1961 "mutual defence" pact, French forces were allowed to be permanently stationed in Ivory Coast: the 500-strong 43rd Marine Infantry Battalion is based at Port Bouet next to the Abidjan airport.

When the civil war erupted there in September 2002, France added a "stabilisation force", now numbering some 4,000 under Operation Licorne, which was augmented in 2003 by 1,500 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) "peacekeepers" drawn from

Senegal, Ghana, Benin, Togo and Nigeria. In January this year, the United Nations extended the mandate of Operation Licorne until December.

But piggybacking off the French military presence in Africa are a series of new foreign military and policing initiatives by the United States and the European Union. It appears the US has devised a new Monroe Doctrine for Africa (the term has become a synonym for the doctrine of US interventions in what it saw as its Latin American "back yard").

Under the George W Bush regime's "War on Terror" doctrine, the US has designated a swathe of territory that curves across the globe from Colombia and Venezuela in South America, through Africa's Maghreb, Sahara and Sahel regions into the Middle East and Central Asia as the "arc of instability" where both real and supposed terrorists may find refuge and training.

In Africa, which falls under the US military's European Command (EUCOM), the US has struck agreements with France to share its military bases. For example: there is now a US Marine Corps base in Djibouti at the French base of Camp Lemonnier with more than 1,800 Marines stationed there, allegedly for "counter-terrorism" operations in the horn of Africa, the Middle East and East Africa - as well

as controlling the Red Sea shipping lanes.

But the US presence involves more than piggybacking off French bases.

In 2003, US intelligence opera-

tives began training spies for four unnamed North African countries - believed to be Morocco and Egypt and perhaps also Algeria and Tunisia.

It is also conducting training of the armed forces of countries such as Chad and in September last year, Bush told the United Nations Security Council that the US would, over the next five years, train 40,000 "African peace-keepers" to "preserve justice and order in Africa". The US Embassy in Pretoria said at the time that the US had already trained 20,000 "peace-keepers" in 12 African countries in the use of "non-lethal equipment".

And now, while the US is downscaling and dismantling military bases in Germany and South Korea, it is relocating these military resources to Africa and the Middle East in order to "combat terrorism" and "protect oil resources".

In Africa, new US bases are being built in Djibouti, Uganda, Senegal, and São Tomé & Príncipe. These "jumping-off points" will station small permanent forces, but with the ability to launch major regional military adventures, according to the US-based Associated Press. An existing US base at Entebbe, Uganda, under the one-party regime of US ally Yoweri Museveni, already "covers" East Africa and the Great Lakes region. At Dakar in Senegal, the US is busy upgrading an airfield.

## SOUTH AFRICA SECRETLY JOINS THE "WAR ON TERROR"

Governments with whom the US has concluded military pacts include Gabon, Mauritania, Rwanda, Guinea and South Africa. The US also has a "second Guantanamo" in the Indian Ocean where alleged terror suspects kidnapped in Africa, the Middle East or Asia can be detained and interrogated without trial: a detention camp, refuelling point and bomber base situated on the British-colonised



Chagos Archipelago island of Diego Garcia, an island from which the indigenous inhabitants were forcibly removed to Mauritius.

In South Africa's case, while it is unlikely there will ever be US bases established because the strength of the country's military, the SANDF, makes that unnecessary, in 2005, the country quietly signed on to the US's Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) programme which is aimed at integrating African armed forces into US strategic (read: imperialist) objectives.

South Africa, by signing on to ACOTA as its 13th African member, effectively joined the American "War on Terror". ACOTA started life as a "humanitarian" programme run by EUCOM out of Stuttgart, Germany, in 1996. After the 9-11 attacks, the Pentagon reorganised ACOTA and gave it more teeth.

Today, its makeup is more obviously aggressive rather than defensive. According to Pierre Abromovici, writing in the July 2004 edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique* about rumours that South Africa was preparing to sign ACOTA - a full year before it did so - "ACOTA includes offensive training, particularly for regular infantry units and small units modelled on special forces... In Washington, the talk is no longer of non-lethal weapons... the emphasis is on 'offensive' co-operation".

The real nature of ACOTA is perhaps indicated by the career of the man heading it up, Colonel Nestor Pino-Marina, "a Cuban exile who took part in the 1961 failed US landing in the Bay of Pigs," Abromovici wrote. "He is also a former special forces officer who served in Vietnam and Laos. During the Reagan era he belonged to the Inter-American Defence Board, and, in the 1960s, he took part in clandestine operations against the Sandanistas. He was accused of involvement in drug-trafficking to fund arms sent to Central America" to prop up pro-Washington right-wing dictatorships.

Clearly, Pino-Marina is a fervent "anti-communist" - whether that means opposing rebellious States or popular insurrections. He also sits on the executive of a strange outfit within the US military called the Cuban-American Military council, which aims at installing itself as the government of Cuba should the US ever achieve a forcible "regime-change" there.

The career of the US ambassador who concluded the ACOTA pact with South Africa is also an indicator of US intentions. Jendayi Fraser, now Bush's senior advisor

on Africa, had no diplomatic experience. Instead, she once served as a politico-military planner with the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Department of Defence and as senior director for African affairs at the National Security Council. According to Fraser's online biography, she "worked on African security issues with the State Department's international military education training programmes".

### IS THERE A MURDEROUS "SCHOOL OF THE AFRICAS"?

Those programmes include the "Next Generation of African Military Leaders" officers' course run by the shadowy African Centre for Strategic Studies, based in Washington, which has "chapters" in various African countries including South Africa. The Centre appears to be a sort of "School of the Africas" similar to the infamous "School of the Americas" based at

massacre of 767 villagers in Guatemala in 1981 were committed by graduates of the School. And yet the School of the Americas Watch, an organisation trying to shut WHINSEC down, is on an FBI "anti-terrorism" watch-list.

So Africa should be concerned if the African Centre for Strategic Studies has similar objectives, even if the School of the Americas Watch cannot confirm these fears. And there is more: we've all heard of the "Standby Force" being devised by the African Union (AU), a coalition of Africa's authoritarian neo-liberal regimes. But the AU has also set up, under the patronage of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (which also covers North America, Russia and Central Asia), the African Centre for the Study and Research of Terrorism.

The Centre is based in Algiers, Algeria, at the heart of a murderous regime that has itself "disappeared" some 3,000 people between 1992 and 2003 (according to Amnesty International: equivalent to the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, but ignored by the African left). The Centre's director, Abdelhamid Boubazine told me that it would not only be a think-tank and trainer of "anti-terrorism" judges, but that it would also have teeth, providing training in "specific armed intervention" in support of the continent's regimes.

Anneli Botha, the senior researcher on terrorism at the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies, said, however, that only 10% of terrorist attacks in Africa were on armed forces, and only 6% on state figures and institutions, though

the latter were "focussed". She warned that a major cause of African terrorism was "a growing void between government and security forces on the one hand and local communities on the other". Caught in the grip of misery and poverty, many people are recruited into rebel armies, even though few of these offer any sort of real solution.

The Centre in Algiers operates under the AU's Algiers Convention on Terrorism, which is notoriously vague on what defines terrorism, opening the door for a wide range of non-governmental, protest, grassroots, civic, and militant organisations to be targeted for elimination by the new counter-terrorism forces. It would be naïve to think that bourgeois democracy - which passed South Africa's equally vaguely-defined Protection of Constitutional Democracy from Terrorism and Other Related Activities Act into law last year - will protect the working class, peasantry and poor from state terrorism.



Fort Benning in Georgia. In 2001, it was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC).

Founded in 1946 in Panama, the School of the Americas has trained some 60,000 Latin American soldiers, including notorious neo-Nazi Bolivian dictator Hugo Banzer, infamous Panamanian dictator and drug czar Manuel Noriega, Argentine dictators Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola whose regime murdered 30,000 people between 1976 and 1983, numerous death-squad killers, right up to Efraim Vasquez and Ramirez Poveda who staged a failed US-backed coup in Venezuela in 2002.

Over the decades, graduates of the School have murdered and tortured hundreds of thousands of people across Latin America, specifically targeting trade union leaders, grassroots activists, students, guerrilla units, and political opponents. The murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero of Nicaragua in 1980 and the "El Mozote"



# IS CHINA AFRICA'S NEW IMPERIALIST POWER?

by **Lucien van der Walt**  
and **Michael Schmidt**

The African tour of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, centred on fostering trade relations between China and African and Arabian countries, highlights an important recent development.

Revolutionaries in Anglophone Africa have always seen Britain and France as the dominant imperialist powers on the continent, but other forces are emerging from the shadows to challenge their continued post-colonial dominance - and it's not just the United States.

Southern African anarchist-communists would normally see the former British colony of South Africa as acting as a sub-imperialist power on behalf of the big capitalist powers and its own capitalist ruling class in the region, a sort of regional policeman as it were: if British interests in

Swaziland are threatened by the democracy movement, we are sure that South African military might will intervene (as it did against Lesotho in 1998) to shore up the Swazi elite.

But the international scene is changing and today we can chart the rise of the People's Republic of China as one of Africa's most powerful kingmakers, whether backing the genocidal regime in Khartoum, or embarking on large-scale building projects including the new Luanda airport (in exchange for 10,000 barrels of crude oil a day) and the Number One Stadium in Kinshasa, a city that with its giant gold statue of a fat, Mao-like Laurent-Désiré Kabila is looking like a city on the Yangtze River instead of the Congo (the DRC's mimicry of the Chinese national flag, before adopting a new flag this year, was too obvious to miss).

## STATE CAPITALISM

Unlike the old Soviet Union, China has managed to engineer a successful transition from closed State-capitalism (the Maoist era) towards an export-orientated neo-liberal model. Its rapid economic

growth and cheap goods - overseen by the Chinese Communist Party, the CCP - may see the country overtake the US as the largest manufacturing power worldwide by 2010.

This capitalist boom has been built on the back of a brutal suppression of the working class and peasantry. Strikes are illegal, dissidents are murdered, and the top 20% of households earn 42% of total urban

income attacking their bosses), and multinational sweat-shop operations such as Nike and McDonalds setting up operations in special "economic exclusion zones".

While terror and repression fuel China's economy, the country's capitalist ruling class looks outwards for cheap labour, raw materials and fuel supplies. Africa, economically sidelined in the world economic crisis starting in the 1970s, has suddenly

become hot property. In 2005, the overall African economy grew at 5% - it's fastest in decades - as demand for African raw materials shot up, with Chinese demand playing a key role. The 1980s and 1990s saw Africa fall off the investment map, with Africa getting less than 1% of all private direct investment to "third world" countries in



**A Factory in China**

incomes while the poorest 20% receive just 6%.

There has been a sharp rise in class struggle, with strikes rising from 8,150 in 1992 to 120,000 in 1999. Last year residents of the village of Huaxi, Zhejiang province, battled the police and local officials in hand-to-hand combat in April and drove them off. In December, hundreds of villagers armed with dynamite and petrol-bombs attacked police in Dongzhou, Guangdong province, after police killed 20 villagers who had protested against land seized to build a power plant. A source close to the CCP central committee revealed last year that some 3-million workers took part in protests last year.

This is a country where the official monthly minimum wage is US\$63 (compare that to US\$45 to US\$55 in rural and urban Vietnam, respectively, levels won by Vietnamese workers last year by embarking on wildcat strikes against their communist bosses), which has probably the worst mining fatality record in the world (the official Xinhua News Agency figure is 5,986 dead in coal mines alone in 2005, resulting in some cases in miners armed with dynamite

1995. Chinese (and South African) capitalists have increasingly taken the gap, and the trend is reversing.

## CHINA IN AFRICA

China clandestinely traded with apartheid South Africa despite its funding of liberation movements in the country and in neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe. Formal relations with South Africa were re-established in 1998.

According to Martin Davies, the director for the Centre for Chinese Studies at Stellenbosch University (and a businessman with interests in Shanghai), last year, trade between China and Africa soared to US\$35-million, with Chinese investment primarily centred on the oil industry, especially in Nigeria, Angola, Sudan and Equatorial Guinea.

Grim conditions in these countries have hardly worried the Chinese dictatorship: whether it is the total lack of democracy in Equatorial Guinea, the state-driven race-war in Sudan, or the fact that the blatant theft of oil wealth by the ruling cliques in Angola and Nigeria has fuelled conflict, with UNITA and the Movement for the



Emancipation of the Niger Delta, respectively trying to win back a slice of the pie.

So it will come as no surprise that Chinese helicopter gunships have been used against civilians in Darfur, according to human rights activists. China - which maintains an electronic listening post on the Comores - gave Sudan massive military aid between 1996 and 2003, including jet fighter aircraft, shipped tons of arms to Ethiopia and Eritrea prior to the outbreak of their border war in 1998, and has sold jets, military aircraft and radio-jamming equipment (to prevent outside broadcasts being heard inside the country) to the Zimbabwean regime.

## SOUTH AFRICA

China has greased its imperialist wheels in Africa by scrapping over US\$1-billion in debt owed by 32 African countries and the SABC reported this year that South Africa's trade with China is growing at 26% annually.

South Africa is China's largest trade partner in Africa, with trade growing 400% over the last six years. South Africa supplies iron ore and other raw materials, and receives manufactured goods - and a new trade agreement will see China limit textile exports but strengthen co-operation in areas like nuclear energy. Meanwhile, South Africa's trade with traditional partners like Britain is shrinking.

However, the importance of relations with China is relatively limited, given the strength and diversity of South African capitalism. On the other hand, Chinese investment looms very large in weak economies like those of Equatorial Guinea. China's interest in securing direct raw material supplies - for example, oil outside the OPEC cartel - means we can expect these relations to intensify, and African elites to solidify their links with the East Asian power. Africa now provides around 30% of China's oil imports.

## SOLIDARITY OR XENOPHOBIA

But what does all this investment in guns, ore and oil mean? COSATU has reacted with alarm to a deal struck between the South African and Chinese governments, warning that with the country flooded with cheap imported Chinese clothing (a 480% increase since 2003), the already-fragile domestic textile industry (62,000 jobs lost in the same period) could collapse.

COSATU leaders were embarrassed last

year when members of their affiliated SA Clothing and Textile Workers' Union demonstrated against the fact that the congress' red T-shirts were made in China. Many mainland Chinese textile operations have relocated to Africa in order to by-pass European and American quotas on Chinese imports, but they have often brought with them brutal working conditions. At the same time, COSATU and its ally, the SACP continue to praise China as a socialist country.

Neither position is correct. COSATU's "Buy South Africa" campaign will do nothing to stop cheap Chinese imports. It promotes anti-Chinese racism and feeds into the poisonous xenophobia that afflicts the local working class. It also suggests that all South Africans, capitalists and workers alike, have a common interest. Nothing is further from the truth: South African capitalists are not the friends of South African workers.

Further, the ANC's GEAR policy promotes free trade, so there is no prospect of the wave of imports subsiding in meaningful

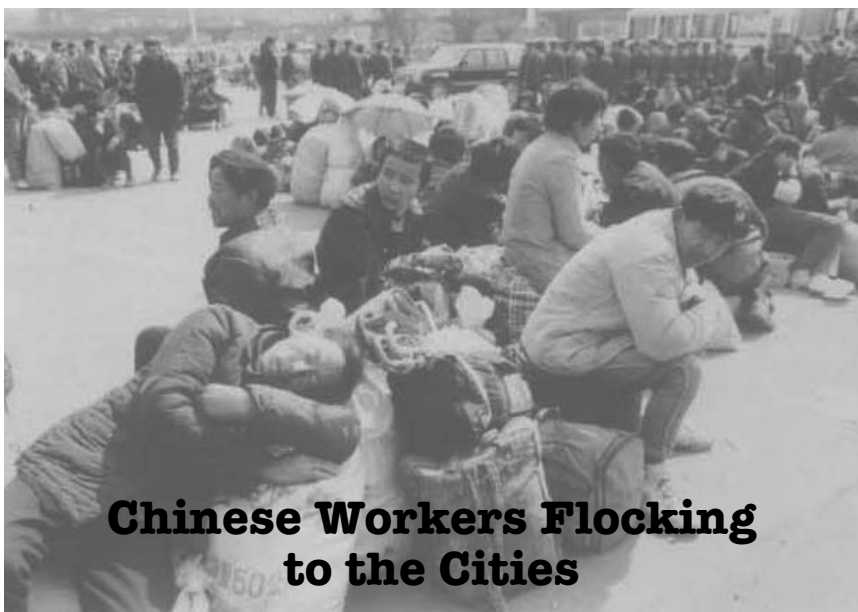
controversial Three Dams project on the Yangtze that will displace 1-million people, "is a construction engineers' dream". This is a good thing, it seems: "If China is to remain a sustainable economy, it has to speed the transition from a rural to an urban society, from an agricultural to an industrial economy."

Chief state spin-doctor Joel Netshitenzhe claimed in the same book that "South Africa and China share mutual goals as both countries are committed to ensuring a better life for all their citizens. Both aim to lower the levels of poverty." Given the state-enforced poverty of the Chinese people, one wonders what Netshitenzhe has in mind when he praised the role of the Chinese state propaganda machine for "the rigour and focus with which China uses information to mobilise people around common objectives and a shared vision..."

A chill settles in one's bones when one reads him hailing the "diversity of voices" in the Chinese media, while studiously ignoring state censorship and the complicity of Western search engines such as Yahoo in helping China jail political dissidents.

The view of SACP deputy secretary general and one-man think-tank Jeremy Cronin is even more revealing. The SACP, terrified that the bubble of "real, existing socialism" was washing down the drain with the restructuring of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in China, sent a delegation there in 2001 to check things out.

Cronin and his delegation were clearly wowed by their CCP hosts: he quotes a 1999 central committee document that "The public-owner-



## Chinese Workers Flocking to the Cities

ship economy, which includes the State-owned economy, is the economic basis of China's socialist system... China must always rely on and bring into full play the important role of the SOEs to develop the productive forces of the socialist society and realise the country's industrialisation and modernisation..." China, it seems, is socialist as well as capitalist! What are we to make of such confused thinking?

"To manage SOEs well in general, efforts must be made to establish a leadership system and organisational and managerial systems in them that conform to the law of the market economy and China's actual situation, to strengthen the building of their leadership, to give play to the Party organisations as the political core of enterprises, and to adhere to the principle of relying on the working class wholeheartedly..." And "rely" they do, for China's miracle is built

## THE "CORE OF ENTERPRISES"

As we have noted in these pages before, both GEAR and NEPAD aim at attracting more trade and more foreign investment, and China fits both bills. Meanwhile, Intelligence Minister (and ageing Young Communist League politburo member) Ronnie Kasrils enthused in a glossy book *China Through the Third Eye: South African Perspectives* - funded by the China Chamber of Commerce and Industry in SA - that China's building boom, including the

"wholeheartedly" on exploitation and terror!

### A CHANGING OF THE GUARD?

So, Chinese communism is finally revealed as nothing more than a modernisation programme guided by authoritarian marketing and management gurus who double as Party bosses! And the Party itself is revealed as a clique of commissars that rides on the working class!

Cronin admits that the delegation "did not have sufficient time to gauge the degree to which" the central committee's stated commitment to workers' "democratic decision-making" and "status as masters of their own enterprises" - capitalist enterprises steered by the party - but he thought it significant that these cheap words had been put on paper.

Cronin lauds the regime for the "fairly clear socialist agenda [that] shines through..." "There is no reason," he huffs, "why markets should not exist under socialism" - a liberal interpretation that allows for the coexistence of "the emergent small and medium privately owned service sector". Where exactly "socialism" "shines" is not clear.

From such mixed economic thinking arises a confused politics, based on industrial and market requirements rather than people's needs, where in Cronin's view, wage increases in the public sector, adopted purely to stimulate market demand qualify as "socialist".

So what we have is an ANC/SACP government that is not only increasingly trading with, but ideologically inclining itself towards, the world's last large totalitarian state, a state that is so blatantly capitalist and simultaneously anti-labour that Cronin's skill as a poet fails to gild the brutal reality. The SACP's state-capitalist thinking has finally managed to find, in the Chinese example, a happy marriage with neo-liberalism.

### PROTECTIONISM OR CLASS STRUGGLE

Chinese goods are cheap because Chinese labour is cheap. If COSATU wants to protect local jobs - and show its commitment to the international working class struggle - it should support trade union organising in China, and step up the class struggle at home and in southern Africa. Neo-liberal capitalism thrives on pitting cheap labour in one country against even cheaper labour in another, in a race to the bottom. The only way out is international solidarity and class struggle, starting with a struggle for an international minimum wage and universal union rights.

China has a proud tradition of class struggle - and this does not mean the CCP and Mao! Back in 1913, anarcho-syndicalists built the first trade unions in Canton, rising to challenge reformist and communist

unionist militants were driven underground and Makhnovist-styled guerrillas such as Chu Cha Pei were forced to retreat into the hills in Yunnan province from where they continued to harry the new ruling class headed by Mao and his entourage of warlords and state-capitalists.

As Africa increasingly becomes the back-yard of China's oil-driven imperialism, one has to ask firstly, whether the government will try to mimic the worst aspects of China's enforced civil peace, a development that would prove a serious challenge to our own working class.

### ANARCHISM OR MARXISM

We have no interest on following those leftists who hope for an end to "capitalist restoration" in China: China has been capitalist since Mao took power, and any Chinese revolutionary movement must jettison Marxism and its Maoist variant. Nor can we agree that China is - in fact - "socialist," despite what SACP leaders may think.

Capitalism is a class system, and a class system means class struggles. Sooner or later China's working class will rediscover its proud fighting tradition and take charge of its own affairs to the exclusion of parasitic Party leaders and capitalists - what is called in Chinese *wuzhengfu gonchan*, or common production without government, in a word, anarchist-communism - and bury the CCP.

But until that day, there is a more serious question we have to ask, one with implications beyond our borders: will China replace Britain as South Africa's imperialist power, a changing of the guard, so to speak - leading to South Africa embarking on military expeditions in Africa to protect Chinese capitalist interests. All serious anti-imperialists must consider and plan for the possibility of Africa becoming the future battleground between US-backed Western and Chinese expansionist interests, and unite the continent's people in a battle against the oil barons.



unionism in all the big industrial centres such as Shanghai in the 1920s. Armed anarchist peasant movements controlled huge swathes of territory in Fukien province and in Kirin province, Manchuria, in the 1930s and anarchist guerrillas fought alongside communists in the resistance to Japanese imperialism in the 1940s.

But after the Maoist coup d'état of 1949, China's estimated 10,000 anarchist trade



## Southern African Anarchism Online

Links to local groups, education material, email discussion lists, PDF leaflets for you to distribute etc. etc.

[www.zabalaza.net](http://www.zabalaza.net)

# DEFEND LIBERTARIAN CENTRE FOR STUDIES AND INVESTIGATION IN MOROCCO

by Pat M (trans)

What follows is an appeal from the Spanish CGT for solidarity with a group of Moroccan anarchists that they have been in contact with for some time. It includes a translation from the French of the original appeal from Fillali Brahim by the translator and further translations from the Spanish and French for English speaking readers. The text suggested by the CGT in French is the proper one to send to the Moroccan authorities as few of them could read English, assuming they can read at all. The translation of the CGT's header follows:

For further information on the situation in Morocco please communicate in French with Fillali at tafokt2001@yahoo.fr

For the background to the project see 'Project for the creation of a Libertarian Studies & Research Centre in Morocco' at [http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story\\_id=1206](http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story_id=1206)

Pat the M., Translator

## SOLIDARITY WITH THE CLER (LIBERTARIAN CENTRE FOR STUDIES AND INVESTIGATION) OF BOUMAALNE-DADES

The CGT has supported in solidarity a group of libertarian Moroccans who have been trying to create a Libertarian Centre of Investigation and Studies in Boumaine Dades, in the province of Ouarzazate in the south of Morocco. The project is to create a library, a meeting place for speeches and work for sociological investigation, especially concerning the collectivist and federalist traditions of los imazighem (untranslatable Spanish word for Berbers) (Berbers) with a non-racist and libertarian vision.

The local authorities have rejected a dossier enclosed and sent via registered mail for its legalisation. They completely refused the appeal for legalisation when there was already a headquarters prepared for the beginning of the project.

For all of this we (the CGT) ask from you a massive mailing of faxes with this text or a similar one to the governor of the province:

**An English translation of the French original from the CGT follows. Please send any faxes in French.**

Monsieur le Gouverneur de la province de Ourzazate,

In the face of the attitude of the governing circle (local authorities) of Boumaine Dades, province of Ouarzazate who have refused to receive the deposition of a dossier on the Centre of Libertarian Studies and Research in Boumaine without any explanation for this refusal.

We want to denounce:

The violation of legality and of citizens' rights to create a centre of accusation, research and defense of human rights in this marginalized region of the country.

*We demand:*

Respect for the law of authorization that permits the functioning of the Libertarian Centre of Studies and Research in Boumaine Dades.

**The fax numbers for protests follow in the original text.**

Cher Camarades,

Voici une traduction de l'email de Fillali Brahim a l'anglais. C'est possible que elle sera utile pour les camarades de l'Afrique du Sud.

*Et aussi a Fillali:*

Voulez-vous les actions de la solidarite avec votre lutte ? Qu'est-ce c'est pouvons-nous faire vous aider ?

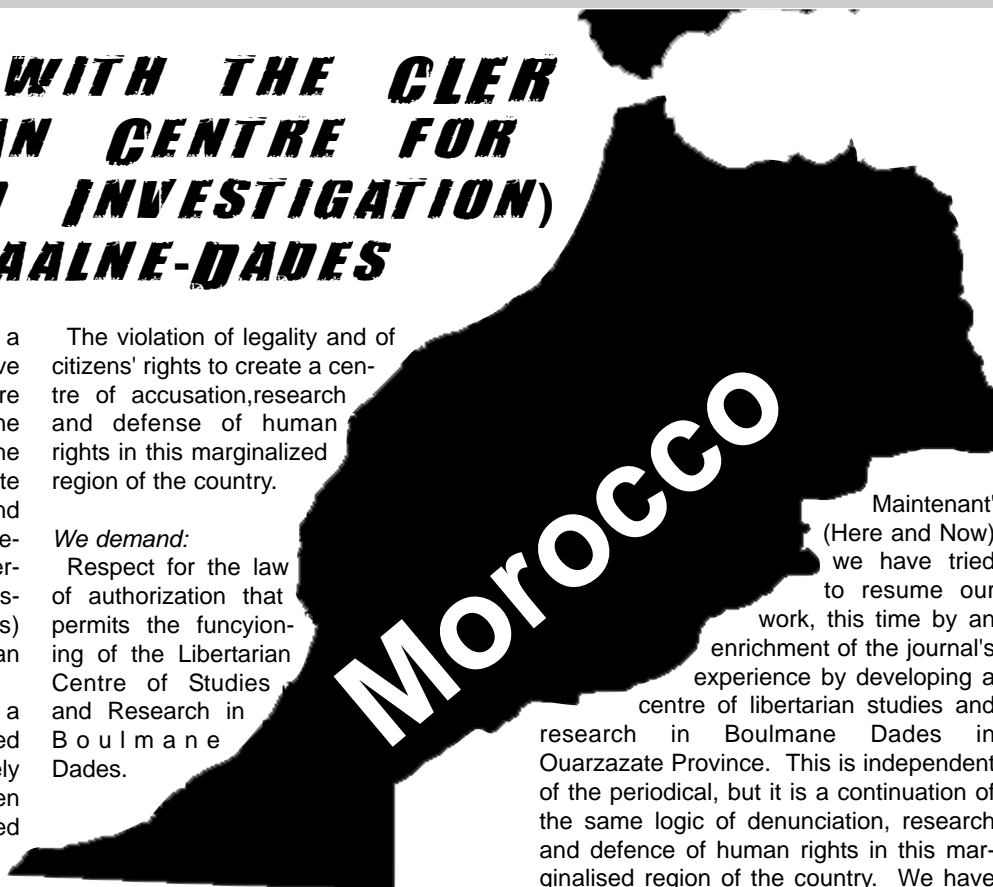
**From Fillali Brahim:**

After the affair of the journal 'Ici et

Maintenant' (Here and Now) we have tried to resume our work, this time by an enrichment of the journal's experience by developing a centre of libertarian studies and research in Boulmane Dades in Ouarzazate Province. This is independent of the periodical, but it is a continuation of the same logic of denunciation, research and defence of human rights in this marginalised region of the country. We have chosen this place in view of the huge problems that meet people, because the organisations (union or political) that are not revolutionary become reactionary. They facilitate the exploitation and domination of the dictatorial regime, a regime that wants a democratic facade to make the world believe that the people participate in the management of their everyday life through their representatives who are active in the bosom of their organisations, side by side with the State, "modern and democratic".

These illusions in which nobody can rightly believe, we want to unmask, to analyse, to criticise and, above all, to give a libertarian alternative of thought and action for the better way that we believe this people deserves.

The journal 'Ici et Maintenant' was a first



step in this view, and the libertarian centre is the road marked out for our will and legitimate conviction that this Earth does not belong to thieves, and our will for the well being and joy of our people. We are touched daily by what we see of the evidence of the permanent crisis that we crash into.

For this reason we set up the dossier of the centre in accordance with the law of civil liberties of Morocco that permit us theoretical work (but in reality nothing that is not pro-State and not faithful to slavery), and we have given these to the president of the 'Boumaine Circle' ("authority"-PM). He definitely heard us explain to him what we had to say about the centre and we gave him all the necessary documents.

The president said to us that he could not give us the receipt of deposition of the file because, according to him, he didn't know what a research centre was. We responded that we weren't responsible for his ignorance and that the law was clear in this domain. We told him that we were going to send him the refused file by registered mail. He responded that if the file was sent in that way it would be refused again.

In fact that is what happened. We sent it, and after 21 days the file was returned to us full of refused stamps, without any reason for this bizarre refusal.

That was how things happened. Now we are going to Rabat, to the headquarters of the National Press Union of Morocco, SNPM, in order to get permission to hold a press conference on May 6th to explain to everybody this contradiction between the official slogans and the reality of human rights throughout the South of this country. It means that a citizen is without any right of accommodation for freedom of expression.

I will present the demand to the union headquarters and await the response. I will send you the response of the SNPM on the subject.

Finally we continue to vigorously denounce the attitude of the local authorities of Boumaine Dades, Ourzazate.

We declare that have full rights to do our research, rights that were stolen from us.

We address this appeal to all who struggle for a better way. To help us be able to do our work in the face of everyday hardship and this desert that aims to depopulate the world.

We refuse to accept our poverty and our suffering. That would cause symptoms of a sick situation of accepting the situation made for us. We would end up fighting ourselves.

We declare that the citizenship card and the passport do not make the individual a citizen, and that citizenship depends on dignity and human rights.

Here is the original French text from the CGT and the addresses to send faxes to:

Le Gouverneur de la Province de Ourzazate: Devant l'attitude du president du cercle de Boumaine Dades, province de Ourzazate, qui a refuse meme recevoir le depot du dossier sur un Centre Libertaire d'Etudes et de Recherches a Boumaine sans aucune explication des motifs de ce fefus.

#### **NOUS VOULONS DENCOUNCER:**

La violation de la legalite et des droits a creer un centre d'etudes de denonciation, de recxherche et de la recherche et de la defense des droits humains dans cette region marginallee du pays.

Le respect de la legalite et l'autorisation qui permet le fontionnement du Centre Libertaire d'Etudes et de Recherches a Boumaine Dades.

*The fax numbers to send protests to are as follows. The following are in Spanish, as per the CGT;*

Gobernador de la provincia de  
Ouarzazate:  
Fax # 00-212-44-88-25-68

Ministro de Justica:  
Fax # 00-212-37-72-37-10

Ministro del Interior:  
Fax # 00-212-37-76-74-04

Con copia a  
tiwiga@caramail.com

Please send copies to  
tiwiga@caramail.com



# ESPECIFISMO: THE ANARCHIST PRAXIS OF BUILDING POPULAR MOVEMENTS AND REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION IN SOUTH AMERICA

by Adam Weaver

Within the broad anarchist movement, we stand in the tradition advocating the need for an organised and disciplined anarchist political organisation. The "Alliance" in the First International was an early example of this model, but it was one of many such forces. In 1926, Nestor Makhno, Peter Arshinov and others restated this approach in the classic "Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists,"\* perhaps the most important text of twentieth century anarchism. In South America - a region with many similarities to southern Africa - this tradition has been developed as Especifismo, and it is for this reason that we carry this important piece.



Throughout the world, anarchist involvement within mass movements, as well as the development of specifically anarchist organisations, is on the upsurge. This trend is helping anarchism regain legitimacy as a dynamic political force within movements and in this light, Especifismo, a concept born out of nearly 50 years of anarchist experiences in South America, is gaining currency world-wide. Though many anarchists may be familiar with many of Especifismo's ideas, it should be defined as an original contribution to anarchist thought and practice.

The first organisation to promote the concept of Especifismo - then more a practice than a developed ideology - was the Federación Anarquista Uruguaya (FAU), founded in 1956 by anarchist militants who embraced the idea of an organisation which was specifically anarchist. Surviving the dictatorship in Uruguay, the FAU emerged in the mid-1980s to establish contact with and influence other South American anarchist revolutionaries. The FAU's work helped support the founding of the Federação Anarquista Gaúcha (FAG), the Federação Anarquista Cabocla (FACA), and the Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro (FARJ) in their respective regions of Brazil, and the Argentinean organisation Auca (Rebel).

While the key concepts of Especifismo will be expanded upon further in this article, it can be summarised in three succinct points:

1. The need for specifically anarchist organisation built around a unity of ideas and praxis.
2. The use of the specifically anarchist organisation to theorize and develop strategic political and organising work.
3. Active involvement in and building of autonomous and popular social movements, which is described as the process of "social insertion."

## A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

While only coming onto the stage of Latin American anarchism within the last few decades, the ideas inherent within Especifismo touch on a historic thread running within the anarchist movement internationally. The most well known would be the Platformist current, which began with the publishing of the "Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists."\* This document was written in 1926 by former peasant army leader Nestor Makhno, Ida Mett and other militants of the Dielo Trouda (Workers' Cause) group, based around the newspaper of the same name (Skirda, 192-213). Exiles of the Russian revolution, the Paris-based Dielo Trouda criticized the anarchist movement for its lack of organisation, which prevented a concerted response to Bolshevik machinations towards turning the workers' soviets into instruments of one-party rule. The alternative they proposed was a "General Union of Anarchists" based on Anarchist-Communism, which would strive for "theoretical and tactical unity" and focus on class struggle and labour unions.

Other similar occurrences of ideas include "Organisational Dualism," which is mentioned in historical documents of the 1920's Italian anarchist movement. Italian anarchists used this term to describe the involvement of anarchists both as members of an anarchist political organisation and as militants in the labour movement (FdCA). In Spain, the Friends of Durruti group emerged to oppose the gradual reversal of the Spanish Revolution of 1936 (Guillamon). In "Towards a Fresh Revolution" they emulated some of the ideas of the Platform, critiquing the CNT-FAI's gradual reformism and collaboration with the Republican government, which they argued contributed to the defeat of the anti-fascist and revolutionary forces. Influential organisations in the Chinese anarchist movement of the 1910's, such as the Wuzhengfu-Gongchan Zhuyi Tongshi Che (Society of Anarchist-Communist Comrades), advocated similar ideas

(Krebs). While these different currents all have specific characteristics that developed from the movements and countries in which they originated, they all share a common thread that crosses movements, eras, and continents.

## ESPECIFISMO ELABORATED

The Especifists put forward three main thrusts to their politics, the first two being on the level of organisation. By raising the need for a specifically anarchist organisation built around a unity of ideas and praxis, the Especifists inherently state their objection to the idea of a synthesis organisation of revolutionaries or multiple currents of anarchists loosely united. They characterize this form of organisation as creating an exacerbated search for the needed unity of anarchists to the point in which unity is preferred at any cost, in the fear of risking positions, ideas and proposals sometimes irreconcilable. The result of these types of union are libertarian collectives without much more in common than considering themselves anarchists. (En La Calle)

While these critiques have been elaborated by the South American Especifistas, North American anarchists have also offered their experiences of synthesis organisation as lacking any cohesiveness due to multiple, contradictory political tendencies. Often the basic agreement of the group boils down to a vague, "least-common-denominator" politics, leaving little room for united action or developed political discussion among comrades.

Without a strategy that stems from common political agreement, revolutionary organisations are bound to be an affair of reactivism against the continual manifestations of oppression and injustice and a cycle of fruitless actions to be repeated over and over, with little analysis or understanding of their consequences (Featherstone et al). Further, the Especifists criticise these tendencies for being driven by spontaneity and individualism and for not leading to the serious, systematic work needed to build revolutionary

movements. The Latin American revolutionaries put forward that organisations which lack a program which resists any discipline between militants, that refuses to 'define itself', or to 'fit itself', ... [are a] direct descendant of bourgeois liberalism, [which] only reacts to strong stimulus, joins the struggle only in its heightened moments, denying to work continuously, especially in moments of relative rest between the struggles (En La Calle).

A particular stress of the Especificismo praxis is the role of anarchist organisation, formed on the basis of shared politics, as a space for the development of common strategy and reflection on the group's organising work. Sustained by collective responsibility to the organisations' plans and work, a trust within the members and groups is built that allows for a deep, high-level discussion of their action. This allows the organisation to create collective analysis, develop immediate and long-term goals, and continually reflect on and change their work based on the lessons gained and circumstances.

From these practices and from the basis of their ideological principles, revolutionary organisations should seek to create a program that defines their short - and intermediate - term goals and will work towards their long-term objectives:

The program must come from a rigorous analysis of society and the correlation of the forces that are part of it. It must have as a foundation the experience of the struggle of the oppressed and their aspirations, and from those elements it must set the goals and the tasks to be followed by the revolutionary organisation in order to succeed not only in the final objective but also in the immediate ones. (En La Calle)

The last point, but one that is key within the practice of Especificismo, is the idea of "social insertion." <sup>1</sup> It stems from the belief that the oppressed are the most revolutionary sector of society, and that the seed of the future revolutionary transformation of society lies already in these classes and social groupings. Social insertion means anarchist involvement in the daily fights of the oppressed and working classes. It does not mean acting within single-issue advocacy campaigns based around the involvement of expected traditional political activists, but rather within movements of people struggling to better their own condition, which come together not always out of exclusively materially-based needs, but

also socially and historically rooted needs of resisting the attacks of the state and capitalism. These would include rank-and-file workers' movements, immigrant communities' movements to demand legalized status, neighbourhood organisations' resistance to the brutality and killings by police, working class students' fights against budget cuts, and poor and unemployed people's opposition to evictions and service cuts.

Through daily struggles, the oppressed become a conscious force. The class-in-itself, or rather classes-in-themselves (defined beyond the class-reductionist vision of the urban industrial proletariat, to include all oppressed groups within society that have a material stake in a new socie-

recyclables collectors. Due to high levels of temporary and contingent employment, under-employment, and unemployment in Brazil, a significant portion of the working class does not survive primarily through wage labour, but rather by subsistence work and the informal economy, such as casual construction work, street vending, or the collection of trash and recyclables. Through several years of work, the FAG has built a strong relationship with urban trash collectors, called catadores. Members of the FAG have supported them in forming their own national organisation which is working to mobilise trash collectors around their interests nationally and to raise money toward building a collectively operated recycling operation. <sup>2</sup>

Especificismo's conception of the relation of ideas to the popular movement is that they should not be imposed through a leadership, through "mass line", or by intellectuals. Anarchist militants should not attempt to move movements into proclaiming an "anarchist" position, but should instead work to preserve their anarchist thrust; that is, their natural tendency to be self-organised and to militantly fight for their own interests. This assumes the perspective that social movements will reach their own logic of creating revolution, not when they as a whole necessarily reach the point of being self-identified "anarchists," but when as a whole (or at least an overwhelming majority) they reach the consciousness of their own power and exercise this power in their daily lives, in a way consciously adopting the ideas of anarchism. An additional role of the anarchist militant within the social movements,

according to the Especificists, is to address the multiple political currents that will exist within movements and to actively combat the opportunistic elements of vanguardism and electoral politics.

## ESPECIFISMO IN THE CONTEXT OF NORTH AMERICAN AND WESTERN ANARCHISM

Within the current strands of organised and revolutionary North American and Western Anarchism, numerous indicators point to the inspiration and influence of the Platform as having the greatest impact in the recent blossoming of class struggle anarchist organisations worldwide. Many see the Platform as a historical document that speaks to the previous century's organisational failures of anarchism within



ty), are tempered, tested, and recreated through these daily struggles over immediate needs into classes-for-themselves. That is, they change from social classes and groups that exist objectively and by the fact of social relations, to social forces. Brought together by organic methods, and at many times by their own self-organisational cohesion, they become self-conscious actors aware of their power, voice and their intrinsic nemeses: ruling elites who wield control over the power structures of the modern social order.

Examples of social insertion that the FAG cites are their work with neighbourhood committees in urban villages and slums (called Popular Resistance Committees), building alliances with rank-and-file members of the rural landless workers' movement of the MST, and among trash and



global revolutionary movements, and are moved to define themselves as acting within the "platformist tradition". Given this, the currents of Especifismo and Platformism are deserving of comparison and contrast.

The authors of the Platform were veteran partisans of the Russian Revolution. They helped lead a peasant guerrilla war against Western European armies and later the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine, whose people had a history independent of the Russian Empire. So the writers of the Platform certainly spoke from a wealth of experience and to the historical context of one of their era's pivotal struggles. But the document made little headway in its proposal of uniting class struggle anarchists, and is markedly silent in analysis or understanding on numerous key questions that faced revolutionaries at that time, such as the oppression of women, and colonialism.

While most Anarchist-Communist oriented organisations claim influ-

ence by the Platform today, in retrospect it can be looked at as a poignant statement that rose from the morass that befell much of anarchism following the Russian Revolution. As a historical project, the Platform's proposal and basic ideas were largely rejected by individualistic tendencies in the Anarchist movement, were misunderstood because of language barriers as some claim (Skirda, 186), or never reached supportive elements or organisations that would have united around the document. In 1927, the Dielo Trouda group did host a small international conference of supporters in France, but it was quickly disrupted by the authorities.

In comparison, the praxis of Especifismo is a living, developed practice, and arguably a much more relevant and contemporary theory, emerging as it does out of 50 years of anarchist organising. Arising from the southern cone of Latin America, but its influence spreading throughout, the ideas of Especifismo do not spring

from any call-out or single document, but have come organically out of the movements of the global south that are leading the fight against international capitalism and setting examples for movements worldwide. On organisation, the Especifists call for a far deeper basis of anarchist organisation than the Platform's "theoretical and tactical unity," but a strategic program based on analysis that guides the actions of revolutionaries. They provide us living examples of revolutionary organisation based on the needs for common analysis, shared theory, and firm roots within the social movements.

I believe there is much to take inspiration from within the tradition of Especifismo, not only on a global scale, but particularly for North American class-struggle anarchists and for multi-racial revolutionaries within the US. Whereas the Platform can be easily read as seeing anarchists' role as narrowly and most centrally within labour unions, Especifismo gives us a living example that we can look towards and which speaks more meaningfully to our work in building a revolutionary movement today. Taking this all into consideration, I also hope that this article can help us more concretely reflect on how we as a movement define and shape our traditions and influences.



**NOTE:** This is the final version of the above article. A slightly different copy, we regret, appears in the print version of the Northeastern Anarchist, and may also be in electronic circulation. Please refer to this final version in any citations.]

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. While "social insertion" is a term coming directly out of the texts of Especifismo influenced organisations, comrades of mine have taken issue with it. So before there is a rush towards an uncritical embrace of anything, perhaps there could be a discussion of this term.
2. Eduardo, then Secretary of External Relations for Brazilian FAG. "Saudacoes Libertarias dos E.U.A." Email to Pedro Ribeiro. 25 Jun 2004

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## REMEMBERING AND LEARNING FROM THE PAST:

# THE 1976 UPRISING AND THE AFRICAN WORKING CLASS

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the 1976 Soweto uprising in South Africa, which marked the start of the fall of apartheid, and inspired activists worldwide. African working youth played a leading role, and their sacrifices showed us that ordinary people can make a difference to the injustices of our world. Revolutionaries should commemorate this struggle, but also learn from its failings.

### RACE AND CLASS

The 1976 uprising was sparked by the imposition of Afrikaans-language teaching in African schools, seen as an act of national oppression. But there was more at play. The 1970s saw growing inflation creating much discontent amongst urban African youth. South Africa's economy, which boomed in the 1960s, entered crisis in the 1970s. Unemployment grew steadily, reaching levels unseen for decades.

This was fuelled by under-funded, racist and authoritarian government institutions like the local government township administrations, the Bantu Education system and the miserable conditions in the segregated township schools. Although the government and large companies such as Anglo American increased spending on education - mainly to grow the semi-skilled workforce, as large companies were facing major skill shortages - these schools remained under-resourced and over-crowded.

They lacked adequate teaching staff or facilities like libraries, sports grounds etc., and ranked the highest in terms of dropout rates and teacher-to-student ratios. Corporal punishment was also used extensively, often sadistically: at Vulamazibuko Higher Primary School in Diepkloof, for instance, teachers frequently punished students by placing their feet in cold water, and then whipping their toes.

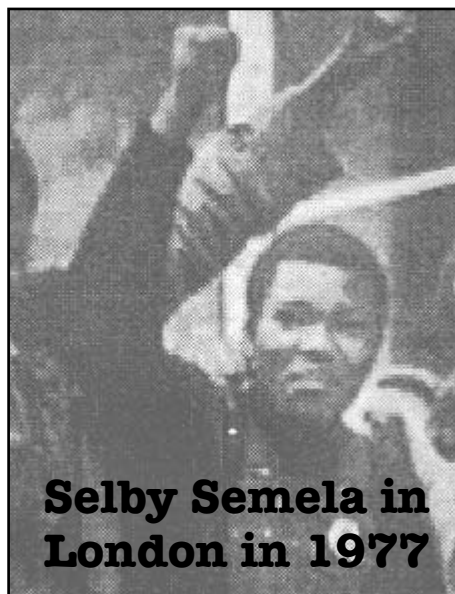
The State began to experiment with neo-liberal policies as well. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report, a key factor in the 1976 uprising was a leap in rates and service charges by the West Rand Administration Board, which had just lost the R2-million subsidy it had received from the Johannesburg City Council.

State spending on education was decreased at the same time that the number of schooling years was reduced. The

abolition of standard six created a huge "bulge" of students being pushed into the first year of secondary school, leading to intensified overcrowding and strain on resources.

### RESISTANCE

Large schools concentrated African students together, shared frustrations from national oppression and capitalist crisis united them, and they started to look for ways in which they could express and resolve their grievances. Neither parents, nor the exiled nationalist organisations like



**Selby Semela in  
London in 1977**

the ANC, SACP and PAC, provided much direction.

As a result, African youth established their own organisations such as the African Student Movement (ASM), which organised students in Soweto schools and aimed to take up student demands and create social and political awareness. Selby Semela - an 18-year-old school pupil and activist - recalled that "the old spinster-huckster organisations" like the ANC, PAC and SACP played almost no role.

Instead, members of ASM were influenced by young teachers from homeland universities like Turfloop, who promoted Black Consciousness (BC). Drawing on the ideas of Steve Biko and others, BC stressed the need to instil a sense of pride and self-worth within "black" people before political organisation took place. Here, the

term "black" was used to include Coloureds and Indians. The ASM changed its name to the South African Student Movement, and tried to organise beyond Soweto.

Other important events inspired Soweto youth. The 1973-4 Durban strikes, which spread to Port Elizabeth and the East Rand, shattered the political quiescence of the 1960s, and signalled the rebirth of African trade unions. The sudden collapse of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique and Angola led many to believe that national liberation was increasingly possible within apartheid South Africa.

So, when the Bantu Education Department tried to implement a new "fifty - fifty" language policy - half of the exam subjects were going to be taught in Afrikaans, a language few teachers spoke, and that many Africans considered the language of apartheid officials, police and racist Whites - revolt was on the horizon.

### SPARKS AND FIRE

School boards were the first to challenge the language policy, but the Bantu Education department was unbending. Its intransigence became the focus of students' political anger. By February 1976 students were organising protests.

Then a mass demonstration was organised in Soweto for June 16th. Semela was on the "action committee," which later became the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC). The protest attracted around fifteen thousand youths. Many displayed their hostility towards the language policy by waving placards such as "Blacks are not dustbins-Afrikaans stinks" and "Afrikaans is oppressors' language".

Police had made no preparations for the event, a protest on a scale unseen in years, and tensions rose. At 9 o'clock that morning, police and students clashed on Vilikazi Street: police fired tear gas, demonstrators threw stones, and police opened fire. Two children died, many were injured. The TRC found that Colonel Theuns "Rooi Rus" Swanepoel of the SA Police Riot Unit - a notorious thug - adopted a "shoot to kill" policy.

The police action ignited the fury of the young marchers. By midday rioting had broken out across Soweto. Cars were stoned and barricades erected. Arson

attacks took place on administration buildings, schools and beer halls. Two Whites were attacked and killed: one was Dr Melville Edelstein, a liberal who had just published a report warning of impending unrest in Soweto.

Despite the police's heavy-handed methods, riots quickly spread across the country, and protests - including three general strikes, of varying success - continued into 1977. In the Western Cape, the revolt came to include many Coloured youth - most of whom were Afrikaans speaking - a very significant development. By the time the uprising ended there were more than 575 dead (451 killed by police), and 3,907 injured (2,389 by police).

The SSRC and other organisations played a leading role, but the revolt was the property of no organisation: it was spontaneous and militant. Contrary to a myth now promoted by ANC leaders (and the claims of then-Prime Minister B.J. Vorster), the ANC, as an organisation, played a very limited role. BC was central amongst students, while many workers adhered to the independent politics of the reborn unions.

## LESSONS

The 1976 uprising marked the beginning of a new era. The costs were high, but Soweto showed that struggle was possible, opening the last chapter in the anti-apartheid struggle. The 1976 revolt rightly occupies a central place in the story of national liberation. The language issue sparked the revolt, but it was only the match to a tinderbox of grievances from capitalist restructuring and national oppression.

The revolt should not be romanticised - it involved State terror, racial attacks, the first use of the notorious "necklace" against supposed informers, and the first major conflicts between township residents and hostel dwellers around the Mzimhlope hostel.

Revolutionaries must also learn from past mistakes, as much as they should celebrate past victories. There were inherent weaknesses in the politics of the uprising. BC was a key factor in the struggle at the time, and the State found it necessary to ban 17 BC organisations and murder Biko before the revolt ended.

But while BC's emphasis on "black" pride was very important - every national liberation struggle will involve a similar mental liberation by oppressed groups - BC never had a clear strategy to change society. After the end of the revolt, many SSRC leaders fled into exile, - forming the South African Youth Revolutionary Council (SAYRCO) in 1979, a body that proved as sterile and ineffective as the exiled ANC, SACP and PAC.

BC stressed personal change, rather than building counter-power. It very rarely developed an anti-capitalist position, even though national oppression and capitalist exploitation were deeply interlinked in

apartheid South Africa.

## THE FALL OF BC

In the late 1970s, many BC activists came to a more socialist position, exemplified by AZAPO and the National Forum, but BC had lost its moment. It was sidelined within a few years by formations like the FOSATU unions, the United Democratic Front and the rebirth of ANC influence. In any case, the socialism of groups like AZAPO was very heavily Soviet in orientation - hardly different to the SACP. Brutal attacks and murders of BC stalwarts by ANC supporters put a further nail in the coffin.

Some BC exiles, however, pointed to a different approach. Semela drew anti-capitalist conclusions, and became a libertarian communist, with a position very close to anarchism. He believed that BC learned all the wrong lessons from 1976. Having managed to "leave in the dust the false goals and methods of the struggles of the forties and fifties," it had no clear alternative. The 1976 revolt showed the power of working class spontaneity, but BC leaders subsequently decided to lay "firm claim to the dubious honour of the avant-garde party." The revolt showed the importance of self-organisation, but the SSRC ran itself "as a self-appointed executive, dictatorially controlled by its chairman."

SAYRCO was no different. Its main activity was to send leaders into South Africa to call upon the youth to join it in exile, when the 1970s had shown that the real struggle was within the country, with the exiled groups impotent. The eventual outcome was predictable: the exiled BC groups set up their own tiny "army," a pale shadow of the exiled ANC's own failed armed struggle, and even less effective.

## CLASS STRUGGLE AND NATIONAL LIBERATION

The 1994 elections showed that the national liberation struggle in South Africa had been conquered by the bourgeois anti-imperialism of African nationalism, which aimed to deracialise capitalism through the State. This was the ANC project.

The alternative anarchist/syndicalist tradition of working class anti-imperialism - which aimed to merge struggles against national oppression, capitalism and the

State in a single revolutionary process - was long buried.

This does not mean that 1994 was meaningless. There were very real gains, like the end of legalised White supremacy, apartheid repression and press controls, even if there were also defeats, like the survival of capitalism.

It was here that BC was tested one last time, and found wanting. By the 1990s, the once-mighty BC movement was a tiny isolated current, mainly middle class. It insisted - contrary to all evidence - that the 1994 elections were entirely meaningless and should be boycotted.

The elections, however, were a massive victory for the African working class, even if that victory is now increasingly overshadowed by the ANC's neo-liberal war on the poor. AZAPO saw only the defeats, boycotted the elections, and largely faded away as the African working class overwhelmingly voted to end apartheid and oust the National Party government.

## A REAL MONUMENT

We anarchists have worked with BC activists on several occasions - the fact we are both outside the ANC tradition was important - but we do not think BC can provide a real alternative. The old-style BC of the 1970s lacked a strategy and a vision; the second generation BC of AZAPO - and the more recent SOPA breakaway - modelled its socialism too heavily on the State-capitalism of Cuba and the Soviet Union, and misunderstood the real changes that took place in the 1990s. And, as Semela shows, some BC activists found an answer in libertarian socialism.

What, then, is to be done? Plural and organic forms of working class organisation should be promoted, working class autonomy and anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian politics and organisation need to be fostered, and struggle needs to be made everyday practice.

Building tomorrow today in such a manner, we can change the world, and honour the victims of 1976 with a real monument: a society free of class and national oppression. It is a far more fitting monument than having Thabo Mbeki cynically and disgracefully appropriating the 1976 revolt for the ANC.

Reflections on the Black Consciousness Movement and the South African Revolution

by Selby Semela, Sam Thompson & Norman Abraham



Selby Semela, Sam Thompson & Norman Abraham, [1979] 2005

## REFLECTIONS ON THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN REVOLUTION

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# A NEW WORLD IN OUR HEARTS

## Remembering the Spanish Revolution of 1936

2006 sees the 70th anniversary of one of the most important episodes of European working class history - the Spanish Revolution.

Because the Spanish anarchist movement was historically such a large and important one, anarchists have had a reputation for idealising the Spanish events of 1936 - 1937 and the role of libertarians in it. Unlike, for example, Britain or Ireland, anarchist ideas had been at the forefront of socialist politics in Spain since the 1860s. The libertarian movement had deep roots amongst both the peasantry and the emergent industrial working class for more than half a century prior to the 1936 revolution.

### CNT - FAI

Most of that movement could be found in the revolutionary syndicalist National Confederation of Labour (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo - CNT), a union that in May 1936 numbered over half a million. By no means all CNT members were anarchists; many had joined for the simple reason that the union was the strongest and most effective in their workplace. But the organisation was at least nominally committed to a libertarian communist future and was regarded as a de facto anarchist union. Partly in order to maintain the CNT's libertarian and revolutionary perspectives, anarchist militants had in 1927 created the Iberian Anarchist Federation (Federación Anarquista Iberica - FAI). This latter organisation had a structure based upon affinity groups and in 1936 claimed something in the region of 30,000 militants.

It is easy to see how the libertarian movement was a major player in Spanish political life, vastly outnumbering the Communist Party and challenging the social democratic party, the Workers' Socialist Party and their industrial wing, the General Workers Union (Unión General de Trabajadores- UGT), for the allegiance of the urban and rural working class. It was, therefore, inevitable that the anarchists would play a major role in the social

upheaval sparked by an attempted military - clerical - fascist coup in July 1936.

### JULY 1936

The July revolt by a large section of the Spanish army, led by General Franco and supported by the Catholic Church and the fascist Falange party, might be described as a pre-emptive counter-revolution. A 'Popular Front' government had been elected in February, bringing to power a coalition dominated by the Left Republicans, a middle class democratic party with a programme of modernisation and moderate reform. Despite their involvement in this front, the Socialists would not take part. Even so, this was

*"We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth. There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie may blast and ruin it's own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world, here in our hearts. That world is growing this minute."*

**Buenaventura Durruti, anarchist militant, 1937**

enough to prompt the reactionary forces of the traditional ruling elite to immediately prepare for civil war. On July 17th what became known as the Nationalist revolt kicked off in Spanish Morocco, quickly spreading into Spain itself. As town after town fell to the militarists the Republican government vacillated, talked of coming to an agreement with the rebel military and generally appeared paralysed in the face of the revolt. As the initiative for resisting the Nationalists was falling to the workers' organisations, particularly the CNT and UGT, the government slowly authorised the arming of the union militias. In the capital, Madrid, the revolt was rapidly disarmed by armed UGT militants alongside those secu-

rity forces who remained 'loyal' to the government. In Barcelona the CNT took effective control.

Though large parts of Spain were in the hands of the Nationalists, their overall advance was temporarily halted and the large cities of Barcelona and Madrid were in the hands of the unions. In Barcelona the CNT and FAI emptied the barracks and distributed arms to groups of members across Catalonia and beyond. So, in the midst of civil war and chaos, began the Spanish Revolution.

In Catalonia and Aragon, the two regions with the greatest concentration of libertarian workers and peasants, there began a social transformation. Real power was being taken into the hands of the working class as the government looked on, temporarily powerless. The distribution of food, the maintenance of public services, the opening of collective restaurants and the organisation of defence against the Nationalist forces were all being undertaken by strictly unofficial elements! Human creativity was being unleashed and the state was nowhere to be seen, though undoubtedly it was there, waiting to regain strength.

Collectivisations of industry and the expropriation of the land, initiated by CNT and, to a lesser extent, UGT members, were taking place throughout these areas. Often, anarchist militias such as the famous Durruti Column would actively promote and defend collectivisations as they travelled to the frontline. The collectivisation of land has been described as "Probably the most creative legacy of Spanish anarchism" by the writer and historian Daniel Guérin. As large landowners abandoned their estates their workers took over and ran them collectively. Where landowners stayed, those who had appeared sympathetic to the militarist revolt were kicked off the land whilst 'good republican' landowners were often invited to join the collectives! In total it is estimated that possibly 3 million people were involved in collectives in the 'revolutionary period' of 1936-37.

The collectives variously attempted to put into practice libertarian communism based on the principle of 'from each according to ability, to each according to need' but, more commonly, collectivism where a 'family wage' was paid by the collective.



## THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Socially, the revolution began to cast-off centuries of mental servitude to the ruling class and the Catholic Church. Working people began to discard formal and deferential speech, common in Spanish. People spoke to each other as equals. Churches found themselves under attack, often being requisitioned for practical use and sometimes simply burnt down as symbols of centuries-old oppression.

New groups involving themselves in artistic, musical and cultural activities emerged in a surge of creativity unleashed by the possibilities the revolution offered.

## THE INDUSTRIAL COLLECTIVISATIONS

In the industrial areas of 'Loyalist Spain', particularly Catalonia, large parts of manufacturing and most public services were immediately taken over and managed by the workers. The collectivised factories and workshops were, for four months after the July events, run without state involvement. The revolution in Russia in 1917 had faced the problem of the desertion of skilled technicians to the counter-revolution, and although this was not as widespread in Spain, where many technical staff were themselves active syndicalists, it was still a factor. Unlike the agricultural experiments in self-management, the industrial efforts were faced with having to reorganise the factories to produce armaments and military vehicles. Added to this was the successful attempt by the state to co-opt the collectivisations.

In October the Catalan regional government ratified the socialisation of industry. The state was attempting to both control the collectivisation process and to use it to its own advantage in building the war effort and disciplining the workforce. The state decreed that all factories employing more than 100 workers were to be brought under the joint management of a Council of Enterprises. This Council was to include both the workforce and a representative from the Catalan regional government who would act as 'controller'. The Collectivisation Decree of October 1936, however, transferred all real power to the state's General Council for Industry. Although the workers who had taken control through direct action in 1936 remained nominally in control, their role was in reality only to be consulted and, naturally, to work.

How did this happen? In July 1936 the state was impotent and almost invisible, yet a few months later it had returned and had usurped power from the working class.

## THE CNT-FAI BETRAYAL

The reason can be found in the fact that whilst the rank and file of the libertarian

organisations were engaging in collectivisations and land seizures, the 'leadership' of the movement saved the government from complete eclipse.

And it began this process as early as the 20th July, the day following the halting of the militarist rising. On that fateful day Luis Companys the President of the Generalitat, the regional government of Catalonia, summoned representatives of the CNT and the FAI. Companys offered to resign from a government which existed in name only, its ability to 'restore order' non-existent. At this meeting the CNT and FAI, representing the armed and mobilised masses, decided that a new administration could be established between the revolutionary workers movement and the leftist forces of the Popular Front. The new structure was the Central Committee of the Anti-Fascist Militias and it was this organisation that oversaw the social re-organisation in the weeks following the effective collapse. It



was this committee that helped co-ordinate the establishing and supplying of militias to fight at the front, the collectivisations and the maintenance of social services. But the vital breathing space gave the government the opportunity to recover and re-establish its power. As the dissident anarcho-syndicalist group the 'Friends of Durruti' were to reflect later "There can be absolutely no common ground between exploiters and exploited. Which shall prevail, only battle can decide. Bourgeoisie or workers. Certainly not both of them at once" (Towards a Fresh Revolution 1938).

So, with power in the hands of the working class, why did the leadership of the CNT-FAI not simply dismiss the government and maintain workers power? The betrayal cannot be blamed upon reformist or moderate elements in the CNT, after all, the militant FAI was also there. Indeed, the FAI's Garcia Oliver, present at the meeting, stated that the choice was between "Libertarian Communism, which means the anarchist dictatorship, or democracy, which means collaboration." (quoted in Lessons of the Spanish Revolution, Vernon Richards 1953).

This false dichotomy ignored the possibility of maintaining and extending the gains of the working class without an 'anarchist

dictatorship' but through the suppression of the republican democratic bourgeoisie, which was already in disarray.

## THE 'ANARCHIST' POLITICIANS

The choice of collaboration sealed the fate of the revolution. Dual power could not last very long. On September 27th representatives of the CNT entered the new Council of the Generalitat, the reorganised regional government of Catalonia and the Central Committee of the Anti-Fascist Militias, in which the CNT had placed so much hope, was gone. The decision to enter the government appears to have been taken a week earlier by the National Committee of the CNT, which was supposed to be answerable to the union as a whole. The CNT had called for a Regional Defence Council which would co-ordinate without being a government per se, but

when offered places in a coalition with bourgeois parties they did not hesitate to cross the class divide. The 'hard-line' FAI militant Garcia Oliver was to say "The Committees of the Anti-Fascist Militias have been dissolved because now the Generalitat represents all of us." This amazing statement shows how quickly both anarchist principles and class analysis were thrown away. The stage was set for the 'anarchist' politicians to enter the National Government of Spain, led by left socialist Largo Caballero, two months later in November 1936.

## THE RISE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The growth of the Communist Party throughout what became the Spanish Civil War was phenomenal. Two main factors promoted that growth. Firstly, the Spanish Republic looked to the Soviet Union for material aid and support and secondly, the Spanish Stalinists opposed any revolutionary activity which might jeopardise the bourgeois republic and thereby recruited heavily from all those who might be inconvenienced by collectivisations. The Communist Party, adept at infiltration and manipulation, took control of the Socialist Party's youth section and, through the importation of Russian military advisors and their own political commissars, rapidly gained an influence in the military of the Republic out of all proportion to their size. In 1936 the party united with the Catalan socialists to form the Catalan United Socialist Party (PSUC), which it dominated.

The Communist Party was the main sponsor of the famous International Brigades, the tens of thousands of volunteers who came from across the globe to 'defend the republic'. This added to the Party's kudos.



## MILITARISATION

The communists were also at the forefront of the campaign to integrate the militias of the CNT-FAI and the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), a large anti-Stalinist left socialist grouping, into the 'Popular Army' of the Republic.

Opposition to militarisation of the militias came mainly from the grassroots of the CNT-FAI and, naturally, from the anarchist militias which had emerged in July - September 1936 during the existence of the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias. The militias were not opposed to co-ordination of the physical fight against the nationalist military, but of being forced into a traditional army that would be controlled by whoever was in charge of the state.

However, the military situation in the period following the entry of the 'anarchists' into the regional and central governments was dire for the Republican forces. The government left Madrid for Valencia as the capital was besieged in November and the pressure increased for the dissolving of the militias into a regular army. The increasing militarisation of the Republican area was another sign that the revolution was being strangled and that the working class was becoming used in a conventional war between two rival factions of the ruling class.

## THE MAY EVENTS, 1937

The last gasp of the Spanish revolution came in May 1937. Throughout April the Generalitat, complete with 4 'anarchist' ministers, including the Minister for Justice, had been escalating harassment of 'uncontrollable elements' in the CNT and the POUM, disarming workers patrol groups, raiding offices. On the morning of May 3rd a provocation occurred that would signal the final defeat of the Revolution and the capitulation of the CNT to the state.

The Barcelona Telephone Exchange had been under the control of its workers, mainly CNT members, since the July days. At 3 o'clock on the afternoon of Monday May 3rd the police attempted to occupy the building but could not advance beyond the first floor due to resistance from the workers. News of the assault spread and rank and file CNT, FAI and POUM militants responded, arming themselves and organising to resist. The leadership of the CNT called for calm and the removal of the police from the building. But events were overtaking the leaders and a general strike developed in Barcelona as barricades were erected by the working class across the city. Shooting started in the early hours of the next day and continued sporadically. Still the CNT called for negotiations to end the standoff. Exactly 24 hours after the occupation of the telephone exchange the

CNT-FAI called for the workers organisations to unilaterally lay down their arms in a radio broadcast. "Workers of the CNT! Workers of the UGT! Don't be deceived by these manoeuvres. Above all else, Unity! Put down your arms. Only one slogan: We must work to beat fascism! Down with fascism!"

But the counter-revolution, spearheaded by the PSUC and the local Catalan Nationalists, was determined to humble the anarchists. Libertarians were shot in cold blood only yards from the headquarters of the CNT. On the 5th the state escalated the provocation by an assault on the local Libertarian Youth centre and the surrounding of CNT headquarters. On the same night the Italian anarchist Camillo Berneri and his comrade Barbieri were abducted and murdered by a joint police and PSUC squad. Berneri, editor of 'Guerra di Classe' (Class War) was one of the most intelligent and constructive critics of the anarchist collaboration.



## AGAIN CAPITULATION

At this time The Friends of Durruti group issued a proclamation calling for a 'Revolutionary Junta' (Council) to be established, which would include the POUM. The POUM, however, remained indecisive and awaited the leadership of the CNT-FAI. The leadership could only counsel 'serenity' and calm, calling for a return to work and a ceasefire whilst the Catalan government called in reinforcements from around Republican Spain!

Despite the encouragement not to abandon the streets that came from the Friends of Durruti, the rank and file of the CNT, FAI and Libertarian Youth complied with the leadership. The majority of syndicalists and anarchists continued to trust those who had been their most ardent militants in the years before. By Friday 7th, the fighting in Barcelona had ended. The Catalan and national governments, however, took this as a sign that the CNT would now accept almost anything in the name of anti-fascist unity and despite agreements to the contrary, occupied the entirety of the telephone exchange and continued to harass, intimidate and arrest anarchists.

## AFTERMATH

The aftermath of the May Days saw the power and confidence of the state reinforced and the morale of the revolutionaries sapped. In June the state outlawed the POUM, which subsequently disappeared from the scene, mainly into Stalinist prisons. In July the anarchists were excluded from the reorganised Catalan government and from August onwards the state carried on a programme of de-collectivisation. The revolution, in the sense of working class power and of a libertarian reorganisation of society, was dead. The revolution dead, the defeat of the Republic followed as the nationalists, supported by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, crushed the 'Peoples Army'.

## AN IMPOSSIBLE REVOLUTION?

The Spanish Revolution of 1936 was born in the midst of a period of darkest reaction. Italy and Germany were under the jackboot of fascism, their working class subdued by repression. The Soviet Union, at the height of Stalin's dictatorship over the proletariat, dominated the left through the Communist International. Stalinism internationally served to defend the Soviet Union and the policy of the Communist Parties twisted and turned depending on the needs of the 'Workers' Fatherland'. It is no exaggeration to say that the working class was in a position of international defeat.

When the workers of Spain spontaneously moved to crush the nationalist - militarist uprising they were alone, isolated and far from being part of an international movement. What they had in their favour were mass organisations, built over many years and having come through repression and illegality.

From the very beginning the anarchist and syndicalist movement's 'official' leadership acted like politicians and played the political games of the bourgeoisie. Paralysed by the fear of establishing an 'anarchist dictatorship' they instead effectively accepted the dictatorship of the democratic, anti-fascist ruling class. And whilst the rank and file of the anarchist movement strove to proceed towards libertarian communism, they failed to challenge their own organisation's integration into the historical enemy of classical anarchism - the state. The Friends of Durruti put it clearly when they said that "Democracy, not fascism, defeated the Spanish people".

An incredible creativity and capacity for creating a new world was exhibited, in the worst possible conditions, by millions of Spanish workers and peasants. This, tragically, was not enough to actually make the new world, held deeply in their hearts, realised.



# REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN COMRADES!

## ANOTHER ANARCHIST DIES IN PRISON:

### Abel Ramarope, Political Prisoner Turned Anarchist, died September 2005

*"You must be aware that we are victimised by our fear to stand up for what is entitled us as people whether in prison or outside prison. We are firstly determined to challenge any barbaric or tyrannical system if it needs be. Change is a must; and it shall come and be effected by those who needs to see it.*

*Well we need to be strong even when we face incarceration. We cannot afford to be sacrificed at the expense of the capitalists. We fought for the transformation of this land, and yet we are deprived of the right to enjoy the fruits of our labour. Now our votes are seen as a priority but our release as political activists/prisoners is not important to them."*

- Abel Ramarope

It is always saddening to hear of someone dying in a prison, with cold concrete and steel preventing them from being comforted by loved ones in their time of need. However, and not to place any more value on one life over another, but when I hear of yet another anarchist, whom I believe often have a more acute awareness of suffering and a stronger longing for freedom and justice than do most people, having died in a prison cell, I am filled with a sadness unparalleled.

Abel was imprisoned as a member of the Pan-African Congress for his role in the struggle against apartheid but, through contact with the southern African chapter of the Anarchist Black Cross in early 2004 he began to develop a great interest in anarchism and devoured any reading material he could get hold of. Despite a decade of humiliation and abuse at the hands of the authorities, when Abel became an anarchist almost two years ago he was filled with a hope and belief in a better future that is rare; especially in someone who has spent so long in prison, having been forgotten both by his former organisation and the very people whose freedom he fought for.

In prison he began to organise a clandestine reading and study group on anarchism, educating prisoners about the real nature of the prison system, and set about organising to expose the corruption of the ANC and the Amnesty Commission; which denied amnesty to political prisoners and

freedom fighters of the apartheid era who were not affiliated to the ANC leadership or

**While there is a working class I am of it,  
While there is a criminal element,  
Then I am in it,  
And while there is a soul in prison,  
Then I am not free.**

were not part of the South African Police or South African National Defence Force during the times of struggle.

Abel was an inspiration to fight back against the injustice of the system if ever I met one; I remember when he told me not to bring him anything that would make his stay in prison more comfortable, as it made him feel stronger and more of an anarchist to suffer. And not to buy him anything from the prison tuck-shop as he didn't want to contribute in any way to enriching the corrupt prison wardens and Department of Correctional Services. Instead he asked for a kettle, which the ABC supplied, that he could use to drink hot water, which he said helped his asthma. I only hope it made his last months more bearable.

Of course one can be sure that if Abel hadn't had to endure a decade behind bars, surrounded by concrete and steel, trying to survive on a worthless diet and if he had had access to the right medication, he may have had the strength to fight his sickness as he did his oppressors. That is why; when the prison warden told us that Abel had died in September from asthma I was furious. Maybe I wanted to cry, but my

tears have dried up like the blood of so many who sacrificed their lives and freedom for a better future. Anyway, we don't only mourn for the dead... we turn anger and sadness into resistance.

It was an honour and a privilege to have known Abel and, inspired by his enthusiasm and commitment to exposing and expelling the lies about the role and function of the prison system - that of protecting and upholding class society - with the aim of destroying them both, we will not rest until every prison has been razed to the ground.

- Love & Rage  
Jonathan,

on behalf of the Anarchist  
Black Cross - SA



**NOTE:** The Prison will not pass on the details and date of his death until a written request has been approved by the Department of Correctional Services.

**Let sadness turn to anger, harness that anger and turn it to rage  
Give expression to that rage and tear down the fucking cage**

## WHERE WE STAND

We, the working class, produce the world's wealth. We ought to enjoy the benefits.

We want to abolish the system of capitalism that places wealth and power in the hands of a few, and replace it with workers self-management and socialism. We do not mean the lie called 'socialism' practised in Russia, China, and other police states - the system in those countries was/is no more than another form of capitalism - state capitalism.

We stand for a new society where there will be no bosses or bureaucrats. A society that will be run in a truly democratic way by working people, through federations of community and workplace committees. We want to abolish authoritarian relationships and replace them with control from the bottom up - not the top down.

All the industries, all the means of production and distribution will be commonly owned, and placed under the management of those working in them. Production will be co-ordinated, organised and planned by the federation of elected and recallable workplace and community committees, not for profit but to meet our needs. The guiding principle will be "from each according to ability, to each according to need".

We are opposed to all coercive authority; we believe that the only limit on the freedom of the individual is that their freedom does not interfere with the freedom of others.

We do not ask to be made rulers nor do we intend to seize power "on behalf of the working class". Instead, we hold that socialism can only be created by the mass of ordinary people. Anything less is bound to lead to no more than replacing one set of bosses with another.

We are opposed to the state because it is not neutral, it cannot be made to serve our interests. The structures of the state are only necessary when a minority seeks to rule over the majority. We can create our own structures, which will be open and democratic, to ensure the efficient running of everyday life.

We are proud to be part of the tradition of libertarian socialism, of anarchism. The anarchist movement has taken root in the working class of many countries because it serves our interests - not the interests of the power seekers and professional politicians.

In short we fight for the immediate needs and interests of our class under the existing set up, while seeking to encourage the necessary understanding and activity to overthrow capitalism and its state, and lead to the birth of a free and equal (anarchist) society.



## WHAT IS THE ZACF?

The *Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation* (ZACF or simply ZabFed) is a federation of anarchist collectives and individuals from the southern regions of Africa who identify with the communist tradition within Anarchism. The federation is organised around the principles of theoretical and tactical unity, collective responsibility and federalism. Our activities include study and theoretical development, anarchist agitation and propaganda, and participation within the class struggle.

As anarchist-communists, we struggle for a classless, stateless and non-hierarchical society. We envision an international confederation of directly democratic, self-managed communities and workplaces; a society where all markets, exchange value systems and divisions of labour have been abolished and the means of production, distribution and communication are taken over by the workers and placed under workers' self-management (socialised) in order to allow for the satisfaction of the needs of everyone, adhering to the communist principle: "From each according to ability, to each according to need."

## ZACF Contact Details

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