

## Mineworkers Strikes Shake Neo-Apartheid



Siphwe Sibeko/Reuters

### Fight for a Black-Centred Workers Government!

Clockwise from top left: Police massacre of striking workers in Marikana, 16 August 2012; protesters in Marikana following massacre; mineworkers march at Lonmin's Marikana mine, September 2012.

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# Chinese Stalinists: Running Dogs for Imperialist Drive Against North Korea

The following article is adapted from *Workers Vanguard No. 1020, 22 March, newspaper of the Spartacist League/USA*.

When North Korea successfully conducted its third nuclear test in February, the U.S. predictably responded with sabre rattling, and more. As new U.S. defense secretary Chuck Hagel announced that “missile defense” batteries along the West Coast would be expanded to counter the North Korean “threat”, joint exercises were under way involving thousands of U.S. and South Korean troops engaged in land,



U.S. Navy

## US and Japanese warships in joint exercise last year.

air, sea and special operations drills. The imperialists also pushed through a new round of United Nations economic sanctions, adding to past measures that have served to throw much of North Korea’s population into hunger. Treacherously, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime has supported previous sanctions and helped broker six-party “talks” aimed at the nuclear disarmament of North Korea, which, like China, is a bureaucratically deformed workers state. This time around, Beijing *helped draw up* the sanctions, an abject expression of the Stalinist policy of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism.

The UN resolution obligates member nations to take actions to enforce the embargo against North Korea, rather than simply requesting that they do so. Playing a balancing

act, Beijing has never taken such action against Pyongyang. China is North Korea’s only significant trading partner, helping maintain an economy that was thrown far back by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union—North Korea’s former economic lifeline—in 1991-92. However, there are voices in the CCP saying that China should wash its hands of its one-time ally. The London *Financial Times* (27 February) published a piece by Deng Yuwen, deputy editor of *Study Times*, journal of the CCP’s Central Party School, which baldly declared: “Beijing should give up on Pyongyang and press for the reunification of the Korean peninsula.” China’s new foreign minister, Wang Yi, who helped lead the disarmament meetings that collapsed in 2008, is known for wanting to cut the ties binding China to North Korea.

Deng Yuwen’s article conceded that people in China commonly “view their relationship with Pyongyang through their shared sacrifice during the Korean war” of 1950-53. Under Soviet military protection following World War II, a workers state modeled on the USSR under the Stalinist bureaucracy was created in the North under Kim Il Sung, and workers and peasants engaged in struggle to smash the capitalists and landlords across the peninsula. When North Korean forces moved to reunify the country in 1950, they were greeted as liberators. The U.S., in its postwar role as the chief imperialist gendarme, used a United Nations fig leaf to unleash its war machine, along with those of Britain, Canada and other Western powers, against the Korean masses, as the peninsula became the front line in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. After major initial North Korean advances, the U.S. juggernaut was able to push back close to Korea’s border with China, the Yalu River.

It was the massive intervention by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) that turned the tide. A series of human wave assaults, a heroic effort costing one million Chinese lives, threw the imperialist forces back across the 38th parallel. Mao Zedong’s CCP regime, which had taken power the year before, realised that the imperialists aimed to roll back social revolution not only in Korea but in China as well. Indeed, several U.S. political and military representatives at the time mooted the possibility of dropping atomic bombs on China.

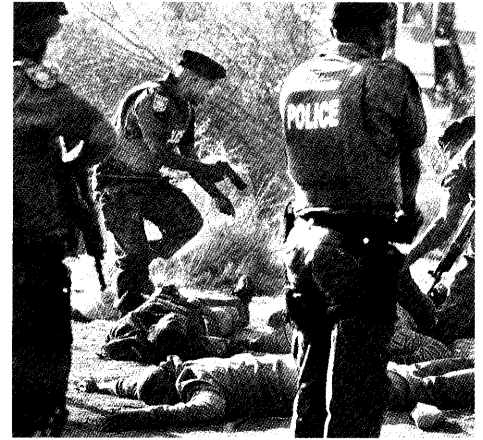
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# Workers Revolution Will Avenge the Marikana Massacre!



Reuters



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**Massacre of 34 striking miners by police (above) did not break the workers' fighting spirit. Left: Lonmin workers celebrate victory.**

As we wrote in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 23, the cold-blooded murder of Lonmin workers on 16 August 2012 was “the worst instance of lethal police violence in response to struggle since the end of white-supremacist apartheid rule in 1994”. Even some bourgeois commentators compared it to the Sharpeville massacre that epitomised the apartheid regime’s terror against black people.

In spite of the drowning of their comrades in blood, Lonmin miners remained steadfast. Their militancy and determination inspired other miners throughout the country to protest, in defiance of both the Randlords and their African National Congress (ANC)-led Tripartite Alliance government, against their measly pay and miserable working conditions. Their rallying call was the R12 500 wage that the Marikana miners demanded. Within a few weeks, miners from Amandelbult in Limpopo to Kumba’s Sishen iron mine in Northern Cape downed tools demanding higher pay.

Clearly out of a concern to maintain the status quo, Zwelinzima Vavi left in the middle of the proceedings of the Congress of South African Trade Unions’ (COSATU’s) 11<sup>th</sup> national congress for Goldfields’ KDC mine in Carletonville to instruct gold miners to go back to work. At some point even the populist demagogue Julius Malema rode the strike wave for a while to gather support for his unsuccessful campaign to unseat Jacob Zuma as president of the ANC. This wave of wildcat strikes also reverberated across the Cape winelands, where farmworkers rose up in protest demanding a minimum wage of R150 a day.

Since the Marikana massacre, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) has displaced the COSATU-affiliated National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) as the majority union at Lonmin, Impala Platinum (Implats), Anglo-American Platinum (Amplats) and other mines around the platinum belt. To protect its cosy

relationship with NUM, the management has delayed the recognition of AMCU, sanctioning the continued presence of NUM in the mines.

Inevitably this has led to conflict between the two unions. Earlier this year at Amplats’ Siphumelele mine, workers downed tools to protest what they perceived as the illegitimate occupation of union offices by NUM in the mine, and more recently a similar wildcat strike took place at Lonmin’s Marikana mine. Here the industrial action followed the murder of Mawethu Steven Khululekile, a regional organiser of AMCU. He is one of several victims of violence in the area that has claimed the lives of mineworkers.

At the same time, the ANC and its Alliance partners are more worried that a numerically weak NUM, once the largest union in the COSATU federation, would reduce their votes in the elections next year. As a result, they have been calling for the defence of NUM by starting what they call the “Hands off NUM” campaign. At the May Day rally in Rustenburg, for example, ANC deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa declared that “We must stand firm and united behind and defend this union”, explaining that a weak NUM means a weaker ANC.

Most importantly though, they are worried about maintaining stability in the platinum belt to ensure the flow of profits to the Randlords and their black henchmen like Ramaphosa. In addition, the ANC government has established an inter-ministerial task team led by deputy president Kgalema Motlanthe to find a solution to the crisis in the mining industry. It has emerged that the government is considering sending the army to Rustenburg to restore stability to the area. We should not forget that in the aftermath of the massacre last year soldiers were deployed to the Rustenburg area to support cops in their operation to maintain “law and order in the Marikana area”, i.e. to suppress the workers.

During the recent wildcat strike in Marikana, AMCU president Joseph Mathunjwa, anxious to defuse the tension and to ensure that production is not hampered at the mine, ordered members of his union to go back to work. When the workers committee at Amplats threatened to down tools amid reports that the company intends to retrench 6 000 workers, he declared, “It makes no sense, when employers are dismissing 6,000 workers, to go on strike illegally. How can you call such a strike? Those so-called workers’ committees are criminals and should be arrested. It is time for law enforcement to act on these criminal elements” (*Business Day*, 17 May).

This reactionary appeal to the bourgeois state against workers is not a coincidence. Notwithstanding their claimed hostility to politics, AMCU leaders are just as class-collaborationist as NUM and COSATU leaders. AMCU is affiliated to the Pan Africanist Congress-dominated National Council of Trade Unions federation, which also has a pro-capitalist leadership. As we make a point to explain below, class independence is mandatory if the South African proletariat is to overthrow capitalist wage slavery.

Mathunjwa’s comment infuriated some of the workers at Amplats, especially after it had emerged that he has benefitted to the tune of up to R800 000 per annum from the treacherous “secondment arrangement” negotiated between the NUM and mine bosses. According to the bourgeois *Daily Maverick*, this so-called “special arrangement” was proposed by the NUM in the late 1980s, with the absurd justification that it would “protect the unions from corporations”. In case of the top bureaucrats, this practice includes payment of annual salaries from middle management level up to the company executive level, while for the shop stewards it entails a higher pay grade, including access to perks like company cars and petrol cards.

Although this practice extends to most unions organising mineworkers like the United Association of South Africa (UASA) and the reactionary Solidarity, most of the union officials benefiting from it are from NUM. Unfazed by this damaging exposure, NUM spokesperson Lesiba Seshoka defended the practice and intoned, “You can go to any other unions in South Africa. This is standard practice” (*Daily Maverick*, 25 April).

The Chamber of Mines recently decided, as the *Daily Maverick* (24 April) put it, that “in the interests of good governance and transparency, the ‘very uncomfortable’ situation should be terminated” at the national, provincial, regional and branch levels, but it will remain intact at the shop steward level. Of course, the mine bosses don’t give a damn about “good governance and transparency”; they have simply decided that it’s no longer a good investment to pay the NUM tops for policing the mineworkers, especially since AMCU is now the dominant union in the platinum belt.

This plan to terminate the arrangement has raised the ire of Senzeni Zokwana, NUM president and national chairman of the South African Communist Party (SACP). Zokwana was paid by AngloGold-Ashanti until 2006, but since then has been paid by the Chamber of Mines. His salary is said to be similar to that of NUM general secretary Frans Baleni, who reportedly earns R1.4 million per annum including perks. He promised that the NUM will fight the decision to terminate the arrangement. More worrying for the NUM tops is that they will have to start paying the salaries of the bureaucrats who benefited from the “secondment arrangement”. The

revelation of this arrangement is added proof of what the Marikana miners said during their strike last year, when they complained that their leaders were misrepresenting them and accused them of being too close to the management.

Furthermore, this is also highlighted by the wholesale rejection of NUM in favour of AMCU in the platinum belt. Save for their members’ militancy, AMCU tops, as we noted above, accept class collaboration. Mathunjwa has on numerous occasions warned against “illegal unprotected strikes” and insisted that workers must follow prescribed arbitration procedures.

If the working class is to break free from bourgeois influence, it will have to fight against its class-collaborationist misleaders and replace them with class-struggle leaders. As Leon Trotsky observed in his unfinished manuscript, “Trade unions in the epoch of imperialist decay” (1940): “Either the trade unions of our time will serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capital to subordinate and discipline the workers and to obstruct the revolution or, on the contrary, the unions will become tools of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.” It is from this perspective that we are calling for the breaking of the Tripartite Alliance along class lines (i.e. setting the working-class base of COSATU and the SACP against their pro-capitalist misleaders and the bourgeois ANC) and the building of a revolutionary workers party that is going to fight tooth and nail for the emancipation of the predominantly black proletariat, the poor, and all the oppressed. For a black-centred workers government!

We publish below, in an edited form, a presentation given earlier this year by comrade Kgori at a Johannesburg “Spartacists on the grass” readers’ circle for subscribers of *Spartacist South Africa* and *Workers Vanguard*.

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In an article on their website, the *Financial Times* noted that “every big government upheaval has been preceded by trouble at the mines” ([ft.com](http://ft.com), 17 February). The trouble that this bourgeois mouthpiece is whining about is the series of wildcat strikes that started in Marikana last year. For a lot of people it was inconceivable that the police of the “democratic government” would commit such an atrocity. We are all familiar with the story now. Rock drillers downed tools on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2012 and they were quickly joined by other sections of mineworkers demanding a wage increase to a minimum of R12 500 per month.

From the onset, striking workers were faced with repression from both the state and mining security guards. The climax of this was reached six days later when the armed thugs of the neo-apartheid South African state, which is administered by the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance, brutally shot and killed 34 miners and injured 78. The police justified their actions by saying that they shot workers in self-defence because they felt threatened by sticks, homemade spears, and pangas that the workers had. This was used by bourgeois commentators to apportion the blame to the workers—which is akin to saying, as our statement that we put out in the aftermath of the massacre emphasised, “the Zulu, Xhosa and other native African warriors who were mowed down by the guns of British and Dutch colonisers should have also accepted part of the blame for the ‘senseless loss of life’, because they tried to fight back with spears and other primitive weapons”. We are for armed self-defence by the

working class against the cops, security guards and the bosses. In a word, we are against the monopolisation of violence by the bourgeois state. Workers must establish defence guards to protect their strikes and picket lines.

This is counterposed to the line pushed by most of our opponents. For example, in a 17 September 2012 statement the SACP said that it fully supported the actions of the government and the “ring-leaders must be dealt with”; and the DSM [Democratic Socialist Movement] said it was a mistake for the workers to respond in kind to the violence that was meted out by the cops and the security guards. You see, at bottom this stems out from the anti-Marxist view of the state that these organisations espouse. They both believe that the cops are part of the working class and they argue that they should be organised into the workers movement. We say no! Cops and security guards out of the working-class movement! These are nothing but hired thugs of the capitalist class. This is what V. I. Lenin said of the state in his seminal work *The State and Revolution*: “The state is a special organisation of force: it is an organisation of violence for the suppression of some class.” In other words, “the state is an organ of class **domination**” composed of the special bodies of armed men. That is the cops, the standing army, and including prisons, courts, and other institutions of coercion.

Central to the role of the state is the monopolisation of violence by the bourgeoisie, as I had indicated earlier. The Marikana massacre and its aftermath clearly elucidate this. Not only did the cops lie about the weapons that the workers had, they shot most of them in the back while they were fleeing and far from the firing lines. The military was called in to implement an undeclared, quasi state of emergency. In addition, the NPA [National Prosecuting Authority] utilised an apartheid law to charge the miners for the deaths of their comrades and the courts were used to keep the miners in prisons.

The SACP would have us believe that the neo-apartheid South African state, as well as their alliance with the ANC and COSATU, are “class-contested”. But facts are stubborn things and difficult to ignore. As our comrade from the Spartacist League/U.S., Jon Brule, stated in his class, “when you become part of a capitalist government, like the SACP is, you have to take responsibility for the policies of that government, which are premised fundamentally on maintaining capitalist profit” (“Miners Strikes Shake Neo-Apartheid South Africa”, *Workers Vanguard* No. 1016, 25 January). It is in this vein that the COSATU bureaucracy is preaching to workers that the cops are there to protect and serve them. But facts are stubborn things, like I said, especially when these armed thugs of the neo-apartheid state steal, kill, maim, and rape with impunity. The recent death of Emidio Macia only opened the lid on what most people already knew [see article on page 22].

The most important thing about this “illegal” wildcat strike, however, is that the workers persevered and won. And this caused a big headache for the COSATU bureaucrats, which can be seen on the tweet that Vavi issued after the deal was struck. He said, “Cosatu and NUM will have to act fast or this deal can collapse...every bargaining system in place...it can communicate [sic] the message workers can lead themselves and get what they want” (*Mail & Guardian* online, 19 September 2012). That is exactly what happened. From Limpopo, Gauteng and Northern Cape to KwaZulu-Natal, miners downed tools and their example was replicated

in the Cape winelands by farmworkers. As is the norm, cop terror was unleashed to repress these workers as well. As we wrote in “Neo-Apartheid Capitalism and Rising Police Terror” in *Spartacist South Africa* No. 7 [Winter 2011], “With mounting social unrest come increased attacks on democratic rights and threats of police Bonapartism.”

But one can ask why there is social discontent in South Africa and especially in the mines. When it came to power, the ANC promised people a better life for all. A promise they never kept, and never could keep. Instead, what we are seeing is a better life for the Randlords, politically connected BEE tycoons, politicians and most of the white people. On the other hand, inflation is running rampant, urged on by the global economic crisis. This has found explicit expression in the mines and other sectors, like in the farms, where superexploitation reigns supreme.

I am going to focus a bit on platinum mining in Rustenburg. Platinum is mainly used in autocatalysts to remove harmful emissions from diesel-driven cars and heavy-duty vehicles. In the early 2000s there was a strong demand for platinum in Europe and this led to over-investment in the sector. According to the *Financial Mail* (7-12 September 2012), in the ten-year period from 2001 until 2010 employee numbers rose from around 95 000 to around 180 000 and production peaked in 2006 at 169,9 metric tons (up from 129,7 metric tons in 2001). The price of platinum was hovering around \$1 800 per ounce.

But then the global economic crisis brought trade to a screeching halt. As governments in Europe began attacking workers and the poor through austerity measures, platinum mineowners over here were looking for ways of cutting back production and ensuring that their profit margins remain high. It is not uncommon today to hear economists say that the market is over-supplied, which means that the price of platinum is down and that the bosses’ bottom line is threatened. For example, we are aware of the fact that some mining houses intend to retrench a significant number of workers.

On the other hand, the workers are demanding a living wage. This is because they are subjected to some of the worst working conditions out there and palpable desolation where they stay. For instance, in this country one miner dies every three days. Meanwhile, investment in safety equipment is seen as an operational cost which, according to Implats CEO Terence Goodlace, will put “margins” (i.e. profits) “under pressure” [quoted in *Financial Mail*, 7-12 September 2012].

What’s more, the places that most of these miners originally come from are impoverished homelands, and the places where they currently stay are also very depressed. The hostels used to accommodate them are filthy; some of them have run-down toilets without seats, shared by hundreds of workers. It is no wonder some of these workers choose to stay in squatter camps where half of their housing allowance is used to pay rent and the other half to supplement the remittance sent back home. For those staying in the hostels, all of the allowance is used to pay the mine for living conditions that are qualitatively similar to the squatter camps. Not only do they have to contend with providing for extended family members, they also have to contend with high costs of living too. And it has just gotten worse with the hike in fuel prices, electricity, and certainly food prices will follow suit. These miserable conditions are a reflection of the migrant labour system which epitomised the superexploitation of



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### Miners' shantytown near Rustenburg mine.

black labour during apartheid and continues to this day in the “new South Africa”.

It is in the context of these conditions that the workers in Marikana struck in defiance of their leadership. Then they were members of the NUM and they just could not stomach any more treacherous betrayal by the NUM bureaucracy. For many years NUM had been misleading/misrepresenting workers. In January-February 2012 workers, again in defiance of the NUM leadership, shut down Impala Platinum mine for six weeks and they also won a wage increase. [See “Implats Strike Beats Back Mass Dismissals, Betrayals by NUM Tops” in *SSA* No. 8, Winter 2012, for more on that strike.]

Adding to their years of betrayals, in Marikana the NUM misleaders literally called on the capitalist state to send its armed thugs to “stabilise the situation”, i.e. to drown the workers in their own blood. Almost a dozen of the workers killed in the massacre were NUM members. Today this sweetheart union is totally discredited in Rustenburg.

AMCU, which the NUM leadership initially blamed for the violence, has stepped in and is now a majority union in many of the mines in the Rustenburg area. NUM president Zokwana accused AMCU of violence during the massacre. The SACP also decried the “violence associated with AMCU” (SACP Central Committee press statement, 19 August 2012), and their branch in the North West province called for the arrest of AMCU’s leaders. Zokwana has since publicly withdrawn his accusation at the Farlam commission of inquiry.

In our Marikana massacre statement, we defended AMCU against state repression and also stated that “we defend the right of the mineworkers to be represented by AMCU if that’s what they desire”. But as we emphasised, the wretched class-collaborationist betrayals by leaders of NUM and COSATU can only be combated by the base of these unions going against their sellout leaders and replacing them with a class-struggle leadership.

Some of our opponents in the left, like the DSM and Democratic Left Front (DLF), took advantage of the crisis in Marikana to peddle their illusions in bourgeois parliament and the state. The DSM is currently busy amassing a million signatures to jump-start their electoral campaign, which

includes campaigning to recall ANC councillors and replace them with theirs. At the same time, Trevor Ngwane of the DLF lectured mineworkers about the need to start a “peace process” with the neo-apartheid capitalist state that butchered their comrades (“Message to the Implats mineworkers rally in Rustenburg”, 13 November 2012, [democraticleft.za.net](http://democraticleft.za.net)).

The SACP on the other hand is still committed to the “Rainbow Nation” promoted through its so-called National Democratic Revolution (NDR). Ironically, the *Financial Times* article quoted earlier is titled “South Africa: A faded rainbow”. There never was a rainbow nation to begin with. All races are not treated equally in South Africa, whites are still on top and blacks at the bottom. In *Workers Vanguard* No. 600, published in 1994, we emphasised that blacks can only be freed through socialist revolution, not the power-sharing deal that the ANC signed with the National Party, which the SACP falsely peddles as the NDR. Also, the National Party dissolved into the ANC in 2005.

The NDR is an application of a Menshevik two-stage theory which argues that the route to socialism is charted through an enactment of an initial stage, where the working class supports capitalism to fight against national oppression, before proceeding to socialism at a later stage. And of course, the only way to reach this is to join the capitalists in their government and pressure them to act in the interest of the working class. When you join the capitalist government you don’t end up forcing it to carry out pro-working class policies, you essentially are tasked with making sure that the country is investor-friendly, which means exploiting labour is profitable. This is what the SACP’s and COSATU’s policy of “swelling the ranks” of the ANC amounts to.

To be sure, the 1993/94 deal ended the rigid, legally-enforced system of racial segregation and subjugation. However, the socio-economic relations that characterised apartheid remained intact, except that over the past 19-20 years a small layer of blacks has been inducted into the elite at the expense of the majority through BEF. We have all seen the despicable role that Cyril Ramaphosa, a former NUM general secretary, played in the lead up to the massacre. The question is, does the elevation of people like Ramaphosa to black capitalists through the gravy train guarantee the emancipation of black people? The answer is a big no. In fact, the history of this country since 1994 demonstrates that, even the massacre itself demonstrates this.

Historically there is an intersection of race and class in South Africa. The majority of the working class is made up of blacks and the capitalists are mainly white. When you go to a strike you are more likely to see blacks on the picket line than whites, for example. Just look at the inequality statistic in this country. According to the World Bank, at 0,7 in 2008 South Africa’s Gini coefficient was among the highest, which means that this country is among the most unequal societies in the world. The average white household earns about R365 000 every year, compared to R60 000 for blacks.

If anything, the ANC-led Alliance government protects *white privilege*. To disguise this basic truth and maintain capitalist order the ANC government has relied on ideological weapons like nationalism and, where this proves inadequate, brute force or violence. Ideological weapons are usually conveyed through the media, schools and religion. The occurrence of this massacre has clearly shown that the ideological weapons have reached their limit and in general the increased cop terror illustrates this.

In *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 12 (February 1995) we stated that, “The ANC-led nationalist movement cannot achieve any semblance of ‘liberation’ for the nonwhite masses since it is committed to maintaining South African capitalism, which has always been based on the brutal exploitation of the black toilers.” As indicated earlier, only a socialist revolution can lead to national emancipation of non-white people. To realise this, we call for a black-centred workers government, which is an application of Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution.

Other measures that signify increased terror are the proposed Protection of Information Bill and Traditional Courts Bill. The former is obviously meant to clamp down on exposures of ANC government corruption and the latter to control rural life in a manner akin to the role that the chiefs played during apartheid.

If the Traditional Courts Bill is implemented, it would adversely affect women, whose condition deserves a special mention. After the cops mowed down workers in Marikana, women from nearby squatter camps took to the streets and were also greeted with rubber bullets by the cops. Seeing women embark on the solidarity protest was encouraging, but one cannot help but think about the migrant labour system and how it affects the life of some of these women. For example, some of them are in polygamous marriages as men usually take second wives when they get to the mines since they are essentially separated from their rural wives as a result of the migrant labour system. Women in the rural areas are subject to abject poverty, where lack of resources and unemployment are widespread; and in urban areas they stay in squatter camps, where they endure horrible living conditions, unemployment and lack of sanitation. For example, in Nkaneng near Marikana up to 50 inhabitants share outdoor toilets and one water tap and there isn’t proper sanitation.

Like comrade Karen asserted in the Young Spartacus pages of *Workers Vanguard*, “Black women in this country have nothing. They are the slaves of the slaves” (“‘Traditional Culture’ vs Fight for Women’s Liberation”, *WV* No. 1016, 25 January). There is just tokenism that is supposed to make women think that their interests are being championed, like having women in higher places in parliament, for example. In fact the nationalists have no programme for women’s liberation whatsoever. South Africa has one of the most liberal constitutions in the world, guaranteeing rights that are not realisable in real life. Look at the right of abortion, for instance. There is so much backlog and inefficiency in government-run hospitals that a lot of women end up going to the life-threatening backdoor abortionist. Indeed, a lot of women took part in the struggle against apartheid but for most of them it was back to the kitchen afterwards. Even worse, the baas’s kitchen.

As Marxists we understand that oppression of women is rooted in the family. For instance, here in South Africa to get married men pay *lobola* for women, which ensures that women are subordinated to their husbands. You get a lot of romantics arguing that *lobola* is a way of expressing gratitude. Well, you can say thank you without having to pay for it.

One thing’s for sure: the masses of oppressed women in this country must have no illusions that bourgeois politicians will represent their interests. This includes Mamphela Ramphele, who, as a former director at the World Bank and former chair of the board at Gold Fields, is a spokesperson for the capitalist class which is the enemy of women’s liberation and of the workers in general. Bourgeois politicians like Ramphele hypocritically pose as “friends” of women and the poor through charity work, including promoting so-called non-governmental organisations. This is just tossing back a few crumbs from the profits their system has sucked out of the blood of the workers. The capitalists and their government can never be pressured into serving the interests of the poor.

What you need is a system based on production for human need not profit. It would take nothing short of a proletarian revolution to emancipate women, just like the October 1917 Russian Revolution demonstrated. This was very important to the Bolsheviks—so much that they established a special commission to champion the interests of women.


So the question is: how do we achieve this? Well, the first thing that needs to happen is that the Tripartite Alliance has to be broken and the class-collaborationist misleaders in COSATU and other unions replaced with class-struggle leaders. Those militants in the SACP who genuinely want to fight for socialism would also have to break with their pro-capitalist leaders and join the struggle to forge a genuinely revolutionary (i.e. Trotskyist) party that is going to fight for a black-centred workers government! Such a government would uphold full democratic rights for the coloured and Indian people, and those whites who would accept a government centrally based on the black working class. At the same time, the workers state would have to expropriate the land and the means of production from the bourgeoisie, and fight like hell to extend workers revolution to the advanced industrial countries or imperialist centres of America, West Europe and Japan. ■

A Spartacist Pamphlet
\$1


## Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 23

### South Africa: Marikana Massacre



### The True Face of Neo-Apartheid Capitalism



Massacre of 34 striking platinum miners by police in Marikana on 16 August 2012 (inset) did not break the workers' fighting spirit. More than 3,000 defiant strikers marched in protest in Marikana on September 5.

**Break with the Bourgeois Tripartite Alliance!  
Forge a Leninist Party!**

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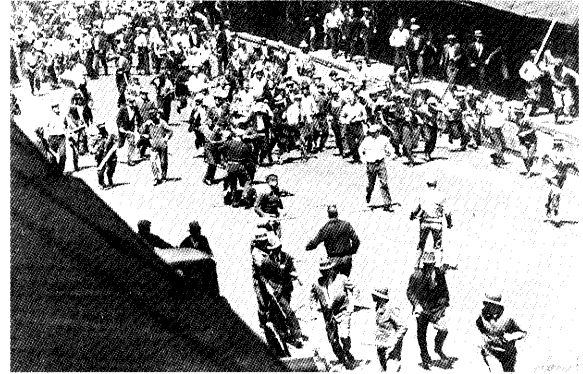
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# The Labour Unions and the Class Struggle



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**Left: Martin Abern, James Cannon and Max Schachtman, early leaders of American Trotskyism. Abern and Schachtman later led petty-bourgeois minority faction refusing to militarily defend Soviet Union. Right: 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strike, led by Trotskyist Communist League of America (CLA).**

We reprint below an excerpt from the book *Fight for Socialism* (1946), by Max Schachtman. This piece gives a clear summary of the Marxist perspective on the trade union struggle, its relationship to the struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, and the role played by the class-collaborationist trade union tops. For these reasons, we thought it would be of great value to readers of *Spartacist South Africa*.

Schachtman became a member of the American Communist Party (CP) in the 1920s. In 1928, he joined early CP leader James P. Cannon and other party members in announcing his support for the International Left Opposition of Leon Trotsky. The Left Opposition was fighting within the Communist International to uphold the revolutionary internationalist programme upon which it was founded in Lenin's time. Trotsky and his cothinkers opposed the revision of Marxism by Stalin and Co., who preached the absurd notion of building "socialism in one country" and whose policy of "two-stage revolution" had led to the beheading of the proletariat and the defeat of the Chinese Revolution in 1925-27.

After their expulsion from the CP, Cannon and Schachtman became leaders of American Trotskyism in its early years, including helping in 1938 to found the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Schachtman soon defected from Trotskyism. In 1939-40, he became a leader of a petty-bourgeois minority faction in the SWP, which bowed to anti-Communist pressure following the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact and refused to defend the Soviet Union when this was posed in the concrete at the outbreak of World War 2. This minority split from the SWP, and over the years, under the pressures of the Cold War, they evolved into anti-Soviet "socialist" advisers to the US imperialists, with Schachtman alibiing America's counterrevolutionary Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961.

Despite his renegacy, Schachtman's *Fight for Socialism* is a useful introduction to the Marxist programme with the exception of the parts that dealt with the Soviet Union. The section reprinted below is particularly valuable for the motivation of the need for the political independence of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. Schachtman emphasises the

need for an independent political party of the workers, having in mind an audience of American workers, where there has never been even a mass reformist party basing itself on the workers. While basing itself on the working class, the South African Communist Party nonetheless also helps to betray the political independence of the working class through its pro-capitalist programme and leadership.

This is done in particular by subordinating the proletariat to the capitalists through the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance, which is a South African variant of the so-called "popular front" or "peoples front". Such alliances between reformist workers parties and bourgeois parties have time and again meant the betrayal of workers struggles and revolutionary opportunities. We refer to the Tripartite Alliance as a nationalist popular front because of the prominent role which nationalist ideology plays in cementing this alliance with the bourgeois ANC and blocking the workers from acting independently. The reactionary nature of the popular front can be seen in how it chains the working class organisations to the bourgeois state, including through the inclusion of cops, security guards and prison guards in the unions. We fight to break the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance along class lines, winning militants from the SACP and COSATU to a genuinely communist programme and forging a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party needed to get rid of neo-apartheid capitalism.

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In almost every country, the workers have organized themselves into labor unions, embracing all the workers of a given craft or, in a more advanced stage, all the workers of a given industry. The worker soon learns that if he is by himself, not in an organization, he is an utterly helpless victim of capitalist greed. If the employer, especially the more powerful employer in the big industries, is able to deal with each worker separately, he can set almost any wage and working standard he pleases. If each worker offers himself singly on the labor market, he soon finds that other workers, especially when there is a large surplus of unemployed, will "underbid" him in an effort to get the job. To defend



themselves from the efforts of the employer to lower wage and working standards, the workers find themselves forced to organize together, to present themselves to the employers as a group and to bargain *collectively*. The formation of labor unions is therefore the first step naturally taken by the workers to organize themselves as a class.

How is this fact to be reconciled with the argument that there is no class struggle, no basic conflict of class interests, in capitalist society?

The most vigorous champions of this argument are the official spokesmen of labor, the leaders of the unions. (We are dealing here with the labor officialdom as it is today, and not as it should and will be.) The labor leaders will readily admit that there is a conflict between capital and labor. But, they say, this conflict need not exist. The conflicting interests can be composed and settled satisfactorily if both sides take a "reasonable attitude". If there is a struggle, it can be moderated and eventually eliminated.

Why? Because both sides, capital and labor, have a fundamental interest in common: both want to continue and expand production. If industry produces, capital will be able to get its legitimate profit and labor will be assured of work and a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. It is necessary, therefore, to convince the unreasonable capitalists to become reasonable (which means to pay a fair day's pay for a fair day's work) and to restrain the unreasonable workers (which means to assure capital of its legitimate profit). Once the unreasonable have been made reasonable, the struggle can be done away with and both groups can live in harmony, to the benefit of all.

The conclusion, says labor officialdom, is that labor must pursue not the path of class struggle but the path of *class collaboration*. That is why it promotes such schemes as labor-management committees, joint production committees, standards of production, efficiency minimums, and in general follows a policy of bringing labor and capital together on the basis of recognizing "the rights of capital" and "the rights of labor". The main job of the labor movement thereby becomes not the elimination of capitalism, but "making capitalism work".

### Capitalist Ideas in the Labour Movement

Fundamentally, these ideas of the labor officialdom are capitalist ideas. It is entirely true that the capitalists do not see eye to eye with the labor leaders on every question, and often come into bitter conflict with them. But that is due primarily to the fact that the labor leaders, in order to hold their special position in society, strive to keep the labor unions alive and even to strengthen them. Without labor unions behind them, these leaders would be nobodies, without power, without influences, without privileges, without social position. In this sense, they are *labor leaders*. For this reason, they and the organizations they lead must have the support of every worker whenever they come into conflict with the capitalist class and its government.

But there is another aspect to the part played by the present labor officialdom. It leads the workers along the path of collaboration with the capitalists. It instills in the workers the idea that no matter how bad this or that capitalist may be, the capitalist system (which it usually calls the system of "free enterprise") is fundamentally sound and must not be attacked. When workers do develop to the point of militant

struggle against capitalism, the labor leaders intervene to restrain them or thwart their aims. In this sense, they are *capitalistic* labor leaders. For this reason, the workers must oppose their ideas at all times and seek to replace them with leaders who understand what capitalism is and who know how to fight it consciously in the interests of the working class.

If you bear in mind our analysis of capitalism, you will understand that the idea of collaboration of the classes is a basically capitalist idea. Certainly, both capital and labor are interested in maintaining and expanding production. But the interest of each of them is fundamentally different and exclusive.

Capital is interested in production for profit, labor in production for use. Capital is based upon a constantly increasing exploitation of labor, in order to maintain its profit; labor constantly resists this exploitation. There is and can be no such thing as a "legitimate profit", inasmuch as *all profit* is derived from paying workers less than the value they add to the product. There is and can be no such thing as a "fair day's wage for a fair day's work", inasmuch as wages are the payment for only one part of the day's work, the other part of which the worker is compelled to contribute to the employer in the form of surplus-value, or profit.

Labor may collaborate with capital twenty-four hours in the day. It can outdo itself in the attempt to "maintain production", to eliminate strikes and lockouts, to establish production schedules and efficiency standards. It can sit side by side with the capitalists in "labor-management committees" until it can sit no longer. But it cannot do away with a fundamental fact: capital always seeks to intensify the exploitation of labor by reducing wages, increasing the work-day, or speeding-up production, or by all three at once; and labor always seeks to raise its wage and working standards. Capital always seeks to increase its profits, which can be done only by exploiting labor; labor always seeks to resist exploitation, which can be done only at the expense of profits. These are fundamental economic facts. Under capitalism, nothing that all the capitalists, or the whole government, or all the labor leaders, or all the workers, or a combination of all these, will ever do, can succeed in wiping out these facts.

The capitalists, of course, hammer into the heads of the workers, from childhood on, that the laws of God and Man and Nature entitle them to a profit, especially a "legitimate" profit. They hammer into the heads of the workers that capitalism always did exist and always will. Maybe it should be improved a little, patched up and painted up here and there, but not eliminated. They hammer into the heads of the workers that there always have been people working for wages and there always will and must be such people; that it is so decreed by divinity and "human nature"; and that the best to be hoped for is the rule of a "fair day's wage for a fair day's work". They work hard at instilling these ideas into the heads of the people. If these ideas did not prevail, they could not retain their monstrous power for a week. What the labor leaders do is to spread essentially the same ideas.

However, there is a simple indication that the idea of class collaboration is as false as the idea of the class struggle is true. It lies in the very existence of the labor unions.

The organization of labor unions is based upon a *revolutionary idea*. This idea is that the workers should organize as *a separate, distinct class*, independent of the capitalists and all other classes. In organizing labor unions,

the worker is not asked if he is for capitalism (or “free enterprise”) or against it; for socialism or against it; for the class struggle or against it. Even the most conservative and pro-capitalist labor official has one standard for organizing unions: is the candidate for membership a worker in the given trade or industry? If he is, he belongs; if he is not, he does not belong.

(Of course, there are some stupid and reactionary unions which exclude Negroes or apprentices from membership. But this does not change the basic principle with which we are dealing. For those that *are* admitted even to these unions must fulfill the basic requirement of being workers.)

The unions do not admit *any* capitalists to membership. Why not? Do not the labor leaders who preach class collaboration insist that some capitalists are “good” and “reasonable” and “friendly to labor”? If their ideas are valid, why not bring into the unions at least the “good” and “reasonable” and “friendly” capitalists? If they believe that labor and capital can work together in “joint management committees” of industry for the benefit of *both*, then why cannot labor and capital belong to and work in the same *union* for the benefit of both? If there is no *irreconcilable* class struggle, why is a *separate* and *independent* organization of the *working class* necessary? If the interests of labor and capital are *common*, or if they can be harmonized, why can’t that be done in and by a *common* organization of workers and capitalists?

It is true that there *are* organizations which are based on this idea and act accordingly. But they are rightly called *company unions*. Every intelligent worker, and even the labor leaders, recognizes them as *capitalist*, anti-labor organizations. They strive to replace them with genuine, independent organizations of the workers, and of the workers alone. It is true, also, that the collaborationist policies of our capitalistic labor leaders tend, willy-nilly, little by little, to transform these independent labor organizations into company unions. But this does not alter the fact that the organization of workers into independent labor unions is a revolutionary act based upon the idea of the class struggle. If this is denied, the idea of an independent labor movement simply makes no sense. The labor leaders should then advocate the giving up of separate labor unions, or transforming them into company unions or joint organizations of labor and capital.

“Well”, it may be said, “if the unions are based upon the idea of the class struggle, isn’t that enough? Doesn’t that qualify them to solve the problems faced by the working class?”

No, not yet.

### Why Unions Are Not Enough

In the first place, the unions are not conscious of this important fact. Except for a small percentage of their membership, they do not understand its significance, all that it implies. This reduces their effectiveness in the struggle to defend the interests of the working class. These interests can be properly defended only if there is a clear understanding of the nature of capitalist society and an organized struggle against capitalism.

The *actual work* of the unions is based upon an acceptance of capitalism. They are not organized for the purpose of liberating the working class from the condition of

exploitation and oppression to which it is doomed under capitalism. Instead, they confine themselves to the attempt to raise the wages of the workers and obtain favorable social legislation while keeping the capitalist profit system. The longer capitalism is allowed to exist, the more acute become its problems. The more acute its problems, the stronger and more urgent its drive against the workers’ living standard. The most that the unions can do—given the way they are now constituted and led—is to resist this drive, try to slow it down. If they remain committed to the capitalist system, the unions, and the workers in general, are limited to *defensive* actions and, in the long run, to defeat.

In the second place, the unions are dominated at present by a bureaucratic officialdom with a capitalist outlook. The labor bureaucracy occupies a special position in society. *Taken as a whole*—not this or that individual labor official—its standard of living and social outlook bring it closer to the middle classes than to the working class. Due to its leadership over a big social movement—the unions—it enjoys special privileges and powers in society.

To be sure, it does not want to see the labor movement destroyed, as happens under Fascism, because without a labor movement to represent and rest upon, its powers and privileges disappear and it is wiped out as a special group. At the same time, however, it can retain its special position only in so far as it keeps the labor movement tied to capitalism. If the labor movement were committed to a militant struggle against capitalism itself; if the labor movement were imbued with a socialist understanding of society; and above all, if the working class succeeded in replacing capitalism with a classless society—there would be no place for bureaucrats and exorbitantly-paid officials, and no place for special privileges of any kind. There would be no life-time officers, as some unions have. There would be no capitalistic salaries, as some officials have. There would be no autocratic powers, as some officials have arrogated to themselves. There would be no grafting [bribery], no financial manipulations, no investment of workers’ funds in capitalistic enterprises—all of which are so widespread nowadays in the labor movement. There would be no “upper classes” and “respectable society” for labor leaders to hobnob with, because there would be no class divisions of any kind.

That is why the labor officials (again, taken as a whole) are such vigorous opponents of socialism or a fight for socialism, opponents of militant class action against capitalism, and equally vigorous champions of capitalism (“free enterprise”) and collaboration with capitalists. Their special social position explains why the labor leaders are in favor, at one and the same time, of maintaining the capitalist government (if it tolerates a labor movement) and of maintaining the unions (if they are docile toward capitalism).

It should be obvious that under such a leadership, the labor unions cannot carry on an *effective* struggle for the defense of working-class interests, and cannot solve the fundamental problems of society.

In the third place, the class struggle is a political struggle, but the unions, by themselves, are not equipped to conduct it successfully. The problems of the workers cannot be solved in the form of a “better contract” between one local union and one employer, or even between one industrial union and a large capitalist combine.

To begin with, even if we think only in the most narrow “wage” terms, the most modest victory of the workers in one

plant or industry depends upon the organized strength of the workers all over the country, in all the important plants and industries. In other words, the progress of any group of workers depends upon the strength and organization of their class, upon its ability to contend with the capitalists as a class.

But the struggle between the two is not confined to the economic field. The state, the government, is an instrument of the capitalist class in this struggle. It intervenes in the struggle more and more directly. The closer capitalism comes to collapse, the more frequently it breaks down—the more active and direct is the intervention of the government to “organize” it, to maintain it. The further capitalism moves toward monopoly, the closer it is intertwined with the machinery of the government. It is not an accident, and not a whim of some group of politicians, that the government and its agents are increasingly present and dominant in the economic life of the country. It is the inevitable result of a capitalist process.

Consequently, the attempt to solve labor’s problems on the purely economic field, yields fewer and fewer results. To solve their economic problems, the workers find themselves forced to go deeper into the political field, to engage in political action. Even such matters as wages, work-day and working conditions are no longer simply settled between one union and one employer. They must be taken up with the government, or one of its bureaus or boards, which have acquired the power to settle them. This serves to bring about a clearer understanding of the fact that the class struggle is a political struggle. The trouble is that the unions are not equipped for *effective working-class political action*.

Before we can proceed with this problem, it is necessary to examine the much-confused and much-misunderstood question of politics.

### What Is Politics?

What does the word “politics” mean to the average worker? It brings to his mind a picture of graft, bribery and corruption. If he sees two men fighting madly to grab off a rich office-plum, he says, “That is politics for you.” If he sees a public figure (or sometimes a figure in the labor movement!) doing something under-handed in order to line his pockets or to climb up the ladder of officialdom, he says, “That is politics.” If he sees a man getting a summons for speeding cancelled by telephoning a friendly ward-heeler, he says, “That is politics for you.” If he hears a labor leader shout, “We don’t want any politics in the unions”, he nods his head in agreement.

All this is based upon some of the realities of *capitalist* politics, which is always accompanied by rotteness, corruption, office-hunting and spoils. But it represents at the same time a fatal misconception of what political action really is. Before a decision can be made on what to do about politics, we should have a proper definition of it.

***Politics deals with government power and the powers of government. Political action is any activity directed toward gaining influence or control over government. The basic aim of politics is state power.***

Once this is fully understood, the working class can take a tremendous step toward solving its problems, especially in a country like the United States, where labor is so far behind in the question of politics. The road is then cleared for independent working-class political action. It is such action that the capitalist class fears more than anything else.

Often, the capitalists and their press say to the workers:

“Don’t get into politics. Politics is a terribly dirty business meant only for professional politicians. If there is any politics to be conducted, let us sinners conduct it. You should keep away from it. It is too complicated for you to understand. The best thing you can do, and the most you should do, is to vote for those who are suited to this sort of business.”

To be sure, politics as conducted by the capitalist politicians is usually dirty and sordid enough. But the reason why they give such pious advice to the workers is not that they want to keep labor’s hands nice and clean, and not even that they fear the cleansing influence of labor in politics. What they really worry about is that labor getting into politics means, eventually, labor’s control of government.

Inside, as well as outside, the labor movement, the same advice is usually heard. Union officials repeat, year-in and year-out: “No politics in the unions. The unions should keep out of politics.” What does this really mean?

The very early days of the labor movement were the very early days of capitalism. In that period, the unions were able to confine themselves pretty much to negotiating wage contracts with small, individual employers, especially where the unions represented only the highly-skilled crafts. The economic conditions of the workers could be improved, especially in a rich and growing country like the United States, without the unions concerning themselves greatly or primarily with the government or with political questions. About all they did was to advise their members, once a year, to vote for this “friend of labor” and against that “enemy of labor”. But even in giving this advice, no organized action was taken to mobilize the political power of labor as a class.

To talk about keeping the unions out of politics today is to talk the language of horse-and-buggy unionism. War, a vital problem of the working class, is a political question. Peace, no less vital a problem, is a political question. Taxation, a matter which affects the living standard of the workers more than it ever did before, is a political question. Democratic rights of all kinds, which labor finds itself forced to fight for more vigorously than ever before, is a political question. And even such elementary things as wage and working standards have become, as was pointed out before, political questions, that is, questions settled by government and its agencies. Whether they want to or not, the workers and their organizations are compelled to take an interest in politics and to engage in political action. Unions find themselves setting up local and national political action committees, which means that for the time the labor movement, at least large sections of it, are entering politics *as a labor movement*.

What, then, is meant by those labor leaders and “friends of labor” who continue to speak about keeping labor out of politics and politics out of the unions? It means what it has always meant: Keep labor out of *working-class politics!* Keep *working-class politics* out of the unions! It means: Continue to act as always in the past. In other words, workers should continue to support capitalist politics, for that is what they have been doing in the past. The motto of “No politics” has always meant, in the working class, no independent working-class politics.

If the correct definition of politics is borne in mind, it will readily be seen that the labor movement is constantly engaged in political action. When a union adopts a resolution to be sent to Congress, that is a political action. The union is



**The Militant, weekly newspaper of the Trotskyist CLA, reported on and helped lead wave of militant strikes that swept US in 1930s.**

seeking to influence political decisions. When a union organizes a meeting or demonstration in favor of or in opposition to the passage of a given bill before a local or federal legislature, that is a political action. When a union sends a delegation to the state capital or to Washington, that is a political action. When it sends its representatives to argue a wage dispute before a governmental body, that is a political action. When it endorses a candidate for office, that is a political action. The fact is that the labor movement is involved in politics every day of the week. There is no escape from it. There is no need to escape from it. Politics, the struggle for political action, is a legitimate, inevitable and, more than that, an urgently necessary field of activity for the working class.

In that case, what is wrong? Two things.

First, the politics of the labor movement is still *capitalist politics*. The political activities of the unions are still directed toward supporting one of the capitalist parties or the other. Where they do not support such a party outright, they support one capitalist politician or another, on the ground that he is a "good man", or a "friend of labor".

In order to keep labor tied to their apron-strings, the capitalist parties always have a few politicians around who can be presented as "friends of labor", especially when labor is discontented and shows signs of breaking away from the parties of capitalism. They say to the workers: "You may think that Smith is a reactionary, with an anti-labor record. But how can you think that about Jones, who is such a fine progressive, who has said and done so many good things for the workingman? At least, support Jones. And above all else, do not form a party of your own. That would be a class party, and there are no classes in this country."

By heeding this cunning advice, the labor unions and the bulk of the working class confine their political activities to the capitalist parties. They do not organize to put labor itself in power, but only the "friends" of labor. At every crucial test, these "friends" prove to be what they always were, namely, defenders of capitalism. The defense of the interests of capitalism is, however, incompatible with the defense of the interests of the working class. Labor is already in politics, but because its politics are still capitalistic, it is not engaged in political action as a class for itself.

**Labour Party and the Workers' Government**

Second, although labor is engaged in political action, it has not equipped itself with the most important instrument

required for participation in politics. *Labor has no party of its own.* To meet the capitalists on the economic field under more favorable conditions, the workers very wisely organized a special machine, the labor unions. To deal with the capitalist class on the political field, it is also necessary to organize a special machine, a working-class political party.

The class struggle is a political struggle. It cannot be fought successfully by the workers unless they have a political weapon, which means, their own political party. The capitalist class has its own political organizations. It sees to it that they remain committed to its basic interests, the maintenance of the capitalist system. It sees to it that they remain under its control. It provides them with a press. It provides them with funds, running into millions of dollars each year. In some places, the

capitalists are in direct control of these parties, in others, its agents and sworn friends are in direct control. Even if, under certain conditions, a "progressive" breaks through to a nomination and gets elected, the capitalist class still maintains control of the political machinery and is able to realize its aims in the end.

Why should not the workers have their own political party, which openly calls itself the party of the working class? The workers are the most numerous and most important class in society. They have the most representative and largest organizations in society, the labor unions, which outnumber by far the membership of all the capitalist and middle-class organizations put together.

That is not all. Labor leaders and "friends of labor" try to discourage the workers from forming a party of their own with the argument that the workers, and especially the labor unions, by themselves, do not form the absolute majority of the population, and therefore could not win in the contest with the existing parties.

An utterly false and misleading argument! The capitalist parties represent a far tinier minority of the population than do the labor unions. That does not prevent the labor leaders and the "friends" from supporting these parties. A working-class party, with a correct program and leadership, could win the support of the overwhelming majority of the population. The main enemy of the working class is monopoly capitalism, represented by the big industrial and financial magnates. Why should not, why cannot, labor, in its fight against the monopolistic class, enlist the support of the poor farmers, of the lower middle classes, of the Negro people in town and country, who are also under the heel of monopoly capitalism? Why cannot labor draw up and carry on a serious fight for such a political program as would attract to it the support of these other people, together with whom labor makes up far more than a simple majority of the population? On what ground should we believe that the political support of these people will always go to the leadership of capitalism, but never to the leadership of labor?

Those who argue against independent political action by the workers, against an independent workers' party, are tied in body and mind to the chariot of capitalist politics. They find no difficulty in believing that capitalism always can and should win the support of the farmers, the lower middle classes and the Negro people. But they have so little confidence in the working class in whose name they presume to speak, that they cannot conceive of it winning the support of the bulk of the people and acquiring the leadership of the

nation. That a few thousand capitalists should run the country seems natural to them. That it should be run by millions of workers is inconceivable to them. In this way, as in all others, they show they are capitalistic labor leaders, not real working-class leaders.

The workers need a party of their own. To form it, is to issue the Declaration of Independence of the American working class. It is the first big step in breaking from the capitalist parties and capitalist politics, and toward independent working-class political action.

However, it is only the first step. A political party that does not proclaim its intention of taking government power, is not worthy of the name. A Labor Party which announced, as some so-called labor parties do, that its aims in politics is to support the candidates of the capitalist parties, could neither inspire the support it should have nor fulfill the task before it. A party that proclaims as its purpose the nomination of "good" candidates by the capitalist parties and their election with its aid, is a miserable bargaining agency, but not an Independent Labor Party. Its proclamation is a confession that the capitalist parties are so bankrupt and rotten, that their candidates can get support from the workers only if they also appear under the emblem of another party.

A Labor Party which announced that it had only a modest aim, like the election of a few candidates of its own, and nothing more, could not inspire serious support among the people. It could get such support and justify its existence in the eyes of the people only if it declared boldly that the capitalist parties are bankrupt, that it challenges them all along the line, that it aims at taking government power and reorganizing society to serve the interests of all the people instead of serving only the interests of the capitalist minority.

The formation of an independent workers' party acquires great significance only if it proclaims the objective of a Workers' Government.

What would be the program and purpose of a Workers' Government? Would it simply be to put the workers in the offices now occupied by capitalist politicians and bureaucrats? Would it simply be to take over the responsibility for managing the affairs of the capitalist class? In that case, it would be a Workers' Government only in name, and a capitalist government in reality. It would confuse the workers, and make it easy for capital to get back all its power.

This is not a mere assertion, it is a fact proved by

experience. Twice in England, a Labor Government was in office; in Germany, in Austria, in Spain and in other countries, the same thing was true at different times. But in every one of these cases, the government failed to act in the interests of the working class. It left the power of the capitalists intact. It made no fundamental change. The position of the masses of the people was not sufficiently improved or not improved at all, because no bold steps were taken to remove the causes of the social evils produced by capitalism. The hopes of the people were disappointed. Their enthusiasm declined. The capitalist class thereupon found little difficulty in regaining all its political control by taking over the government directly. It either crushed the labor government by violence or simply dismissed it from office. In many cases, an outright reactionary or fascist government took control.

A Workers' Government is needed not to protect the power and interests of the capitalists, but the power and interests of the workers, and of all the little people as a whole. We have already seen that political power—the government, the state—exists only to serve class interests. All the interests of the capitalist class are tied up with and based upon preserving their ownership and control of the means of production. Their whole power over society is based upon this ownership. It enables them to exploit and oppress the majority of the population. It results in growing social inequality, in unemployment, economic scarcity, insecurity and war. The maintenance of capitalist property is the basic principle of every capitalist government. To this principle, it subordinates everything else.

A Workers' Government must have a basically different principle if it is to discharge its great obligation to those who placed it in power. To the evils of capitalism, it must oppose social progress and human welfare. To the interests of a ruling minority, it must oppose the interests of all humanity. Its aim must be to assure society a high, continuous level of production which will permit the cultural development of all, and which will not be broken periodically by convulsive crises; to assure abundance to all and peace among all the nations and peoples, so that the nightmare of insecurity is dispelled; to assure everyone freedom from physical and intellectual enslavement of any kind. Are not these the things that all the people long for?

Capitalist class rule has demonstrated to the hilt that it cannot, by its very nature, achieve this aim. ■

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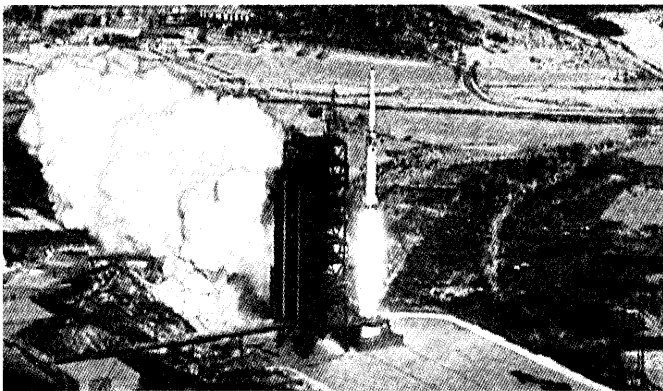
## North Korea...

(continued from page 2)

A 1953 armistice sealed the division of the Korean peninsula between the deformed workers state in the North and the capitalist state in the South. The imperialists had reduced Korea to rubble, with a staggering four million Koreans dead. Ever since, the U.S. has maintained a massive military presence in the South, numbering 28,500 troops today. For decades, this force propped up hated dictatorships. At all times, the U.S. military deployment has been a dagger pointed at both the Chinese and North Korean workers states and at the South Korean working class fighting against exploitation and oppression.

Defense of North Korea as well as China against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution is the duty of the proletariat internationally, not least in the U.S. But you will certainly *not* hear this from the American International Socialist Organization (ISO), followers of the late Tony Cliff. In “Why Are Tensions Rising in Korea?” (socialistworker.org, 15 March), the ISO’s David Whitehouse allows that “the current crisis is made in the U.S.A.” But he also takes pains to denounce North Korea as “a tyranny in which most of the population lives in poverty.” Retired basketball superstar Dennis Rodman displayed a far better impulse, joining North Korean Stalinist leader Kim Jong Un at an exhibition basketball game in Pyongyang and reporting that Kim had one thing to relay to Obama: call me. For his simple act, Rodman was vilified, ridiculed and smeared by everyone from the White House press secretary on down to local media. To his credit, Rodman remains defiant.

The ISO article warns about possible plans by the U.S. and South Korea for a land invasion of the North. This is rather rich considering that the last time such an invasion took place, in 1950, Cliff and his cohorts *capitulated to the U.S. and British imperialists* by refusing to defend North Korea, marking their definitive break from Trotskyism. Since then, the Cliffites have supported every imperialist-sponsored counterrevolutionary movement arrayed against the former Soviet Union, China and other non-capitalist countries. The South Korean Cliffites, operating closer to the Demilitarized Zone, make their anti-Communist stance unambiguous. A 23 February article on the socialistworker.co.uk website by Young-Ik Kim, titled “North Korea: A Nuclear Bogeyman Created by the US”, denounces the North Korean nuclear test



KCNA

**December 12: North Korea launches satellite into orbit.**

as having “nothing to do with anti-imperialism or socialism”. The article goes on to opine that the North’s “nuclear programme—pursued at the expense of its people’s livelihoods—will only increase tension in the region”. This sentence could have been written word for word by the *Wall Street Journal*.

Those who, unlike the Cliffite bootlickers, see the need to stand with the workers states against the capitalist class enemy must understand that this includes supporting their development of nuclear weapons and necessary delivery systems—a crucial means of deterrence against imperialist attack. Chinese leftists would do well to remember China’s own struggle to achieve nuclear weaponry. As we wrote in “Bureaucracy and Revolution in Moscow and Peking” (*Spartacist* No. 3, January-February 1965): “China’s development of the A-bomb must be greeted by all revolutionary Marxists as a welcome strengthening of Chinese defenses at a time when the Chinese Revolution is not only being aggressively threatened by U.S. imperialism but when it is also being systematically betrayed by the Soviet bureaucracy in the search for ‘peaceful coexistence’.”

Some may see a fundamental discontinuity in the PLA’s heroic struggle in 1950-53 and Beijing’s toadying to the imperialists over North Korean nukes today. In fact, these events speak to the contradictory nature of the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy. Deriving its privileges from the collectivized economy that is at the core of the workers state, the bureaucracy is forced at times to defend that state against capitalist forces. At the same time, the Stalinist dogma of “socialism in one country” means that the needs of one’s own state are paramount. Inevitably, this leads to seeking accommodation with world imperialism, stabbing other Communist regimes in the back and selling out revolutions elsewhere.

After the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies fell out in the late 1950s and ‘60s, Mao’s China forged a counterrevolutionary alliance with U.S. imperialism against the USSR. In sharp opposition to both regimes, we Trotskyists declared: For Communist unity against imperialism! The *continuity* between Mao’s CCP and today’s regime, with its “socialist market economy”, lies in their shared opposition to the Marxist program of world proletarian revolution. Ultimately, as Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky pointed out in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1937) and other works, unless the Stalinist caste is swept away by the workers, bureaucratic privilege, political suppression of the working class and appeasement of imperialism threaten the very existence of the workers state. That prognosis was tragically borne out in the Soviet Union.

In North Korea, “socialism in half a country” à la the Kims has been particularly vulgar in its nepotism and cult of personality. Despite strident rhetoric against the U.S. and its South Korean lackeys, the Pyongyang regime renounces any perspective for the revolutionary overthrow of the South Korean capitalist class. We call for the *revolutionary reunification* of Korea, through proletarian political revolution in the North and workers socialist revolution in the South. This is part of the International Communist League’s perspective for a socialist Asia, which requires as well a political revolution to sweep away the Chinese Stalinist regime and, crucially, the proletarian overthrow of Japanese imperialism. The ICL is dedicated to forging Leninist-Trotskyist parties to lead such struggles around the world. ■

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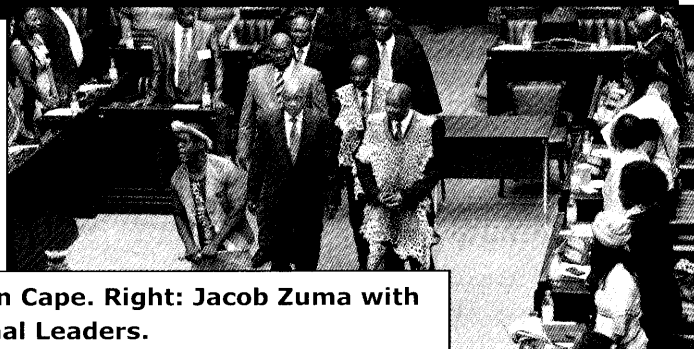
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# Down With the Traditional Courts Bill!



SABC



GCIS

Left: Women farming in rural Eastern Cape. Right: Jacob Zuma with chiefs at National House of Traditional Leaders.

## For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

In December 2011, the government introduced a new Traditional Courts Bill. The bill would give traditional leaders, headed by tribal chiefs, unchallenged legal power over 17 million rural black inhabitants, who are balkanised according to tribal background along the same lines promoted under apartheid. Chiefs would get increased powers to make laws, decide cases and hand down punishment—including evictions and forced unpaid labour—often with no possibility for appeal.

The biggest losers under this bill are black women, the “slaves of the slaves”, who already suffer from grinding poverty and triple oppression. Backward traditional practices oppressive to women are widespread—from *lobola*, forced polygamy and *ukuthwala* (marriage by capture) to virginity testing, all of which are reinforced by the traditional leaders. Women are commonly denied the right to represent themselves in the traditional courts, and forced to be represented by their husbands or other male family members.

After the bourgeois parliament discussed the Traditional Courts Bill in late 2012, misinformation reports were spread by the ANC and the government saying that the bill had been withdrawn. This method is commonly used to defuse anger against particularly unpopular new laws (similar tricks were tried with the Protection of State Information Bill, which has now been passed). The fact is that the Traditional Courts Bill is now being reviewed by the provincial governments and pushing it through is still very much on the agenda of the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance government.

The bill is part of the increased state repression which has been deployed in response to mounting social unrest. In order to administer the neo-apartheid capitalist system, the leaders of the Alliance are compelled to reach for the same weapons that were previously used by their own apartheid butchers. The government led by president Jacob Zuma, in particular, has relied on stoking poisonous tribal sentiments and anti-immigrant chauvinism, while sharpening the most repressive

tools of the state—massacres of strikers, police brutality, de facto states of emergency, etc. The strengthening of the chiefs, tribal divisions, and traditional backwardness is part of the package of neo-apartheid rule.

The bill also underlines the lesson that national liberation struggles led by petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalists are incapable of ensuring real and lasting rights for women. Throughout its 101-year history, the programme and policies of the ANC have been guided by the basic aim of fostering a black capitalist layer which could participate in exploiting “its own people” a task which they did not want to leave solely to the white and foreign capitalists. The interpenetration of the ANC leadership with the chiefs and other traditional leaders has been a key part of this programme, and a clear indicator that this party represents the class enemy of the liberation of workers, women, and the oppressed black majority in general.

Just look at Mandla Mandela, a grandson of Nelson Mandela and ANC member of parliament. As chief of the Mvezo traditional council in the Eastern Cape, he has become notorious for using this position to enrich his family and suppress criticism or challenges, all the while promoting the most hideous backwardness to shore up his despotic reign. For example, in 2010 he officially defended the barbaric “culture” of kidnapping women (particularly young girls) known as *ukuthwala*, telling a parliamentary committee on rural development and land reform, “for a girl to be taken as a wife through *ukuthwala*—the process has nothing to do with age—When you are going to discuss culture do not even try to bring in white notions as such an approach will turn things upside down”. In 2011, three of Mandla Mandela’s “subjects” in Mvezo took him to court after he ordered their eviction from their ancestral gravesite to make way for capitalist developers to build a hotel and stadium.

Bourgeois-nationalist ideology has always relegated women to being “baby-makers” and servants of men. The





Laurie Bloomfield



AFP/Getty

**Left: Apartheid police attack women demonstrators in Cato Manor, near Durban, 1959. Right: The day after neo-apartheid police massacre on 16 August 2012, women from surrounding shantytowns protest at Lonmin platinum mine in Marikana.**

capitalists and their lackeys are the enemies of women's liberation. As revolutionary Marxists, atheists and fighters for women's liberation, we fiercely oppose the Traditional Courts Bill. We seek to link the fight against this reactionary bill to the necessary broader struggle against the whole system of capitalist exploitation. The struggle for women's liberation is inseparable from the struggle for socialist revolution, and both require a fight to break the working class from the influence of bourgeois nationalism as part of forging a Leninist party to act as a tribune of the people. The working class as a whole has a vital interest in stopping this reactionary bill, which will also be used to further clamp down on any struggle against the neo-apartheid capitalist order.

### **Tribal Chiefs: Tools of Racist Capitalist Oppression**

Life in the former bantustans is hell for the black masses, especially women, and the traditional leaders play a central role enforcing this misery and keeping the population in check. Research conducted by the Rural Women's Movement has uncovered cases in rural villages of KwaZulu-Natal where parents are forced to pay R1 000 or a cow to the tribal chief as a fine for their daughter falling pregnant out of wedlock; where traditional leaders deprive families of the "right" to bury loved ones because of such unpaid fines; and where many other instances of despotic abuse run rampant, including imposition of endless arbitrary "taxes" to fund traditional leaders' parasitic lifestyles.

One of the most brutally oppressive, backward practices perpetrated against women in the name of tradition is female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision. It is often found alongside male circumcision in societies where cultures attempt to make sharp gender/sexual distinctions as children reach puberty, and it continues to be practiced in rural parts of South Africa, although the government does not acknowledge its existence. FGM is a heinous crime against women, which must be categorically and unconditionally opposed. In contrast, male circumcision, when performed under safe medical conditions, is a procedure that is vastly less deforming. Yet every year in South Africa, scores of young boys die as a result of botched circumcisions at traditional initiation schools. This highlights the tribal leaders' bitter hostility to Western medical advances and the

cheapness of black life. This year in May, over 20 boys died in just one week in Mpumalanga province. The ANC's provincial minister for "health", Matshego Dlamini, grotesquely justified this, explaining her refusal to intervene by saying, "This is a tradition; as a woman I cannot go; if they are dead or not, it is a tradition"!

The chieftancy is a bastion of reaction, a remnant of pre-capitalist society which survived through widespread collaboration with the former colonial and apartheid rulers. Throughout Southern Africa, the chiefs fight tooth and nail to deny women abortion and other basic democratic rights. There is a large overlap between the chieftancy and the ruling ANC. This helps the chiefs increase their power and wealth, while the chiefs in turn are an important part of repressing the rural black population and delivering them as voting cattle to the ANC.

Defending the Traditional Courts Bill during a speech to the National House of Traditional Leaders in November 2012, Zuma lashed out at black intellectuals who have been critical of the bill: "Some Africans who become too clever take a position (where) they become the most eloquent in criticising themselves about their own traditions and everything." Zuma, whose government just a few months earlier had carried out the massacre of 34 striking black mineworkers in defence of the profits of London-based Lonmin Platinum, demagogically intoned, "Let us solve African problems the African way, not the white man's way." In fact, the Traditional Courts Bill stands very much in the tradition of the white rulers—from British imperialists in the colonial period, to the Afrikaner nationalists during apartheid—who seized upon and reinforced the most retrogressive aspects of tribal and traditional culture as a means of propping up their rule and amassing profits from the blood and sweat of the black masses.

A prime example is the Native Administration Act of 1927, which created civil, divorce, appeal and high courts under control of the tribal headmen and chiefs, reinforcing and imposing tribal divisions on the black population. That act codified the minority status assigned to women by traditional customs, declaring: "A Black woman ... who is a partner in a customary union and who is living with her husband, shall be deemed to be a minor and her husband shall be deemed to be her guardian." This was part of a notorious

series of laws enacted by the British rulers as they went about entrenching the migrant labour system—the Masters and Servants Act, the Natives' Land Acts beginning in 1913, the Urban Areas Act, and various Pass Laws and Poll Taxes, all of which served to dispossess blacks of their land and create a pool of cheap black labour with no rights.

After coming to power in the 1948 elections, the National Party government would fine-tune this racist system and take it to new extremes under apartheid. As noted in “‘One chief, one vote’: The revival of traditional authorities in post-apartheid South Africa” (*African Affairs*, 1997): “The African reserves in the countryside played a crucial role in the government’s efforts to establish tighter control over African labour. ... In the African villages, the administration of the pass book and the running of the labour bureaux, where permits had to be annually renewed, were the responsibility of the chief.”

The heart of apartheid was the migratory labour system, the reduction of South African blacks to dispossessed foreigners within their own country and the reduction of the surrounding black states to labour colonies for South Africa’s mines, factories and farms. Thousands of workers, maimed for life while toiling for the white ruling class, were dumped back on the bantustans. The full brunt of this system was borne by the women relegated to the unspeakably destitute “homelands”.

The migrant labour system and the superexploitation of mainly black labour remain at the foundation of the capitalist system in the “new South Africa”, but now with the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance government acting as the black overseers for the still predominantly white capitalist rulers. This fact, and the role of the traditional leaders in this system, was highlighted by David van Wyk, a researcher for the Bench Marks Foundation, who noted in an interview with *Amanda!* (September 2012): “An Angloplats personnel manager told me that they’re using local councillors and chiefs as recruitment officers. A woman who tells me that she went for five interviews and at each interview she was asked for sex and at each interview she refused and every time she didn’t get the job. [It’s like] what they said about post-colonial Kenya, that ‘contracts are signed on the thighs of women’.”

As communists, we seek to eradicate the inherently racist migratory labour system. This would mean on the one hand massive investment to promote the economic and social development of the rural areas here and in neighbouring countries. It also would involve a major programme to provide quality, affordable housing for all in the cities and other areas where industry is currently concentrated, including adequate housing for workers and their families to live comfortably. The capitalists and their government are not going to do any of this, because it does not serve their class interests. What’s needed is a black-centred workers government, part of a socialist federation of Southern Africa, to build a socialist planned economy in which production is organised to serve the interests of the majority rather than the profits of a filthy rich minority.

The COSATU leaders have never fundamentally challenged the migrant labor system or its counterpart, South Africa’s “domestic service” for African women who have made it out of the desolation of the rural areas. This is no accident—it flows from their treacherous class-collaborationist politics, which chain the working class to the bourgeois-nationalist ANC via the Tripartite Alliance. A fight

against the migrant labour system is going to take a political struggle against the class-collaborationist trade union tops.

Eradicating the migrant labour system is also intimately connected to the land question, a burning issue at the centre of the dispossession of the non-white majority. A century after the Natives' Land Act of 1913, the white minority still owns more than 70 percent of urban and arable rural land. We are for the expropriation of the large, white-owned farms and for their transformation into collective and state farms under workers rule. Much of the remaining land in the rural areas is now under the control of the tribal chiefs as a result of the Communal Land Rights Act of 2004, which gave them control over the land of their subjects. A black-centred workers government would put an end to the privileges and power of these rural despots.

At the ANC’s founding in 1912 (initially as the South African Native National Congress), a considerable number of the delegates were tribal chiefs, leading to the creation of an “Upper House” to accommodate traditional leaders who joined the organisation. Along with the intellectuals, lawyers and other representatives of the black petty-bourgeoisie who formed the ANC, the chiefs’ main concern was begging the British colonial rulers to grant them a privileged position as black aristocracy within the system of white capitalist rule. For example, at the 1912 founding, one of the five basic aims outlined for the organisation was to “promote understanding between chiefs, and loyalty to the British crown and all lawful authorities and to promote understanding between white and black South Africans”!

The ANC would later adopt a more populist stance aimed at attracting mass support, exemplified by the 1955 Freedom Charter, a bourgeois populist programme. This was in large part a result of the white rulers’ refusal to grant even the most minimal concessions, instead increasing repression of any independent black political activity, including banning the ANC and other black nationalist organisations by the early 1960s. At the same time, the apartheid rulers sought to co-opt the tribal chiefs and use them to police the black population through the hated bantustan system. For the most part, the chiefs were willing collaborators, a fact which led to significant hostility toward the chiefs among the base of the ANC-led Congress movement and other wings of the anti-apartheid movement.

Some of the sharpest expressions of this hostility occurred during the 1980s, at the same time as massive strikes by the black trade unions and township revolts rocked the country. But the ANC leaders’ calls to “make the country ungovernable” were never intended to launch a struggle to overthrow the hated apartheid rulers; rather, the nationalist leaders were cynically exploiting the militancy of the masses in a bid to *pressure* the white rulers into a negotiated settlement. At the same time, they sought to mend ties with the traditional leaders who had collaborated with the National Party government, trying to give them “liberation” credentials by creating a mythology about the tribal chiefs’ resistance to apartheid. In 1987, the ANC launched CONTRALESA (Congress of Traditional Leaders) as an organisation of “progressive” tribal chiefs, hailing this as “the chiefs coming back to the people”. Since coming to power in 1994 following the deal with the white rulers, the Tripartite Alliance government has been in charge of maintaining the same profit system as before. They have inherited the structures that existed during apartheid.

## Women's Oppression, Tradition and the Family

As part of administering neo-apartheid capitalist misery, the ANC and other Alliance leaders also romanticise tribal societies, including conciliating and promoting *izangoma* (witchdoctors) and other quacks who are euphemistically referred to as “traditional healers”. The disastrous state of the public health care system—with public hospitals chronically overcrowded, understaffed and decrepit, if you can even make it to one—means that traditional healers are the only “health care” many ever see. Some women go to them for abortions because legal abortions in hospitals are not accessible. We stand for women's right to free, safe abortions on demand. We defend science and science-based medicine against “traditional medicine” *muti* and other so-called “alternative medicine”, opposing government subsidies or other promotion of traditional healers.

The disastrous effects of the bourgeois nationalists' promotion of traditional backwardness were shown horrifically by the “AIDS denialist” policy of the Thabo Mbeki government (a policy in which Zuma, Mbeki's deputy until 2005, as well as the leaders of the SACP and COSATU, were complicit for years before later distancing themselves). A Harvard School of Public Health study showed that some 330 000 South Africans died of AIDS between 2000 and 2005 because a timely antiretroviral (ARV) treatment programme was not implemented. The meagre aid which the profit-driven imperialist system rationed out to Southern Africa was further obstructed, as Mbeki and other ANC leaders rejected medical science and actively blocked the implementation of an ARV programme, instead promoting traditional healers and other merchants of death pushing herbal and “natural” cures. Because HIV/AIDS is a sexually-transmitted disease, its spread has always been fueled by the subordinate position of women. We always opposed the deadly “denialist” quackery, and we continue to demand free ARVs for all who need them as part of the struggle for free, quality health care for all.

Besides their role in furthering ignorance, promoting anti-scientific prejudices and superstition, the traditional healers are part of the repressive political structure that runs from the community *sangoma* straight up to the House of Traditional Leaders, which is part of the bourgeois state. A primary function of that repressive structure is to enforce the subordination of women to men. This is done through promoting and legitimising anti-woman, patriarchal practices. Along with *lobola* and *ukuthwala*, this includes virginity testing and initiation ceremonies like *uMemolo*, where young women are taught subservience to men and how to be the bearers of traditional culture to the next generation.

These backward traditional practices are remnants from an agricultural and slave culture. They are a big factor in legitimising and promoting violence against women, including some of the highest recorded rape statistics in the world. It is the most vulnerable women who suffer most under these practices. For example, the thugs who practice *ukuthwala* usually kidnap women who are orphans or come from poor families. As always in class society, the traditions and culture which are upheld most vehemently are those which are acceptable and beneficial to the wealthy.

Strengthening the traditional courts means strengthening this repression of women. In many systems of customary law, African women fall under the guardianship of their fathers or,

after marriage, their husbands. They have no contractual capacity without consent of their guardian and are not allowed to appear in court without the assistance of their guardian. They are excluded from political processes of the tribe and are sometimes precluded from obtaining land rights. Traditionally women are not included in *lobola* negotiations; sexual consent and other sexual rights belong to family members rather than the women themselves.

A common misconception is that women's subordination to men, like the patriarchal family of today, have always existed. Another misconception, particularly prevalent among feminists and others who oppose women's oppression from a bourgeois-liberal framework, is that the source of women's oppression is simply backward patriarchal ideas (mainly those of men). On the other hand, nationalists in particular apologise for forced polygamy, *lobola* and other anti-woman practices, romanticising them as uniquely African ways of showing “respect” between families. Another justification for these things argues that since women are often accorded prominent positions in traditional African practices, they can't be oppressive to women.

As Marxists we understand that women's oppression is material and that the view of women as inferior to men is a reflection of that material reality. Engels explained that women's oppression is rooted in the development of private property and the division of society into classes, both of which are tied to the development of the family. Early human societies lived in a form of “primitive communism”. This meant humans hunted and gathered the bare minimum in order to survive, and shared this equally. The division of labour between men and women was based on the biological reality of child care—i.e. women were responsible for bearing and nursing of the young—and implied no subordinate social status for women. The division of labour between the sexes was equal, both worked to produce the necessities of life. The functions of the household were a communal and collective responsibility.

This primitive social equality was overthrown when advances like the development of agriculture enabled humans to produce more than the bare minimum needed to survive. This social surplus became the property of a minority, which were men, creating the first class divisions in society. This led to the development of the institution of the family as a means of passing ownership of property from one generation to the next. It also gave rise to the state, an organisation of dominance used by one class to suppress another.

The patriarchal family decreed monogamy for women so that men could ensure that their offspring inherited their property. This put an end to the communal family. Therefore family functions, raising children and household labour, became private and lost their public character. Women, confined to the individual home, became isolated from social production, which became a male sphere. As Engels wrote in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884): “The overthrow of mother right was the **world historical defeat of the female sex**. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude; she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children.”

So what is the role of the monogamous family for people who have no property to pass down? The family under capitalism also serves to rear the next generation to work on the land, in the factories and mines, and to serve as cannon

fodder in the bourgeois army. It serves to train youth to obey authority, inculcates religious backwardness and generally acts as an ideological brake on social consciousness. In this way the institution of the family ensures the maintenance of class rule for the capitalists. It is the main source of women's oppression, an economic and social unit which is a mainstay of social reaction along with organised religion. It is also at the root of discrimination, legal persecution and other oppression of homosexuals. Despite liberal laws on paper, anti-gay bigotry is virulent in South Africa, with regular reports of murderous attacks against gays and lesbians, particularly in the townships and rural areas.

Unlike the feminists, who view women's liberation as a task of women only, we understand that the fight for women's equality must be taken up as a necessary part of the struggle to liberate the working class as a whole. This includes fighting to integrate women into social production. The trade unions must fight for free, 24-hour childcare to be available for all; for the extension of maternity leave rights for working women; for free access to birth control and free, safe abortions on demand; and for other demands to give women greater access to decent jobs and financial independence.

Fighting for these demands requires a political struggle to replace the current pro-capitalist trade union leaders—who, in the case of the COSATU leaders, directly subordinate the working class to the capitalists via the Tripartite Alliance nationalist popular front—with a class-struggle leadership. Struggling against the pro-capitalist union misleaders is a crucial part of the necessary fight to forge a revolutionary vanguard party. We want to open the way for women to play an active and leading role in the working class, which uniquely has the social power and objective interest to overthrow the capitalist system.

Especially in countries of belated capitalist development like South Africa, the fight for women's liberation can be a powerful motor force for socialist revolution. South Africa never experienced a bourgeois-democratic revolution. Instead, capitalist oppression was imposed by the imperialist colonisers on top of pre-capitalist societies, leaving in place and reinforcing all the accumulated backwardness of those societies, particularly brutal oppression of women. We oppose the "cultural relativism" of nationalists and others who justify barbaric, anti-woman practices like female genital mutilation and marriage-by-capture in the name of tradition, and we seek to put an end to such practices. There is nothing uniquely African about such practices—for example, *lobola* is a version of the bride price, something which has been practiced in societies in Asia and Europe at different periods, and still is today in countries like Afghanistan.

We fight for women's emancipation through socialist revolution. We seek to get rid of the institution of the family, which is the source of women's oppression. The functions of the family—child care, house work, etc.—can't simply be abolished; they must be replaced by social institutions. In a socialist society, the workers state would seek to provide free, 24/7 child care which is easily accessible at home and in the workplace; communal kitchens and laundry facilities; and other measures which would free women from household slavery and allow them to participate socially at every level. This is only possible on the basis of a socialist, planned economy, where production is freed from capitalist anarchy

and irrationality and organised and run according to human need rather than profit.

### **"Two-Stage Revolution": Betrayal of Women, Socialism**

The SACP claims to oppose the Traditional Courts Bill. Last year, delegates at the party's 13th national congress voted to reject it outright, just a few months after the SACP Central Committee issued a mealy-mouthed statement calling for "more discussion" on the bill and arguing, "Aspects of the Traditional Courts system that are progressive should be retained, but aspects that are in conflict with the non-sexist, democratic and nation-building goals of the NDR should be rejected." Not surprisingly, though, none of this has caused any noticeable disturbance in the SACP leaders' harmonious relationship with the capitalist government that is pursuing this reactionary bill—a government which they are a prominent part of. To take one example, Yunus Carrim, a member of the SACP's Politburo, is deputy minister of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs—the very government ministry responsible for the bill!

The SACP leaders have a long history of betraying working-class interests in the name of the Menshevik/Stalinist schema of "two-stage revolution"—known in South Africa as the "National Democratic Revolution" (NDR). According to this schema, which serves as an ideological justification for their historic alliance and interpenetration with the ANC, conditions are not currently ripe for socialism. Therefore, first must come a political bloc with "progressive" bourgeois nationalists. Then, in some far-off and unspecified future, this will evolve into socialism. Throughout history, the "second stage" has in reality always been the bourgeois nationalists slaughtering workers and communists.

In 1964, historic SACP leader Govan Mbeki wrote the following fine words denouncing the traditional leaders: "If the Africans have had chiefs, it was because all human societies have had them at one stage or another. But when a people have developed to a stage which discards chieftanship, when their social development contradicts the need for such an institution, then to force it on them is not liberation but enslavement" (*The Peasants' Revolt*). However, in the name of the class-collaborationist alliance with the "progressive" ANC nationalists, the SACP leaders went along with every grotesque conciliation of the chiefs, and today they are among the most craven apologists for the government of the Traditional Courts Bill.

In order to go forward in its struggles, the working class must break with the Tripartite Alliance and with the reformist politics of class collaboration packaged as the National Democratic Revolution. In opposing the "two-stage revolution" schema, Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League, stands for the programme and perspective of permanent revolution developed by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky. This posits that in countries of belated capitalist development, the outstanding democratic tasks historically associated with the bourgeois revolutions can only be carried out through the assumption of power by the working class, and that the working class, once in power, must fight to extend the revolution to the advanced capitalist countries to ensure the successful building of socialism.

South Africa is a particularly striking case of the applicability of Trotsky's permanent revolution, a unique society where European colonisation created a strong overlap between race and class through the brutal suppression and superexploitation of the black majority. To stress the intimate link between socialist revolution and national liberation for the black majority, and to combat the dominance of nationalist ideology, we raise the call for a *black-centred workers government* as a concretisation of permanent revolution. A black-centred workers government would unite the different tribal and language-based groups, and would include an active role and full democratic rights for the coloured and Indian minorities, as well as for those whites who accept a government based centrally on the black workers.

The measures needed to dismantle the racist migrant labour system and to free women from domestic slavery underline the vital need for an internationalist perspective: Development of the rural areas, programmes to provide housing and child-care to all, etc.—all these things will depend for their ultimate success on linking up with an international planned socialist economy, meaning the extension of socialist revolution to the advanced capitalist (imperialist) countries of North America, West Europe and Japan. In fighting for that goal, we seek to build a Leninist revolutionary vanguard party of the working class that would champion the cause of the vast unemployed urban masses, the landless, immigrants, women, agricultural labourers and all of those oppressed under neo-apartheid capitalism.

### For New October Revolutions!

Black women played a heroic role in the struggle against apartheid, but because that struggle was politically dominated by bourgeois nationalism, their hopes of liberation were unfulfilled. For a positive model in the fight for women's liberation, we look to the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky. The Bolshevik-led October Revolution of 1917 was a dramatic confirmation of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. The revolutionary government in the young workers state fought to carry out the Marxist programme for women's liberation. They immediately removed all impediments to legal equality, giving women the right to vote, breaking the hold of the church over marriage and divorce, and making these simple matters of civil registration. The Bolsheviks legalised abortion, set up literacy schools for young girls, outlawed discrimination against homosexuals, and abolished the concept of illegitimacy of children born out of wedlock.

But as Lenin explained, such legal changes are only the first step to the liberation of women. The second and more challenging step is laying the material foundations needed to actually replace the social functions of the family and liberate women from household drudgery. The Bolsheviks struggled, despite scarce resources, to provide large-scale socialised domestic services as a first step (see "The Russian Revolution and the Emancipation of Women", *Spartacist* English edition No. 59, Spring 2006, for a more extensive look at what the Bolsheviks did). But Russia was a backward capitalist country, and after the revolution the young workers state was economically devastated, isolated and surrounded by hostile imperialist powers. Lenin and Trotsky understood that the key to building socialism in Russia was the international



Viktor Bulla

### Women workers demonstrate in Petrograd, March 1917.

extension of workers revolution to the more advanced capitalist countries, particularly to Germany.

This revolutionary internationalist outlook was later trampled on by a conservative, nationally-narrow bureaucratic caste represented by Stalin, which came to power in a *political counterrevolution* and pursued the anti-Marxist, utopian programme of "socialism in one country". Despite the subsequent bureaucratic degeneration and Stalinist misrule, the gains made by the Soviet workers state were tremendous, not least for women. Trotskyists defended the Soviet Union against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution, and fought for proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucracy and return the workers state to the road of Lenin and Trotsky. This is our perspective toward the remaining deformed workers states today—China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam.

One of the places where the Russian Revolution had a profound impact on the conditions of women was Soviet Central Asia. At the time of the October Revolution, this region was even more backward than Russia, still in a pre-capitalist mode of production and marked by the hideous oppression of women under customary Islamic law. The Bolsheviks undertook systematic work among these women, seeking to win them as allies and demonstrate the liberating potential of the communist programme to the peoples of the East. This was captured by Trotsky in a speech given in April 1924, celebrating the third anniversary of the founding of the Communist University for Toilers of the East in Moscow:

"The sense, strength and the essence of Bolshevism lies in that it addresses itself not to the labour bosses but to the mob, the underdogs, the millions and to the most oppressed of the oppressed.... And this, moreover, means that the Eastern woman who is the most paralysed in life, in her habits and in creativity, the slave of slaves, that she, having at the demand of the new economic relations taken off her cloak will at once feel herself lacking any sort of religious buttress; she will have a passionate thirst to gain new ideas, a new consciousness which will permit her to appreciate her new position in society. And there will be no better communist in the East, no better fighter for the ideas of the revolution and for the ideas of communism than the awakened woman worker (*applause*)."

("Communism and Women of the East", reprinted in *Spartacist* English edition No. 60, Autumn 2007)

We fight, in this spirit, to build the revolutionary internationalist party needed to win new Octobers here and around the world. ■

# Neo-Apartheid Police Terrorise Workers, Immigrants, Township Poor



Daily Sun



AFP

**Left: Mozambican taxi driver Emidio Macia, who died in custody after being dragged by cops on 26 February in Daveyton township. Right: Memorial service for Macia on 6 March.**

On February 26, in broad daylight, nine police gruesomely tortured Mozambican taxi driver Emidio Macia before the eyes of dozens of people in Daveyton, east of Johannesburg, before he died in custody. A video taken by someone in the crowd shows the cops tying Macia's hands to a police van and dragging him away toward the police station, where he died of head injuries, internal bleeding and lack of oxygen. As the horrific images of the dragging went around the world, there has been an outpouring of anger over this latest demonstration of naked cop terror. The killing of Macia came just over six months after the Marikana massacre of 16 August 2012, when police gunned down 34 striking black mineworkers like wild animals. As one protester put it, on a placard held at a demonstration outside the bail hearing for the cops who killed Macia: "What Have We Done to Die Like Dogs?"

In response to the outcry, the police brass and ministers of the Tripartite Alliance government, which is led by the African National Congress (ANC) and includes the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), have gone into "PR mode", feigning shock and dismay at the actions of the Daveyton cops. Don't be fooled for a second by this cynical stage acting: These are the top cops responsible for commanding the whole machinery of racist state repression, and they have no qualms about spilling the blood of workers and the oppressed to maintain the rule of capital. Take police

commissioner Riah Phiyega, who cried crocodile tears for Macia and condemned the cops in a press conference the week after the killing. Directly after the Marikana massacre, Phiyega told a gathering of cops, "Don't be sorry about what happened."

President Jacob Zuma and Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa ludicrously try to portray the Daveyton cops as just a few "bad apples" in an otherwise benevolent police force. Just a few weeks after the Daveyton incident, another cop was arrested in North West Province for an assault just like the one that killed Macia! The victim in this case, a court interpreter, was targeted because he had advised a youth being harassed by two policemen. According to Independent Police Investigative Directorate spokesman Moses Dlamini, one of the cops "grabbed the complainant by the neck and asked him if he knew what police were capable of these days" before dragging him for 100 metres behind a police car.

In the face of erupting social discontent, the bourgeois Alliance tops have increasingly given the police free rein to terrorise striking workers, immigrants and the township poor. Here are some of the other people killed by police and private security guards during strikes and service delivery protests over just the past two years: Petros Msiza, a shop steward from the COSATU-affiliated South African Municipal Workers Union who was picketing during a March 2011 strike by bus and refuse workers in Tshwane/Pretoria; Andries Tatane, a teacher and activist, during a service

delivery protest in Meqheleng, Ficksburg, in Free State Province in April 2011; three farmworkers in De Doorns and other towns in the Western Cape during the farmworkers strike between November 2012 and January 2013; four people during service delivery protests in February in Zamdela township, Sasolburg, in the Free State. The list goes on and on.

Last year, 30 cops from the infamous Cato Manor Organised Crime Unit in KwaZulu-Natal were charged with over 100 crimes, including 19 counts of murder. In Cape Town, 12 cops are also facing murder charges. There have been numerous reports of torture of arrested protesters, including many survivors of the Marikana massacre and strike leaders from other mines whom the cops have tried to intimidate. Over 900 people died in police custody in the space of a year during the reporting period 2008-09, a number that declined only slightly to 720 during the reporting period 2011-12. According to Cape Town journalist Palesa Morudu, "The highest number of killings by the apartheid police reached 763 in 1985, the year PW Botha declared a state of emergency" ("Human Rights Lessons from Mthethwa and Company", *Business Day*, 12 March).

The Tripartite Alliance government administers the capitalist state in defence of the same capitalist system as under apartheid and British colonial rule—a system that is still based on the superexploitation of mainly black labour and the grinding oppression of the mass of the non-white majority. And they have borrowed wholesale from the repressive machinery of apartheid white minority rule. Don't forget that some 270 Marikana mineworkers who survived the massacre were initially charged by the National Prosecuting Authority for murdering their own comrades on the basis of the apartheid-era "common cause" law! Many of these and other striking mineworkers still face various charges. **Drop all the charges against wildcat strikers!** It is urgently necessary for the entire working class to defend these workers and other victims of police repression, because otherwise the cops will be emboldened to clamp down on all of labour. **An injury to one is an injury to all!**

It is notable that there was a sharp increase in police killings before 2009. In those years, Zuma and his supporters campaigned for him to take over as leader of the ANC and the government, with a central focus on the call to "get tough on crime". In April 2008, then-deputy cop minister Susan Shabangu declared to a group of cops at an "anti-crime imbizo" in Pretoria: "You must kill the bastards if they threaten you or the community.... I want no warning shots. You have one shot and it must be a kill shot.... There are to be no negotiations with criminals." She was supported by Zuma, and in the years since, police commissioners and numerous government tops have declared that the cops must "shoot to kill".

The government then began "militarising" the police and creating and expanding special forces units like the Berets, who are regularly unleashed to brutalise and harass street vendors and anyone else trying to eke out a desperate existence. Of course, in the eyes of the capitalist rulers and their government ministers, the worst "crime" imaginable is for the working class to "violate public order" by challenging its position as wage slaves of the capitalists. It's no surprise that in the days before 16 August 2012 Susan Shabangu, now minister of mines in Zuma's government, howled along with

other Tripartite Alliance tops for the blood of the striking workers in Marikana, whom they denounced as "criminals"!

### For a Socialist Federation of Southern Africa

The grisly killing of Macia, an immigrant from Mozambique, has reminded many people of the sadistic cops who in 1998 were filmed using three Mozambican immigrants as training bait to incite police dogs against blacks. While in 1998 it was six white Afrikaner cops who reveled in carrying out that racist atrocity, this time it was a group of black cops. As we have repeatedly argued since 1994, the cops in this neo-apartheid system, whether black or white, are hired thugs of the (still mainly white) bourgeoisie who enforce racist terror against the black toilers and oppressed. This understanding is opposed to the false consciousness of black nationalism, which says that all black people—from black police and mining capitalists like Patrice Motsepe to the rock drill operators working in the mines—share a common interest that stands above class divisions.

When the racist attack on Mozambican immigrants was uncovered in 2000, we described how this and other racist atrocities at the time exposed the fairy tale of the "rainbow nation" ("Racist Terror in the 'New South Africa'", *#V No* 748, 15 December 2000). We emphasised in that article: "We either going to be multiracial class struggle or intertribal bloodletting. There can be no non-racial democracy in South Africa. It is only through a social revolution that racial domination can be put to an end. If the masses' frustration does not find expression along class lines, it will continue to fuel every other kind of division as different sections of the oppressed fight and kill each other over a few meagre crumbs from the capitalists."

This warning was confirmed, in the negative, most starkly by the outbreak in May 2008 of the anti-immigrant pogroms that spread across townships throughout the country and took the lives of 62 people. These attacks were encouraged by state repression against immigrants. For example, almost 205 000 Zimbabweans were deported in 2007. During the May 2008 pogroms that followed, the police mostly looked on approvingly or joined in terrorising immigrants. In 2010-11, the state began a campaign to crack down on immigrants, ending the "special dispensation" that had allowed Zimbabweans to stay in the country without documentation. As a result, there were nearly 43 000



January 9: Rally in Cape Town of striking black and coloured farmworkers from De Doorns. Gallo

deportations to Zimbabwe between October 2011 and October 2012. Many other immigrants are still being held at the Lindela deportation camp in the West Rand, where inmates rioted in March 2012 against hellish conditions.

State terror is wind in the sails of the reactionary mobs carrying out attacks in the streets, which have been on the rise. In May this year, anti-immigrant attacks broke out like wildfire across the country. From Diepsloot and Orange Farm, near Johannesburg, to townships around Port Elizabeth, dozens of shops—mainly ones owned by Somalis—were looted, and at least one Somali immigrant was killed, stoned to death. Various “business forums” of South African shop owners have fanned the flames for the attacks, complaining of “unfair competition” from immigrants. We support the efforts that immigrants in a number of areas have made to organise self-defence. In addition to this, some township residents have bravely come out to oppose the attacks. What’s urgently needed are integrated, multiethnic defence guards based on the organised working class.

Class struggle provides the basis on which ethnic, national and other divisions within the working class can be overcome and class unity forged against the bourgeoisie’s divide-and-rule tactics. An example of this can be seen in De Doorns in the Western Cape. In 2009, some 3 000 mostly Zimbabwean immigrants were forced to flee De Doorns following anti-immigrant attacks. Three years later, De Doorns was at the heart of the wildcat strikes by farmworkers throughout the Western Cape demanding an increase in the minimum wage to R150 per day. The white farmers and the racist Democratic Alliance provincial government tried to foment divisions between coloured and Xhosa workers, and between South African and foreign workers. But the workers resisted this, and immigrants from Lesotho and Zimbabwe played a prominent role in the leadership of the strike. Since the strike ended, there have been threats by farmers to hire immigrant workers as a way of getting around the increased minimum wage of R105 per day and of fueling anti-immigrant bigotry. It is an urgent task of the workers movement to fight to organise immigrant workers into trade unions, linking this to a fight for *full citizenship rights* and against state repression and discrimination of any kind.

The key is to build a revolutionary internationalist leadership which recognises that the interests of the working class are irreconcilable with the capitalist system. A Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party that will act as tribune of the oppressed, fighting against all manifestations of capitalist oppression and opposing all forms of bourgeois nationalism, must be built. The national borders in sub-Saharan Africa, as in many parts of the Third World, are completely artificial. They were imposed by the imperialist colonisers, who fought among each other to carve out spheres of domination, drawing arbitrary borders that would suit this purpose.

Our perspective is for a *socialist federation of Southern Africa*. Then the current domination of the region by South Africa’s racist rulers will be replaced by a system in which the relatively advanced South African economy can be put to use on the basis of rational planning and collectivised ownership of the means of production, to raise the living standards of the masses throughout the region. This must be part of fighting to link up with workers revolutions in the imperialist centres and creating an international planned socialist economy, which is necessary to lift Africa out of poverty.

It is from our revolutionary internationalist framework that we address the death of 13 South African army (SANDF) troops earlier this year, who were deployed in the Central African Republic (CAR). They were killed when some 200 South African troops were sent packing by insurgents of the Seleka military coalition, who went on to depose the regime of Francois Bozizé that the SANDF was trying to help prop up. In response, there was an outpouring of chauvinism in the bourgeois media and by the government in South Africa about the “fallen heroes” of the SANDF. Amid this, little note was taken of the carnage wreaked on the population of the CAR, one of the world’s poorest countries, where it is estimated that more than 200 000 people had been displaced by mid 2012, and up to 30 000 have fled the country since the latest fighting broke out.

Both Bozizé and the insurgents who deposed him are reactionary tin-pot dictators who have appealed to the American and European imperialists for support. For its part, the South African army was deployed in an attempt to demonstrate the Zuma government’s reliability in guaranteeing “stability” so that the South African capitalists and their imperialist senior partners could plunder the diamonds and other mineral wealth in the CAR. (The government suffered a black eye with the death of the 13 soldiers and apparently withdrew the others at least temporarily.) South African troops are currently stationed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan as part of African Union (AU) contingents, which act as adjuncts to the United Nations and other imperialist forces.

In September 1998 the South African government launched a military invasion of Lesotho by South African and Botswana troops. While using the pretext of saving the government from the threat of a developing mutiny, the first target of the South Africans was a group of 16 sleeping Lesotho Defence Force members who were killed guarding the Katse Dam away from Maseru (the capital of Lesotho), where the uprising was taking place. The Katse Dam provides fresh water to South Africa’s industrial hub of Gauteng Province. Scores of other Lesotho citizens lost their lives as a result of this invasion.

The use of the military abroad is a reflection of how the bourgeois state is used at home to oppress the working class and the poor: Don’t forget that the SANDF was also sent to Marikana and surrounding areas to reinforce the police against the striking mineworkers. We say: ***South African, AU troops out of the CAR, DRC and Sudan! UN, French and other imperialists get out!***

### **The State and Revolution**

The National Prosecuting Authority took the step of charging the Daveyton cops caught on video killing Macia with murder, and the judge denied them bail. This is “damage control”, designed, like the bogus Farlam commission of inquiry into the Marikana massacre, to let people blow off some steam and to whitewash the capitalist state. Anybody with illusions that justice for the victims of police terror will be granted by the courts and prosecution, which are part of the same bourgeois state, should look at the case of the teacher Andries Tatane. The cops who killed Tatane were caught *on camera* shooting him at pointblank range with rubber bullets, and he died minutes later with those bullets lodged in his heart and lungs. That was April 2011. Some two



years later, the trial concluded on March 28 with all the cops getting off without even a token slap on the wrist!

This shows yet again that *there is no justice in the bourgeois courts*. No amount of reformist tinkering with the machinery of state repression can change the viciously racist and brutal nature of the neo-apartheid police. V. I. Lenin explained in *The State and Revolution* (1917): “The state is a product and a manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonisms objectively *cannot* be reconciled.” The state is an instrument for the oppression of one class by another—under capitalism, for the oppression and exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie.

As Lenin wrote, the state power “consists of special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc., at their command”. There is no way to reform the capitalist state machinery to make it serve the interests of the workers and oppressed. It must be smashed through workers revolution and replaced by a state that can serve the interests of the majority, the dictatorship of the proletariat. In Lenin’s words: “Every revolution, by destroying the state apparatus, clearly shows us how the ruling class strives to restore the special bodies of armed men which serve *it*, and how the oppressed class strives to create a new organisation of this kind, capable of serving the exploited instead of the exploiters.”

Since the 1990s, the pass laws, Group Areas Act and countless other apartheid laws upholding white minority rule are no more. But the material, social basis of apartheid, which is rooted in the superexploitation of black labour, remains unshaken. The Tripartite Alliance government administers a neo-apartheid capitalist system. In almost 20 years, nothing has changed in the grinding poverty and exploitation suffered by the overwhelming majority of blacks and other non-whites, and in many ways their conditions have deteriorated. On the other hand, a handful of black elites have enriched themselves by joining in the exploitation of “their own people” and acting as political front men and labour lieutenants for the white Randlords and their imperialist senior partners, who continue to dominate the economy.

The reformist leaders of COSATU and the SACP spout all kinds of anti-Marxist nonsense about the South African state being a “class-contested terrain”, etc. This is just an attempt to justify the countless wretched betrayals they have carried out in the service of their alliance with the ANC. The Tripartite Alliance is a nationalist popular front through which the working-class base of COSATU and the SACP are subordinated to their own exploiters, while the leaders of those organisations have joined the capitalist government, thereby taking responsibility for administering the racist capitalist system.

While SACP leader Blade Nzimande currently serves as minister of higher education in the Zuma government which oversaw the Marikana massacre, earlier SACP government ministers included Charles Nqakula as minister of the cops and Ronnie Kasrils as spy minister, both under the Thabo Mbeki government. COSATU includes among its affiliates the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU), while other COSATU affiliates also organise security guards and police and the SACP welcomes cops as “comrades” in its own organisation. This is suicidal fraternisation with the capitalist exploiters’ shock troops, the deadly enemies of the working class.



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In the fight against police terror, class-conscious militants must demand: **Cops, prison guards, security guards out of the unions!** This is part of the struggle for the political and organisational independence of the working class from the bourgeoisie, its state and its parties. We seek to break the Tripartite Alliance along class lines, winning pro-communist militants from COSATU and the SACP to forging the Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party that can lead a revolutionary struggle against this rotten system. A new leadership of the unions, based on a programme of class struggle, must come to the fore in the course of building the revolutionary party.

The sellout SACP and COSATU tops are aided and abetted by pseudo-socialist outfits like the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), Keep Left! and the Workers International Vanguard Party (WIVP), all of which push the grotesque reformist lie that the cops are fellow workers. The DSM has recently been trying to capitalise on the prominence it gained through the mineworkers strike wave by forming a “new mass workers party”, the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP). At a meeting to launch WASP in Pretoria on March 21, the DSM welcomed a “union” of private security guards and invited them to address the crowd as one of the organisations (another was the WIVP) supporting the formation of WASP!

Despite the SACP’s talk about the “national democratic revolution”, South Africa never had a revolution of any sort. The much-vaunted “most democratic constitution in the world” was the outcome of a *negotiated settlement* between the white rulers and the ANC/Alliance tops, the latter of whom betrayed the struggle for black freedom in order to ensure a “smooth transition”, i.e., to avoid upsetting the capitalist profit machine. As a result, and with the explosive social contradictions of this society, the democratic rights that were granted have always been reversible and bourgeois parliamentary democracy highly unstable. We are witnessing this today, as the social contradictions begin to explode and protests by the working class and other oppressed layers are met with increasingly brutal, deadly state repression.

The workers and the oppressed do not need reformist and liberal sermonising and hand-wringing about the rights supposedly guaranteed by the bourgeois constitution. They need a leadership that points clearly to the class interests behind the machinery of state terror, and to the revolutionary struggle needed to put an end to grinding immiseration and repression. The only salvation is a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party fighting for a black-centred workers government and new October Revolutions all over the world. ■

## COSATU Divisions...

(continued from page 32)

capitalist system is reaching an explosive level, leading to differences among the Alliance tops over the best way to respond. That 560 protests in Gauteng Province alone were recorded between 1 April and 10 May is but one example of how deep the impatience of the poor masses has become.

The Tripartite Alliance is a South African variant of the popular front, a coalition of reformist-led workers organisations (the Stalinist-derived SACP as well as the COSATU union federation) with bourgeois parties (the ANC) for the purpose of administering capitalist rule. The popular front is commonly employed by the bourgeoisie to deal with a restive and militant working class by co-opting the pro-capitalist leaders of the workers organisations into the government coalition, giving them the task of implementing and defending capitalist attacks on their members. The popular front is a betrayal of the proletariat. Such coalitions never serve to transform the capitalist government into serving the interests of the workers—as the reformist misleaders claim—but rather have always meant increased attacks on the workers, paving the way for open reaction.

The Zuma regime has reacted to opposition and anger from the base of society by using more repressive measures. Part of the fallout with the hypocritical, occasionally left-talking bureaucrats like Vavi and NUMSA leader Irvin Jim signifies the changing governing needs of the ANC-led Alliance. As the ruling strategy rapidly evolves from cooptation to brazen repression, the role of illusion-breeding pretentious critics is becoming unnecessary. At the same time, last year's wave of wildcat strikes and the dramatic collapse of the NUM in the platinum belt, in particular, have led influential sections of the bourgeoisie to seriously question the ability of the COSATU bureaucracy to keep the workers under control. The decision by the Chamber of Mines to terminate the "special arrangement" whereby it pays the salaries of top union officials, mainly from the NUM, is one indicator of this (see article on page 3).

The response by COSATU bureaucrats like Vavi and Jim has been more hypocritical rhetoric about the need to overcome the "social distance" between the union leadership and membership, and other posturing to demonstrate their "independence". For example, at the ANC's national conference in Mangaung last year, leaders of COSATU were elected to the ANC's national executive committee (NEC) for the first time, where they will take open responsibility for the policies of the capitalist government and ANC. While a number of Vavi's prominent opponents accepted nominations to serve on the NEC, Vavi and Jim declined in order to maintain the appearance of distance from the ANC hierarchy and occasionally mouth off some criticisms of the government.

There have also been growing tensions between the COSATU and SACP tops, with Irvin Jim in particular criticising SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande for accepting a ministerial post in Zuma's government and calling on him to return to fulltime work for the SACP. The SACP has basically told COSATU to mind its own business. There are even speculations that Nzimande and Gwede Mantashe (ANC secretary general and former SACP

chairman) are behind the attempts to kick Vavi out of COSATU.

There is no question about the reactionary pro-capitalist politics of the pro-Zuma faction in the COSATU bureaucracy, but Vavi and his supporters share the same class-collaborationist programme. The posture of "independence" by Vavi, Jim and Co. is nothing but a hypocritical sham. The pro-capitalist demagogue Nzimande (one of Zuma's biggest fans and loudest apologists) for once said something truthful when he countered their criticisms by saying: "Those who say they do so [attack the ANC] because they are independent are wrong. **There is no independence in the alliance**" (*Mail & Guardian* online, 17 May, our emphasis). This is precisely the point about how the Tripartite Alliance nationalist popular front serves the rule of the capitalist exploiters! The interests of the working class are betrayed by subordinating it to an "alliance" with the bourgeoisie and its parties, in which the pro-capitalist tops—despite their occasional criticisms and complaints about government policy—confront their working-class base as representatives of the bourgeois alliance.

Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), does not support either faction of the COSATU bureaucracy, both of which are fundamentally committed to upholding the nationalist popular front. While the two wings of the pro-capitalist bureaucracy trade accusations and counter-accusations of corruption, we contend that the greatest corruption perpetrated by both factions is the **political crime** of selling out the independent interests of the proletariat to the racist capitalist rulers through the bourgeois ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance. (Next to the mountains of profits they have helped the bourgeoisie amass through the super-exploitation of the mainly black proletariat, the million rand sums the COSATU tops are bickering over amount to pocket change.) We are for breaking the Tripartite Alliance **along class lines**. This means setting the working-class base of COSATU and the SACP against the pro-capitalist tops and fighting for the **class independence** of the proletariat—organisational independence from and opposition to all wings of the bourgeoisie, bourgeois parties and the capitalist state.

The growing immiseration of the black majority along with the coloured and Indian toilers on the one hand, and the increased repression by the Tripartite Alliance government on the other, mean that there is a real possibility of an acute crisis developing soon. Explosive class struggle has the potential to blow the ANC/SACP/COSATU Alliance and the whole country apart. But the outcome of such a crisis will depend crucially on whether a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class can emerge—a party steeled in struggle and based on an internationalist programme of working-class rule to replace decaying capitalist imperialism.

The forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party is also crucial for the fight to replace the pro-capitalist misleaders of the trade unions (not only those affiliated to COSATU) with a class-struggle leadership. The urgent tasks facing the workers in their immediate struggles cannot be solved on the basis of a "shop floor" perspective, but require a revolutionary framework to struggle against the whole system of neo-apartheid capitalism. As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky explained in his work "Trade unions in the epoch of imperialist decay" (1940): "In the epoch of imperialist decay the trade unions can be really independent only to the extent

that they are conscious of being, in addition, the organs of proletarian revolution.”

### **Vavi's Class-Collaborationist Betrayals in the “New South Africa”**

Now that he is under attack from the pro-Zuma bureaucrats in COSATU, Zwelinzima Vavi is trying to portray himself as a champion of working-class interests against the capitalists and the government. Nothing could be further from the truth. As the longest serving head leader of COSATU, Vavi has been centrally responsible for keeping the most powerful unions in the country under the thumb of the capitalist government, assisting his comrades in the government as they carried out vicious neo-liberal attacks against the working class. These include the implementation of IMF- and World-Bank-dictated structural adjustment programmes demanding reduced government spending and cost-recovery. These measures saw mainly black, coloured and poor Indian townships being targeted for cutting off of basic services like water and electricity. Through privatisation, more than a million jobs were lost and many hospitals and clinics serving the poor were closed down. An estimated 330 000 people died between 2000 and 2005 as a result of the Mbeki government's “AIDS denialism” and the failure to provide life-prolonging anti-retroviral drugs.

Despite all these crimes against the poor by this capitalist government, Vavi continued his unwavering support. His modus operandi has always been selective left rhetoric against some government policies, sometimes leading to one or two protests or work stay-aways, designed to blow off steam and deflect pressure from the base of the unions. When election time came, Vavi would, without fail, not only call for the workers to give political support to their class enemies, but vigorously campaign for the electoral victory of his capitalist allies. Slogans like “COSATU—the workers' voice. ANC—the workers' choice” are the hallmarks of his misleadership of COSATU.

Under Vavi, COSATU has also continued to provide foot soldiers to carry out anti-working-class attacks as ministers in the capitalist government. Contrary to the tired lie that promoting COSATU bureaucrats to leading positions in the government and ANC will help make them “pro-working class”, many of these turncoats have gained reputations as the most hostile and pronounced enemies of the working class and the poor just think of Susan Shabangu, Gwede Mantashe, or Cyril Ramaphosa.

At the same time, Vavi has proven himself time and again to be a trustworthy strike-breaker on behalf of the bourgeoisie and his friends in government. To mention just a few recent examples, in 2010 Vavi sold out the public workers strike after initially falsely promising to call solidarity strikes by more strategic mining, industrial and commercial workers. Early last year he strangled a strike by SADTU members in the Eastern Cape and unsuccessfully tried to break a number of the 2012 wildcat strikes in the mines.

When the government committed one of the most gruesome massacres against organised labour in Marikana last August, Vavi closed ranks with other Alliance tops against the workers who were killed for fighting against slave working conditions, many of whom remained NUM members. In fact, Vavi thanked Zuma for showing strong leadership, and several months later joined the rest of the



Jordi Matas

### **Vavi and Zuma embrace during 11<sup>th</sup> national congress of COSATU, September 2012.**

COSATU bureaucracy in backing Zuma against Kgalema Motlanthe in the elections for president at the ANC's Mangaung conference in December 2012. (To get an idea of Vavi's utter hypocrisy, in 2011 he had declared to a SADTU regional meeting in Durban, “I will never back anyone who is accused of corruption” —a hardly-veiled reference to Zuma.) We of Spartacist/South Africa opposed any support to either faction of this party of the class enemy, just as in 2007 we opposed both sides when Zuma faced off against then ANC president, Thabo Mbeki.

### **Vavi and Zuma: Friends Turned Foes**

In the past, Vavi used the working-class base of COSATU as a pawn in Zuma's battle with Mbeki. He hailed Zuma as a “friend” of the working class, and in June 2008 caused an outcry when he announced he was prepared to kill and be killed for Zuma. Now that Vavi's relationship with Zuma has soured, he wants to mobilise the workers to fend off attacks from Zuma's supporters within COSATU. The chickens have come home to roost. In 2008, Vavi led the purging of Willie Madisha, who was then COSATU president and an Mbeki supporter. Now he is crying foul when what he did to Madisha for not supporting Zuma is being done to him for the same reason.

Vavi's support for Zuma's second term was accompanied by calls for a “Lula moment” in South Africa. This was a reference to the government in Brazil from 2003-2010 under president Luiz Ignacio “Lula” da Silva, who was once one of the most famous labour leaders in Latin America. Lula's government used his immense authority over the workers movement to impose the IMF-dictated austerity measures that his predecessors could not achieve. In fact, during his first year in office the Lula government produced a budget surplus exceeding that demanded by the IMF. This was achieved by cutting social expenditure and massive retrenchments. Within a year of Lula in power, unemployment rose by 600 000, pensions were slashed; these and other attacks led to a strike of some 800 000 public workers lasting over a month (for more, see “Lula's Popular Front Turns Screws on Workers”, *Workers Vanguard* No. 818, 23 January 2004).

The coalition that brought Lula into power was an example of a popular front coalition like the Tripartite Alliance. The record of Lula's government provides incontestable evidence that he attacked the working class and the poor to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie—exactly what all popular front governments have done, and exactly

what the Tripartite Alliance government has done since 1994. Vavi and other COSATU bureaucrats pushing the “Lula moment” slogan argued that there was a decisive change in Brazil when Lula began his second term as president, and that he became more “decisive”, which is what they would like Zuma to do. Lula’s “decisiveness” was in the service of administering capitalism. Whatever increase there was in economic growth was on the basis of brutal attacks on the workers and poor, resulted above all in increased profits for the local capitalists and imperialist investors, and remains subject to the ebbs and flows of the crisis-ridden world economy. Indeed, Brazil remains one of the most unequal societies in the world, rivalling South Africa. The fact that Vavi sees Lula’s presidency as something to strive for says a lot about him—maybe he is hoping to put himself forward as “South Africa’s Lula” in case he gets booted out of the Tripartite Alliance?!

### **NUMSA Leadership: Talk Left, Walk Right**

The picture of class-collaborationist betrayals is fundamentally no different if you look at Vavi’s most outspoken supporters, Irvin Jim and the NUMSA leadership. The NUMSA leaders have become known as the most left-talking among COSATU affiliates. For example, after the Marikana massacre the NUMSA Central Committee was one of the only leading bodies in COSATU to issue a clear-cut denunciation of the police. Their press statement of 2 September 2012 even noted, quite correctly, that with the Marikana massacre, “the police have violently reminded us once again what Marx and Lenin taught us about the state: that it is always an organ of class rule and class oppression and that bourgeois democracy is nothing but the best political shell behind which the bourgeoisie hides its dictatorship.”

But the NUMSA bureaucrats’ occasional use of revolutionary rhetoric only serves to give a “Marxist-Leninist” veneer to their pursuit of class-collaborationist politics. Thus the very same NUMSA CC statement applauded the response by “Comrade Jacob Zuma” to the massacre! Just like Vavi and the rest of the COSATU tops, Jim and the other NUMSA leaders are wholly committed to the alliance with the bourgeois-nationalist ANC and the Tripartite Alliance government. They too have a long history of betrayals of workers struggles in the “new South Africa”.

This history goes back to even before the 1994 elections that brought the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance to power. When a militant sit-down strike by workers at the Mercedes-Benz plant in East London threatened to create problems for the Alliance tops’ pursuit of negotiations with the apartheid rulers in 1990, they moved in to reassure the white minority regime that they would police the black proletariat. It was NUMSA leader Moses Mayekiso who, along with SACP leader Joe Slovo, went to East London to strangle the strike. In May 2013, some 1 600 workers at the East London Mercedes plant went out on a two-day wildcat strike to protest disciplinary threats by management against a section of the workforce. It was widely reported that this was the first strike at the East London plant in over 20 years, meaning the 1990 strike that Mayekiso and Co. ended was one of the last industrial actions up to the present day!

Following the 1994 elections, the ANC-led government of Nelson Mandela set as a top priority creating an investor-friendly environment as part of establishing its credentials as

dependable overseers in the eyes of the Randlords and their imperialist senior partners. The framework for neo-apartheid capitalism was shaped by the capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92, which ended the possibility for Third World nationalist regimes to manoeuvre between the US imperialists and the degenerated workers state. The ANC demanded discipline and stability from its junior partners, the SACP and COSATU, and they obliged. Old slogans from the anti-apartheid struggle like “insurrection” and “people’s power” (a populist formula which dissolves the working-class into a classless “people”) were discarded and replaced with calls for “reconstruction accords”, for increased “labour productivity and flexibility”, and other schemes promoting the bogus notion of “social partnership” between the workers and the capitalists.

The NUMSA leadership played a leading role in advancing these class-collaborationist schemes. This included a number of watershed agreements between the NUMSA bureaucracy and Volkswagen South Africa (VWSA) in the mid-late 1990s, whose net effect was binding the union in taking responsibility for the profitability of the bosses’ enterprise. This included increased labour “flexibility” through the hated casualisation schemes that are currently dominated by the use of bloodsucking labour brokers. Other deals included agreeing to speed-ups on the production line, cuts in December holiday leave and other concessions in order for VWSA to get contracts for producing car models. In all this, the NUMSA leaders worked closely with the bureaucracy of the German metalworkers union IG Metal, who were well-versed at selling treacherous “social partnership” deals to increase profits for the German imperialists.

The NUMSA leaders were ruthless in their suppression of oppositionists within the union who sought to challenge their sell-out deals. One such opposition group emerged in the late 1990s among some shop stewards and workers in the VWSA Uitenhage plant, initially calling itself a “Concerned Group” and later “Indlu ye ngwevu”. These were mainly older workers who had participated in the militant struggles against apartheid of the 1980s and correctly saw the new “social partnership” as undermining the hard-won gains of class struggle.

The NUMSA bureaucracy’s purge of these union militants—using suspensions, expulsions and even the bourgeois courts—was completed during the dismissal in February 2000 of almost 1 400 workers following a wildcat strike at VWSA in Uitenhage. Treacherously, the SACP and COSATU leaders took the side of the VWSA management in supporting these dismissals. Just two days before the mass dismissals, a leaflet was issued by the provincial leadership of NUMSA advertising a strike-breaking meeting addressed by the general secretary of COSATU, one Zwelinzima Vavi: “Vavi will urge all NUMSA members to go back to work and distance themselves from agent provocateurs [sic] bent on disturbing production at the plant.” The contact person listed on this leaflet? One Irvin Jim, who was then provincial leader of NUMSA in the Eastern Cape.

### **COSATU Tops Ride the “Gravy Train”**

The material basis for these betrayals is provided by the perks and privileges which the COSATU bureaucrats have gained under neo-apartheid, resulting in a standard of living

and outlook which puts them much closer to the bosses than to their working-class base. This phenomenon in the labour movement internationally was analysed in Trotsky's "Trade unions in the epoch of imperialist decay", where he noted that the labour lieutenants of capital get crumbs from the tables of the capitalists in exchange for disciplining the working class in the interests of preserving the capitalist system. (For more on the trade union bureaucracy, readers are also referred to the reprint from Max Schachtman's book *Fight for Socialism*, page 8.)

After 1994, the leaders of COSATU and its affiliate unions set up union investment companies behind the backs of their members. While they sought to justify this as a measure to supposedly break the stranglehold of white capital on the economy and to extend participation in the economic activities of the country to the "previously" disadvantaged communities, the facts prove that only the union tops have benefitted. Many of them leave union posts as multimillionaires, and some former union leaders like Cyril Ramaphosa have become part of the handful of black capitalists in the still predominantly white capitalist ruling class. The union bureaucrats' investment companies are frequently involved in the most scandalous low-wage companies and sometimes in projects which the union tops are at the same time cynically mobilising COSATU members to protest against. Meanwhile, workers do not even get strike funds to help sustain themselves during the usually bitter struggles against the bosses.

The *Daily Maverick* recently exposed one of the most scandalous cases of the union tops receiving pay-offs from the bosses. That paper uncovered how NUM leaders, from local shop stewards through top regional and national leaders, have literally been on the payrolls of mining capitalists, getting paid high salaries by the bosses they are supposed to protect their members from. The response by NUM spokesman Lesiba Seshoka was effectively to say that this kind of class treason is the norm in COSATU.

Vavi has hypocritically complained about the "social distance" between union functionaries and the rank-and-file members, and tries to profile himself as an anti-corruption fighter. This has clearly angered his opponents in the COSATU bureaucracy, especially when he raises a stink about their dirty dealings or those of Zuma. But this corruption is inherent to the workings of the class-collaborationist Tripartite Alliance (and to capitalism in general), which is based on the workers' misleaders delivering "stability" to the capitalist exploiters and which Vavi has been so central to maintaining.

Moreover, Vavi's cries against inequality are simply

empty hypocrisy. In 2009 Vavi doubled his salary from R250 000 to R500 000 a year, a salary that dwarfs those of the COSATU membership (and of COSATU's administrators and researchers). Vavi also gets compensated as a director in different bourgeois institutions including the Industrial Development Corporation. This state-owned entity is tasked with providing money to new industrial capitalists. He has also not differed from his opponents in using political connections to open up business deals for family members. The COSATU secretary attributes his comfortable life style, including a R2,9 million home in Sandton, to his wife's income. Vavi's wife Noluthando Vavi is a director of six companies, including Zwelothando Minerals and Resources and Zwelothando Trading Enterprise. She has had joint business ventures with president Jacob Zuma's second wife, Nompumelelo Ntuli—one of which was started only months before Zuma's election as ANC president following a campaign led centrally by Vavi, Blade Nzimande and the bourgeois populist Julius Malema.

### Lessons of the Anti-Apartheid Struggle

At a recent 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary memorial of the assassination of former SACP general secretary Chris Hanu, Vavi and Nzimande got involved in a public spat that is uncharacteristic of the Tripartite Alliance leaders. Vavi claimed that Hanu would never have joined the government and said before his death he would scrutinise the new "democratic" state to ensure it lived up to its promises. Nzimande objected to Vavi's insinuations, pointing out that it was not possible to tell what Hanu would or would not have done after his death.

Vavi is pushing illusions in Hanu that are held by lots of people who are disillusioned with the current state of things. The fact of the matter is that Hanu's political programme was *no different* from that of the rest of the Tripartite Alliance tops: power-sharing with the former apartheid rulers and maintaining South African capitalism. His main difference was that he used more militant tactics, including threats of the resumption of armed struggle during the negotiations, to achieve exactly the same goals as the rest of his comrades.

Illusions such as this have become common in the face of mounting anger and disillusionment over the results of almost twenty years of neo-apartheid capitalism administered by the Tripartite Alliance. These illusions serve to deflect from the crucial lessons that working-class militants and others who hate this racist capitalist system need to draw from the anti-apartheid struggle and its outcome. The SACP and COSATU led millions of workers who struggled militantly against apartheid, and many of them wanted to replace it with

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socialism. But the leadership opposed proletarian revolution and instead promoted an alliance with the petty-bourgeois nationalist ANC with the aim of a so-called democratic (i.e. capitalist), “non-racist, non-sexist” South Africa. In this way, the militancy of the working class was steered in the direction of the treacherous negotiated settlement with the apartheid butchers.

All this was not a “mistake” on the part of the SACP leaders, but flowed from the SACP’s Menshevik-Stalinist programme of “two-stage revolution”. This is the programme of supporting the “progressive” bourgeoisie in the first stage, which supposedly will later evolve into the second stage of socialism in the indefinite future. Experience of the two-stage “theory” in reality has always shown that in the first stage, Communists mobilise the working class to help the bourgeois nationalists come to power, and in the second stage, the nationalists butcher the working class. The Marikana massacre was not the first time this happened. Previous disasters resulting from the “two-stage” strategy include the failed Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, the beheading of one of the world’s largest Communist parties in Indonesia in 1965, and the “popular front” of Allende in Chile paving the way for Pinochet’s bloody coup in 1973. It is necessary to assimilate the lessons from the history of international class struggle in order to go forward, and this requires a revolutionary vanguard party with a Marxist programme based on those lessons.

Another crucial lesson from the anti-apartheid struggle is that black workers cannot defend or further their interests simply through trade union struggle, however militant. This can be seen most clearly in the fate of the so-called “workerists”, who were at one time a dominant force in the leadership of the black trade union movement that emerged in the 1970s. The “workerist” tendency, represented by the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), was generally distrustful of the ANC, believing it would ride roughshod over the working class once in power as other post-independence nationalist regimes in Africa had done. But their answer to this fear (which proved quite correct) was to limit the tasks of the trade unions to shop-floor issues and try to “ignore” politics, leaving the struggle for national liberation of the black masses from apartheid to the leadership of the petty-bourgeois nationalist ANC.

The “workerists” had *no programme or perspective* for leading the struggle against national oppression, something which would have meant challenging the ANC and other nationalist organisations politically. But when the township revolt of the 1980s broke out, the FOSATU unions could not stand passively outside the mass upheaval against apartheid, so the result was that they participated in the struggle by accepting the dominant ANC leadership. COSATU was formed in 1985 from the merger of the NUM, FOSATU, and pro-ANC unions. The COSATU unions soon emerged as the main organisations of mass, militant black struggle, for example mobilising 340 000 mineworkers at the height of the 1987 gold strike. However, the growing social and political power of COSATU was paralleled by its increasing subordination to the ANC.

Irvin Jim and some other supporters of Vavi have been branded “workerists” by some of their opponents within the COSATU bureaucracy. But this is an invention of the Zuma loyalists in COSATU, who want to silence *any criticism* of the ANC and government. Jim and the current NUMSA

leaders are quite clear and open in their political support for the ANC, including endorsing Zuma’s second term and recently declaring their willingness to support the ANC in the 2014 elections. Moses Mayekiso, a prominent “workerist” in the early 1980s, later made his peace with the “populists” of the pro-ANC unions and joined the SACP. Since then the leadership of NUMSA has been consistently pro-Alliance and pro-ANC. Mayekiso’s strangling of the 1990 Mercedes strike was just one clear indicator of this.

The leaders of the Association for Mining and Construction Union (AMCU) have made a big show of declaring themselves to be “non-political”. But despite their refusal to formally endorse any political parties, the AMCU leaders do have politics and these politics are class-collaborationist. AMCU is affiliated to the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU). NACTU is politically aligned to the Pan Africanist Congress and Black Consciousness Movement, which are fundamentally no different from the ANC in their bourgeois-nationalist politics. Meanwhile, AMCU president Joseph Mathunjwa has on many instances expressed his dislike of “illegal and unprocedural” strikes. He recently clashed with the workers committees at Anglo American Platinum and other mines in the Rustenburg area, denouncing their strike actions and working to send the mineworkers back to the shafts (see article on page 3).

Before and after the wildcat strikes last year, there has been a massive wave of resignations from the NUM across the platinum belt, with most of those mineworkers joining AMCU, which is now the majority union at the big platinum mines. Revolutionaries generally favour organising all workers of an industry in one union to maximise their strength, but we do not condemn all splits within the trade-union movement out of hand; these need to be judged on a case-by-case basis. It is the NUM tops’ betrayals that are fundamentally responsible for undermining workers’ unity in the mining industry, and if the majority of workers want to join AMCU it is their right. But as the class collaboration of Mathunjwa and other AMCU leaders underline, new unions are not in and of themselves enough to resist the bosses’ attacks. What’s needed is a *political* fight for a class-struggle leadership to replace the pro-capitalist sell-outs both within COSATU and in other federations like NACTU. This is a crucial part of the struggle to build a revolutionary party that champions the interests of all the exploited and oppressed.

### **Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Vanguard Party to Fight for a Black-Centred Workers Government!**

During last year’s wildcat strike wave, we called for and supported the formation of joint strike committees based on elected local mine committees. Such committees would organise and unify the miners’ struggles irrespective of union affiliation. They would fight to ensure equal pay for equal work, striving to drive out the parasitic labour brokers. They would coordinate workers defence guards to stop scabs and organise defence against cop thugs, as well as promoting demands in the interests of the surrounding poor black communities and mobilising to defend immigrants against the police and mob attacks. Elected strike committees would more democratically reflect the will of the workers than existing union bodies, and they would embrace broader sections of the working masses. An effective strike committee would, in periods of prolonged and intense struggle, take over

many of the functions of running society like coordinating provisioning of food and medical care. This would provide an invaluable experience for the workers and instill the consciousness of their own ability to organise society on the basis of proletarian state power.

But this depends on a *revolutionary leadership* emerging, one which is firmly rooted in the working class and has a clear programme to fight for a black-centred workers government to end neo-apartheid capitalist slavery. At the height of the anti-apartheid struggle there was a development of spontaneous working-class organisations much broader than the official trade unions. These covered many factories and plants in a particular locality and involved the unemployed, community organisations and the youth. The task of these area committees was to coordinate and promote solidarity of workers' struggles within a particular local and between different locals, and they included other worker formations outside of COSATU, like NACTU.

But while these area committees had great potential because of the working masses they encompassed and the struggles they coordinated, the leadership was committed to maintaining capitalism and the alliance with the ANC. No criticism of the participating organisations was tolerated. In this way, the political hegemony of the ANC was protected and the black proletariat was used to haul the ideological cart of nationalism. We are for *workers democracy* within the working-class organisations. This includes open debate and criticism of political programmes, which are required for the workers to hold their leaders accountable and learn to reject reformist dead-ends.

One such dead-end can be found in the reformist politics pushed by the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), whose activity around the workers committees in the Rustenburg area was highly publicised in the media. The DSM used the prominence it gained during the wildcat strikes to launch a new "mass workers party", the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP), on the basis of a reformist, trade-union economist programme. In fact, up until 1996 the DSM's predecessors were buried inside a mass *bourgeois* party, the ANC, and *opposed* the call for a workers party. For example, in 1994 the current leader of the Committee for a Workers' International to which the DSM is affiliated, Peter Taafe, said: "The slogan of a workers party was an incorrect slogan in the period prior to the elections in South Africa. We wanted the biggest possible ANC majority." Their deep-seated reformism is further confirmed by their grotesque position that cops are "workers in uniform". Even the brutal murder of the Marikana workers has not convinced these reformists about the suicidal nature of this position.

The national oppression of the non-white majority is too deep, multifaceted and structural to ever be addressed through trade-union struggle alone or any other reformist solution. The proletariat must place itself at the head of the struggle for the national liberation of the black African people as well as the coloureds and Indians, a struggle culminating in a black-centred workers government. The success of a socialist revolution in South Africa requires its international extension. What we wrote in "South Africa Powder Keg" (*Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 12, February 1995) retains its force today:

"For the moment South Africa is a weakened link in the chain of the world capitalist system binding the neocolonies of the Third World to the imperialist states of

## Defend Liv Shange!

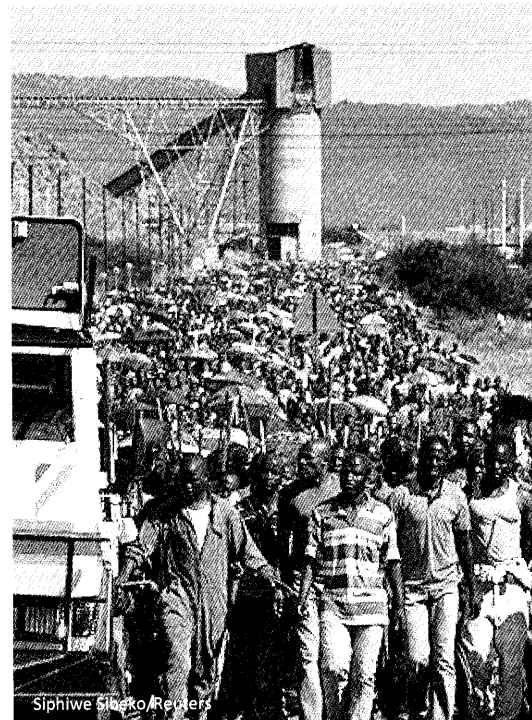
On 23 June, the *Sunday Independent* reported that Home Affairs and state intelligence services have begun an investigation of the immigration status of Liv Shange—a leading member of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM)—as well as her role in the wildcat strikes in the mines. This is a blatant attempt to silence and repress a leftist activist who has prominently supported the mineworkers. The victimisation of Shange is part of the continued state vendetta against the mineworkers. It comes right before the contract negotiations in the gold industry which are expected to result in more strikes, as the government is considering deploying the army to the platinum belt (again), and as more and more mining bosses are threatening and carrying out mass sackings in retaliation against strikes. Defending Shange is in the interest of the left and workers movement as a whole, which is facing increased repression from the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance government.

In early June, ANC secretary general Gwede Mantashe gave the signal for the state witchhunt. In a clear reference to Shange (who is from Sweden) and the DSM, Mantashe lashed out at "people who are from far away... Sweden, Irish [sic]. They are a force behind the anarchy that is happening in the platinum industry." Shange, who has been married to a South African citizen since 2004 and has a family here, is currently visiting Sweden, and Home Affairs is threatening to prevent her from returning. As a smokescreen for the government's blatant political persecution, they are claiming that Shange was in the country illegally, when in fact she was issued a spousal visa and followed all of Home Affairs' bureaucratic procedures to get a replacement when her passport was stolen in 2010. We demand that she be allowed to return to South Africa and given full citizenship rights. **Government hands off Liv Shange and the DSM!**

North America, West Europe and Japan. It is necessary to mobilize the forces of the proletariat to *break* that chain at its weakest links, and then fight like hell to take the battle to the imperialist centers, seeking allies against the vicious enemy of all the oppressed international capital." That requires a revolutionary internationalist vanguard party, which is what we are fighting to build. ■

# COSATU Divided, ANC/SACP/COSATU Popular Front in Crisis

## Break With the Bourgeois Tripartite Alliance!



Gallo

**Above: COSATU leaders Vavi and Dlamini—who are now at each other's throats—closed ranks last year against striking mineworkers. Right: Lonmin workers walk off the job in September, less than a month after cops of bourgeois Tripartite Alliance government killed 34 of their comrades.**

Siphwe Sibeko/Reuters

## Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Party to Fight for a Black-Centred Workers Government!

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is faced with the worst crisis since its inception about three decades ago. At the centre of the tensions is the attempt by supporters of Jacob Zuma to purge COSATU's general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi. This has pitted various top bureaucrats from different affiliates, as well as within some affiliates, against each other in pro- and anti-Vavi factions. The two biggest COSATU affiliates, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) are on opposing sides. The NUM leaders are anti-Vavi, while NUMSA is leading those defending him. In some of the affiliates like the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), top bureaucrats are divided between those supporting and those against Vavi. The base of the unions is generally more supportive of Vavi than most of their leaders.

Supporters of Vavi think he is being victimised for being a vocal critic of the government, while his opponents complain

about his "oppositionist" stance. In fact, all wings of the bureaucracy prop up the bourgeois government via the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance a nationalist popular front chaining the workers to the capitalist exploiters. In the lead-up to the 27 May meeting of COSATU's National Executive Committee (NEC), top African National Congress (ANC) honchos intervened to prevent what looked like a split in the making. The ANC bourgeois nationalists heavily rely on COSATU to deliver the working class as voting cows and would not tolerate any COSATU split on the eve of the 2014 general elections.

### Nationalist Popular Front Unravelling

The current squabbles among the top Tripartite Alliance bureaucrats are only symptoms of the deepening class contradictions in society. Among the oppressed majority, the anger against the ravages of the post-1994 neo-apartheid

*continued on page 26*