

# ZABALAZA

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



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# Asgisa: A Working Class Critique

by Lucien van der Walt

***The announcement of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative – South Africa (Asgisa) in 2006 has been met with some enthusiasm in left and labour circles. There is, however, very little to be excited about.***

The SA Communist Party (SACP) praised the Asgisa programme soon after its launch. Blade Nzimande admitted that Asgisa was not a new macro-economic policy, and that it ignored “logistics” relevant to the working class, like decent transport and education.<sup>1</sup> Even so, he was “broadly” upbeat, claiming to see signs of a shift towards “an active developmental state ... a comprehensive industrial policy and ... integrated local development planning”, a “welcome shift.” All reasonable people, he added, “agree with the relevance” of promoting a competitive national economy.

Cosatu was more openly critical, criticising Asgisa at its September 2006 congress. The union federation went on to argue for its usual social democratic and nationalist project: expand the State sector, promote export-led manufacturing growth, and (in line with Keynesian thinking)<sup>2</sup> redistribute income to the poor in order to boost local demand and, so, economic growth. Still, Cosatu reaffirmed its support for the ANC – or, more, specifically, for disgraced ANC leader Jacob Zuma, who many naively believe will implement a pro-labour programme.

## WHAT IS ASGISA?

The differences between the SACP and Cosatu are not that deep. Both currently embrace the notion of a “developmental state”, which they take to mean an interventionist State machine that can actively shape the capitalist economy – hopefully in the interests of the masses.

The “developmental state” is, in this context, really a restatement of Cosatu and the SACP’s long-standing support for a “national democratic” interventionist State that would supposedly help provide the basis for a future transition to socialism. This is in line with the Marxist two-stage theory that the immediate task is a “national democratic revolution” (NDR), meaning a mixed capitalist economy in which the “national question” is resolved before socialism becomes possible.

The term “developmental state” was originally coined to refer to ruthless but efficient capitalist dictatorships in East Asia like South Korea, which succeeded – despite a colonial legacy – in becoming significant

industrial capitalist powers. Since then the term has mutated, and has become widely used by the State-centred left to describe just about any alternative to neo-liberalism. Even the ANC government (which avoids the term “neo-liberal” like poison, while applying neo-liberalism in practice) now calls itself a “developmental state”.

The difference between the SACP and Cosatu on Asgisa is, in other words, that the SACP sees Asgisa as a move from neo-liberalism to the “developmental state”; Cosatu does not. So, is Asgisa a break with the neo-liberal framework laid out ten years ago in Gear? And, second, will Asgisa help meet the needs of the broad working class?

## THE GENERAL PROGRAMME

Like Gear, Asgisa starts by stating that it aims to create jobs, halve unemployment, and reach sustained economic growth (around 6% annually by 2010).<sup>3</sup> But since job creation and reducing poverty are the supposed goals of just about any economic policy, we can’t evaluate Asgisa on the basis of its intentions. As with Gear, the crucial issue is how will these goals be reached? And it is here that the problems start.

As Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (closely identified with Asgisa) has stated,<sup>4</sup> it is not a replacement for Gear. It is a package of specific, short-term initiatives to take the restructuring of the South African economy forward by removing “binding constraints” and identifying “growth points.”

The country’s current economic trajectory is praised in Asgisa as showing “steady improvement” in improving living conditions, creating jobs, promoting growth, and improving business confidence (pp. 2-3). A dishonest representation of the data lets Asgisa make manifestly ridiculous claims that the real incomes of the poor have increased sharply since 1994 (!), and that 540,000 net new jobs were created in 2004-2005 alone (!!).

The “binding constraints” include a currency that is “overvalued” (making exports uncompetitive), poor infrastructure that hampers efficiency (particularly in transport), skills shortages, a high price of labour due to transport costs, lack of com-

petition and opportunities for new businesses, a “sub-optimal regulatory environment” (in labour law and other areas), and a lack of State capacity (pp. 4-6). There is nothing in this stress on competition, export-led growth, cutting costs for business, and developing an efficient State, that departs in the least from neo-liberalism.

## “DECISIVE INTERVENTIONS”

Asgisa’s “decisive interventions” (not “a shift in economic policy”) (p. 6) to deal with these issues are generally also within the neo-liberal framework, except when they involve “Black Economic Empowerment” (BEE) measures. BEE *does* contradict neo-liberalism to the extent that *black* capitalists are given special treatment; however, BEE and neo-liberalism can also be partly reconciled by using neo-liberal measures like privatisation (the transfer of state operations and assets to the private sector) and outsourcing to BEE companies.

Asgisa’s “decisive interventions” include sector strategies (mainly promoting tourism, and attracting outsourced jobs from other countries), a set of fairly uncoordinated plans to promote skills (with the emphasis on skills for a competitive economy), promoting small businesses (with an emphasis on BEE through privatisation, cheap loans, and a “review” of tax and labour laws), suitable macro-economic policies (mainly continuing Gear’s stress on a weak rand, low inflation, and spending less money more efficiently), and “governance” issues (more efficiency, and continuing to move towards a “social contract” on “economic matters”) (pp. 8-16).

Perhaps the most important part of Asgisa is a heavy stress on promoting infrastructure. Admitting that a large backlog in infrastructure developed in the first decade of Gear, Asgisa envisages real and significant increases in investment spending, growing at perhaps 10-15 percent per year, and leading off with R370 billion being spent from October 2005 to March 2008. Around half of this will be done via the corporatised (and partially commercialised) State corporations, Eskom (electricity) and Transnet (transport) (pp. 6-8). This supposedly (but not really)<sup>5</sup> “unprecedented” rise in expen-

diture will contribute to the 2010 World Cup initiative, promote “public-private partnerships” (PPPs, a type of privatisation) in infrastructure, and also contribute to the various Industrial Development Zones that are designed to promote exports and attract direct investment.

**A HIGHER GEAR?**

While Asgisa is, as should be expected, far more concrete than Gear in setting out precise objectives and initiatives, there is nothing here that breaks with Gear. Asgisa’s “decisive interventions” are either directly in line with Gear’s approach (such as the stress on outsourcing), or are direct restatements of Gear’s policies (inflation targeting, fiscal discipline, the “social contract”, more flexible labour laws).

And - this is especially important to stress - the emphasis on infrastructure development in Asgisa is entirely consistent with Gear’s call for “a substantial acceleration in government investment spending, together with improved maintenance and operation of public assets,” up to, and including, the use of PPPs. <sup>6</sup> This aspect of Gear was almost totally neglected in the past, with the result that infrastructure has crumbled. Even the dullest bureaucrats, it seems, have come to realise that rolling electricity blackouts, courtesy of Eskom, and an overworked and unreliable railway grid, courtesy of Transnet are disastrous to efficient capitalist accumulation.

**BEE IN THE NEO-LIBERAL ERA**

The only real break is, perhaps, the heavy stress on BEE. Gear itself said almost nothing about the apartheid-derived context. Gear emphasised promoting small and medium enterprises (p. 13), but did not link this specifically to BEE. Given that the ANC is a bourgeois nationalist party, Asgisa’s stress on BEE is not surprising.

As a capitalist party, at the helm of a capitalist State, the ANC must adapt the new order of neo-liberalism. As an African nationalist party, built in the anti-apartheid struggle, the ANC must also promote the development of the African elite: it has done this in the State machinery quite quickly and effectively, but has made quite limited inroads into the private sector. This somewhat contradictory agenda lies at the heart of ANC policy. Neither side of the contradiction, however, offers the working class anything.

**NEO-LIBERAL CLASS WAR**

If by “developmental state”, we mean a break with neo-liberalism, it is mere wishful thinking to see Asgisa representing a shift towards “an active developmental state.” It is an elaboration of the Gear project. Only a highly abstract analysis, where neo-liberalism is viewed in the most purist terms, could deny Asgisa’s neo-liberal credentials.

With Asgisa firmly part of the neo-liberal agenda, it follows that it offers nothing positive to the working class. As we have argued before, neo-liberalism is about restructuring capitalism in a period of long-term decline to restore profitability, and shift the balance of class forces decisively in favour of the ruling class. This involves a whole series of measures against the working class: flexibility, cost recovery, wage freezes, cuts in welfare and public transport, an ideological offensive against unions, and so on.

Neo-liberalism succeeds in its objectives to the extent that capitalist economic growth is restored, and to the extent that working class conditions and power are eroded. On both counts, Gear is a “success”. That the South African economy is growing at its fastest since the 1970s *at the exact same time* as poverty, unemploy-

**AND NOW?**

The fact of the matter is that capitalism, in general, is based upon the systematic domination, exploitation, and exclusion of the working class. The slums are not the consequence of isolation from the “economic mainstream,” but its creation. BEE does not marginalise the working class by accident, but because all capitalists - and the larger ruling class as well - *inevitably and necessarily* marginalise the working class, of whatever race or nationality.

In the era of neo-liberalism, these problems are particularly marked, for neo-liberalism involves a systematic redistribution of wealth and power away from the working class. To assume that neo-liberalism can be halted by “engaging” the ANC - let alone, by electing a political opportunist facing corruption charges like Zuma - is extremely naive.

“Social equity” requires a significant redistribution of wealth and power towards the working class, and this requires, in turn, large-scale struggle. Only partial gains are possible within the current social order; substantial change requires a new order of things. The task of the hour is not to place false hope in the policies of the ruling class, nor yet to choose which member of the ruling class assumes the presidential throne. The task is to start winning people to the vision of a world beyond capitalism, based on participatory planning, distribution by need, internationalism and self-management.



**NOTES:**

1. Blade Nzimande, 11 April 2006, “Asgisa’s devil lies in the detail,” *Business Times*
2. J. M. Keynes argued that higher working class incomes were good for capitalist business
3. The Presidency, 2006, *Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative – South Africa (a summary)*, Republic of South Africa, pp 2-3. All subsequent Asgisa references are to this document: the closest to an official statement of Asgisa available, it first appeared as a background document at a press conference.
4. Vicki Robinson, 10 February 2006, “From Gear to Asgi,” *Mail and Guardian Online*, [www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=263813&area=/budget\\_2006/bud\\_insight/](http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=263813&area=/budget_2006/bud_insight/)
5. It is easily overshadowed, for example, by the massive expansions in State capital spending in the 1950s and 1960s, the hey-days of import-substitution-industrialisation by the National Party.
6. Government of National Unity, 1996, *Growth, Employment and Redistribution: a macroeconomic strategy*, Republic of South Africa, pp. 16-17

# Now is the Winter of Our Discontent

## SA Public Sector Strike Stokes the Fire of Popular-Class Unity and Reveals “Communist” Weakness

by Michael Schmidt - Pictures by Lebohang Makwela

This year's giant month-long public sector strike was a remarkable demonstration of a convergence of working-class interests, across organisational, ideological, public/private, and racial lines – the likes of which has probably never been seen in South Africa before.

And it took place against a backdrop of an intense policy debate within the ruling African National Congress (ANC) alliance that has seen a go-it-alone faction emerge within the South African Communist Party (SACP) and a more strident independence take hold among the 1,8-million members of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu).

By the time the dust had settled, had we seen the emergence of true popular-class consciousness among workers and the poor?

### THE FIRST SHOTS REVEAL CLASS DIVISIONS

By the time Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) talks got underway in Pretoria at the end of January, there were early warning signs that the usual mid-year strike season generated by negotiations over wages and bread-and-butter issues would develop into an unprecedented conflict.

It wasn't just that the government was offering an insulting 6% across-the-board wage increase that fell pitifully short of the rise in the cost of living with inflation running at 7%<sup>1</sup>. This hardline stance is linked to the government's neo-liberal orientation, which stresses the need to contain inflation and state spending, inter alia, by capping public sector wages and by locking state workers into longer-term wage freezes.

Tensions were initially raised by rumours that chief government negotiator Kenny Govender had not been properly mandated by the Cabinet committee from which he took his instructions – consisting of Public Service and Administration Minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Safety and Security Minister Charles Nqakula, Defence Minister Mosiuoa Lekota and Finance Minister Trevor Manuel. Govender denied the claim, but there had been almost zero progress by the eve of the strike on June 1. And the role and political affiliations of the ministers pulling his strings would be thrown into sharp relief in

the weeks ahead.

The very first day of the strike, a single incident of violence underlined some of the most basic contradictions in the post-apartheid political compromise: police fired rubber bullets and teargas on strikers picketing the Tygerberg Hospital in Cape Town.

Cosatu president Willie Madisha (who was also an SACP Politburo member) and SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande, on hearing the news of the shooting at a march of strikers in downtown Johannesburg, roundly condemned it. But so too, naturally, did a leader of the Cosatu-affiliated Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru).

This immediately revealed the raw sub-structure of the conflict.

Firstly, leading communists like Madisha and Nzimande found themselves pitted against a strike-breaking force headed by Nqakula, who was SACP national chair. This raised the question of whether the SACP's attempt to sail with one foot in the canoe of the masses and with the other foot in the canoe of the state would not



result in the party doing the splits.

Secondly, the state itself – which has increasingly come under leftist scrutiny in South Africa as an unelected counter-democratic bureaucracy – was revealed as a conventional capitalist employer that readily engaged in deliberate armed violence against its own employees.

Thirdly, the police themselves, accustomed to their role as enforcers of state/capitalist interests found their members on both sides of the barricades, their professional duties in conflict with their needs as human beings. We would welcome the unionisation of the police - most of whom are working class - over recent

years, if it had in any noticeable way curbed police violence against the working class. Sadly, this has not been the case - as recent pre-emptive police gunplay against legal pickets in the mining sector has shown.

The stage having been set and the battle-lines so clearly drawn, the initially lukewarm response to the strike (starting on a Friday meant most workers simply took a long weekend rather than join marches) quickly developed incredible momentum.

### THE PARTY'S PALE-PINK CHAMPAGNE SOCIALISM

The SACP had for some time been undergoing a series of changes that had shifted it away from its traditional Stalinism. Those changes can probably be dated to late leader Joe Slovo's think-piece *Has Socialism Failed?* (1989), written in the era of the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and coinciding with Francis Fukuyama's since-discredited “end of history” thesis that claimed liberal capitalism had triumphed as the final mode of politics.

Slovo's document, while reaffirming the validity of socialism in the absence of the USSR motherland, inexorably placed the party on the path to becoming a conventional parliamentary social-democratic entity indistinguishable from similar ex-Stalinist parties abroad, despite its resistance to change its name.

Fifteen years later, the party paper *Umsebenzi* showed pretty girls sporting party-branded T-shirts and other gear up for sale. And as this year's SACP funding scandal<sup>2</sup> revealed, the party has no restriction whatsoever on businesses, regardless of their motives, donating funds to the party coffers.

More importantly, the party is deeply divided, and does not - except on paper - have any shared line. Some rank-and-file members are old-school Stalinists while the personal politics of its leaders veers between mild social democracy to raging neo-liberalism. Clearly the 1990s saw the party floundering in the political wilderness after the collapse of the USSR.

In the final analysis, the party deferred its own commitment to pursuing socialism because firstly it mistakenly assumed that the USSR had been “socialist” in the first place (thus its vision of socialism was forever tainted with the idea that it could be

enforced from above by state-capitalist means). Secondly, its historical marriage to the ANC's bourgeois-nationalist project has undermined the party's inability to think outside the very limited toolbox of nationalist politics.

It had become in very practical ways a capital-friendly party that did not challenge the structure of capitalism/state, but merely proposed reforms that would see a partial rechanneling of profit towards developmental ends. But this stance was increasingly challenged by the SACP's refounded Young Communist League (YCL), which rapidly challenged older party conventions.

By May last year, when the SACP released its State Power Discussion Document, the party had finally started to grapple with the question of whether it had been a good idea at all abandoning class struggle in favour of a few seats for its leaders at the bourgeois feast.

The SACP correctly notes that the South African state is Y-shaped: one arm services the largely-white corporate oligarchy; while the other under-serves the largely-black labour pool. Yet it still sees "capturing" that state as the true role of a revolutionary party. Although the party critiques the form of the state, it does not critique its content as an unelected, bureaucratic instrument of elite rule over the popular classes. Unlike the party we recognise that the state cannot be transformed into a democratic instrument designed to uplift the poor majority.

In the party's draft programme *The South African Road to Socialism*, released ahead of its July party congress, it honestly noted the errors of Stalinism: "dogmatism, intolerance of plurality, and above all, the curtailment of a vibrant worker democracy with the bureaucratisation of the party and state. Millions of communists were among the victims of Stalin's purges". But this dodged the question of honestly facing the class character of the USSR by claiming it was really "socialist" despite "errors".

The draft later stated that "there is no single road to socialism" and hailed the "role of popular mobilisation rather than relying solely on inter-state-driven reconstruction efforts," and of the importance of "organs of popular power" among the peasantry and poor in driving a progressive agenda on the African continent. But the progressive nature of the party's continental aims are vague at best and appear to be directed at channelling popular power into the narrow purposes of African "developmental states". This does little more than strengthen class rule.

"One thing is certain," the party wrote, "the intensified class struggle that is apparent across the length and breadth of our society will be the decisive factor determining the outcome". But how much further has the party advanced towards a pluralistic worker-democratic vision?

For one thing, the party has no class line: the popular classes exist merely to bulwark

the "developmental state". Its vision is blinkered by its slavish adherence to the "need" for a strong state to "help weld together a multi-class national democratic movement buttressed by mobilised popular and working class power". The party manifestly fails to explain why the ruling class - against all logic, against even the most basic Marxist theory at that - can be "welded" into a multi-class project that benefits the working class.

In line with this crippled version of working class power, it comes as no surprise that the party warns against "a syndicalist or populist rejection of representative democracy, or even of a respect for a progressive law-based constitutionality rooted in social solidarity". What the SACP means by "organs of democratic self-government" is equally contradictory: "community policing forums, school governing bodies, and ward committees". No autonomous popular-class organisations in sight. Everything wedded to the capitalist state.

Trotskyist labour analyst Terry Bell, one of the rare pro-labour voices in the mainstream press, said while Public Service



Minister Fraser-Moleketi was becoming compared in her iron-gauntleted handling of the strike to that other Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher, during her strike-breaking drive against the National Union of Mineworkers in Britain in 1984, the real Thatcherite was Finance Minister Manuel.

Still, it is worth noting that Fraser-Moleketi is yet another former communist who has sneaked away from the party in recent years. Never really involved in the struggle for a democratic South Africa, she joined the ANC while visiting Zimbabwe in 1980.

Her Stalinist training - boot camp in Angola, followed by an officer's course in the USSR and unspecified "specialist" training in Cuba - once again demonstrates the very short distance, as the vulture flies, between Stalinism and Thatcherism/Reaganism.

So it came as no surprise that this pale-pink "champagne socialist" party found itself a house divided against itself during the public sector strike.

## THE BATTLE IS ENGAGED: SOLIDARITY AND UNITY

The strike generated intense interest among trade union organisations abroad, and the ZACF did its small bit in publicising the strike and drumming up messages of solidarity from the international anarchist and syndicalist movement.

The ZACF itself noted that earlier in the year, the Independent (that is, state) Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers recommended that President Thabo Mbeki get a 57,3% pay increase, taking his total package from R1,1-million to R1,8-million annually.

Strikers carried placards saying "57,3% good enough for Mbeki - good enough for me". The fact that Mbeki rejected the commission's recommendations during the strike in an apparent attempt to pour oil on the troubled waters does not disguise the country's huge income disparities: while members of Parliament argued they should get salaries of R650,000 annually, a hospital clerk told us she fed five mouths with a take-home salary of R12,000 annually.

Support for the strikers' initial 12% wage demand came from the anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labour in France (CNT-F) which condemned "the South African government's attempt to intimidate strikers into ending the strike by issuing dismissal notices to striking workers, and by using apartheid-era police brutality against picketers".

Other organisations that sent messages of support via the ZACF included the Federation of Anarchists of Greece (OAE), the International Solidarity Commission of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the Workers' Solidarity Alliance (WSA) in the United States. The International Workers' Association (IWA) said it would send a solidarity message directly to the unions, although its affiliate, the Solidarity Federation of Great Britain (SolFed - IWA), sent a solidarity message via us.

The Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group in Australia (MACG) issued a detailed statement, noting: "The fact that, even now, [June 19], the public sector strike is not resolved is a demonstration of the fundamental conflict of interests between labour and capital. Regardless of the outcome of this strike, while society is divided into a working class and an employing class, there can be no just and lasting settlement to employment disputes."

The MACG endorsed "the right of picketing workers to use reasonable force in self-defence" - but as is usual, the red herring of violence was raised in the mainstream press and among the striking unions themselves, becoming a point of fracture in the initially united front.

That front embraced 17 unions representing Cosatu, the Federated Unions of SA

(Fedusa), and the black consciousness National Congress of Trade Unions (Nactu) – together accounting for about 1,4-million strikers – and about 400,000 independent unionists.

It was a remarkable coming together of the three main union federations, usually divided by their disparate ideologies into respective ANC, liberal and black consciousness blocs, plus the independents, one of the strongest expressions ever of multi-racial, yet single-class power in the country's history. The strike did demonstrate a significant amount of cross-racial labour action, and probably quite unprecedented in scale, so on one level it was an advance in class consciousness. But the ideological grip of the ruling class - via the ANC and via nationalist mythology - remained pretty strong. These are uneven advances.

Before long, off-duty soldiers and naval sailors – their members drafted in as scab-labour to work in the hospitals and other services – were joining pickets and marches. Bell told me that "irrational" wage disparities in essential services such as nursing, police and defence were fuelling the fire.

A one-day sympathy strike was called on June 13 and was well-supported. Public sympathy, despite widespread anger at the lack of service-delivery, was high.

## THE CRACKS IN THE DAM

By June 16, when labour had dropped its demand to 10% and the government moved to 7,25%, the united front was holding firm, and the average union member appeared to be very well-versed in the issues at play around housing allowances, medical aid and so forth, despite Fraser-Moleketi claiming union leadership was keeping them in the dark.

Several cracks had appeared around the police use of force against strikers, the intimidation of non-strikers, and what the independents saw as the politicisation of the strike by Cosatu ahead of the ANC's crucial June policy conference and December congress.

Popcru's head of collective bargaining, Alex Mahapa, told me that police members were hotly debating whether officers' orders to fire on strikers were legal orders (strangely, while soldiers have a unique code of conduct allowing them to disobey illegal orders, there is no police corollary).

The strike was largely well-disciplined yet sporadic incidents of violence received extensive mainstream media play. Although it is a fundamental principle of labour never to cross a picket line, the very diversity of the striking unions created difficult conditions.

For example, JR Pieterse of the conservative teachers' SA Onderwysersunie said though all teachers' unions were united by their experience of similar poor levels of pay and working standards, it had only decided to embark on a one-day strike while other unions voted for an indefinite strike, raising tensions between the one-

day strikers and the rest and leading to intimidation.

Gavin Moultrie, president of the independent Health & Other Services Personnel Trade Union of SA (Hospersa) said by June 16, the independents had become disenchanted with what they saw the abuse by Cosatu affiliates of the strike's economic aims to push party-political agendas relating to the various factions in the ANC presidential race. Still, this would not cause the Independent Labour Caucus to break ranks, he said.

Court actions started flying as labour and government tried to see who would be the first to blink: the Labour Court ordered the 120,000-strong Popcru to restrain its on-duty police members from joining the strike as threatened. But even the conservative 64,000-member SA Police Union (Sapu) warned many of its members were threatening a wildcat strike.

By June 24, however, with government having dug in at 7,5%, and with the ANC's policy conference looming, the first unions broke ranks: Fedusa affiliate Hospersa announced it would sign the deal, with president Moultrie saying he hoped to convince Popcru, Sapu, the independent Public Servants' Association (PSA), and Cosatu affiliate the National Education Health & Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) to join Hospersa.

This would give it them the bargaining council majority necessary for government to enforce the agreement. Moultrie said he felt by refusing to settle for 10%, the SA Democratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu) was "holding the other unions hostage". He saw this intransigence as part of a campaign to promote Sadtu president Madisha for the ANC's National Executive Committee in December.

In part, the Fedusa capitulation was revenge for a 1997 about-face by Cosatu unions who had also capitulated at the last hour, enabling the government to unilaterally enforce its will.

But in reality, all unions admitted they were at the mercy of their memberships regarding whether to move or not. Even at that late hour, it was a victory for the shop-floor – especially given that few unions had any strike funds at all, so strikers were really feeling the pinch.

## THE AFTERMATH: SHOPFLOOR WINS AND LEFTIST LOSSES

By July 1, the strike was over. Business Day reported the score-card as "Government 2, Unions 1," though naturally focused on the extra R5,5-billion – actually well affordable – that had been added to the public sector wage bill. By comparison to Thatcher's crushing showdown with the British National Union of Mineworkers, which broke the back of British labour, however, government had failed to break the power of the unions and had been confronted with an unprecedented level of working-class unity, initially backed by wide public sympathy.

Although the closing days of the strike

revealed bitter divisions between Cosatu and its traditional unionist rivals and public sympathy waned<sup>3</sup>, the unions held the line for unusually long and robbed the government of an easy victory. Hopefully the pragmatic lesson learned of the power of union solidarity will not be lost. And hopefully the syndicalist lesson of shopfloor democracy won't be easily forgotten or eroded either.

The other good things that emerged from the strike were the transformation of Cosatu's weekly labour review into *Cosatu Today*, hailed as the first working-class daily "newspaper" since apartheid ended, and the launch of the new progressive journal *Amanda!* which promises to be non-sectarian.

The MACG correctly urged "all workers in South Africa to reflect deeply on the role of the South African so-called Communist Party. Communism has not failed. Rather, the SACP has failed communism. Under apartheid, the SACP taught that the workers' struggle had two stages. The first stage was the struggle for the establishment of democracy, for the abolition of apartheid and entrenched racial oppression.

"The second stage, to follow at some point after the establishment of democracy, was the struggle for socialism. To the extent that this was true, they deceived the workers (and many of their own members) by omitting to tell them that, in the second stage of the struggle, the SACP would be on the side of the capitalists!

"The wretched history since 1994 of this once-proud organisation can only be understood as the penalty for its fundamental political errors. The liberation of the working class itself cannot be delegated to a political party." And, it seems that the SACP seems doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. This was evident at the SACP's 12th congress, held in July.

While a Markinor survey in mid-June during the strike had shown 28% of South Africans and 25% of ANC supporters believed a new workers' party should be formed to contest ANC dominance, and while some party members have started to seriously question the Alliance with the ANC, the SACP avoided making any real shifts. At its congress, party leaders neatly deferred the decision on whether to contest the 2009 elections as a self-standing party with its own platform. However, as examples too numerous to spell out show – including the Workers' Party (PT) government in Brazil – electoralist options seldom represent true advances for the popular classes.

## OPPORTUNISM IGNORES GRASSROOTS STRUGGLE

Why? The SACP's long tradition of loyalty to the ANC is a major factor. In a cutting analysis, Dale McKinley of the Anti-Privatisation Forum<sup>4</sup> argued that for the past 15 years, the party had "fiddled" with the issue of being junior partners in an alliance with the ANC that they will clearly

never control. Their second option, was never realised: "to go back to the basics of organising and mobilising the poor and working class (which must include real, practical alliances with community organisations and social movements) based on a radical programme of demands for the redistribution of wealth ..." This programme should "re-build a genuine left political and organisational power-base to contest power relations within SA society (something which is not simply reducible to elections and running as an electoral force separate from the ANC)".

Rather than tackle the crisis in the party's ranks, and in its direction, the congress was dominated by the leadership squabbles in the ANC between supporters of President Mbeki and his disgraced rival, Jacob Zuma.<sup>5</sup>

McKinley noted how the presidential leadership battle between factions such as those supporting Mbeki or contender Jacob Zuma had come to not only dominate, but in fact supplant real politics within the SACP.

"It is a sad state of affairs – a situation in which the largest and most long-standing 'left' party in South Africa [the SACP] is effectively held hostage to the outcomes of personal/intra-organisational and patronage battles within another party [the ANC] and, in which its own programme and politics is also effectively moulded by the same battles".

Sure, Minister Nqakula was ousted as party national chair – but not because of his politics but because he (supposedly) represented the Mbeki faction. It was telling, McKinley said, that Zuma was "neither a communist nor even socialist," but rather an opportunist, so for Cosatu and the SACP to claim there has been a shift to the left both in the party and in the ANC is patently false.

Instead, the reality is the SACP and Cosatu are confirmed in their roles as mere handmaidens, forced to kowtow to the usual old ANC dictates of strengthening the Alliance (exclusively in its favour) and thus endorsing the deferment of any true revolutionising of the country's classist economy. Here, too, we see the results of the strike in terms of consciousness are limited. The energy and anger of the strike was carefully dissipated into thin air by certain union and SACP leaders.

The result is that despite memberships of 14,000 and 1,8-million respectively, <sup>6</sup> the SACP and Cosatu had been "virtually nowhere" amidst the "hundreds of community protests around basic services, crackdowns by the state on these activists/communities and efforts to influence local government delivery mechanisms and politics to be more inclusive/participatory..."

He explains why the SACP and Cosatu approach to the radical social movements have been so two-faced, making sweet overtures the one moment, then decrying them the next, instead of seeing them as natural allies: they wish to "organisationally control the social movements so that they are not 'anti-ANC' and also so that these

social forces do not pose any ongoing or future threat to the 'left' dominance of the SACP/Cosatu and the self-annointed 'left' forces in the ANC/the state".

We anarchist-communists work within these social movements because they – and not state corporatist structures like community policing forums - as the SACP would have it – are true "organs of popular power", for all their faults and inconsistencies. In doing so, we work alongside all true grassroots communists, however they describe their traditions, who genuinely support the organisational and ideological autonomy of the popular classes (workers, peasants and poor).

We also encourage constructive debate and engagement with SACP members concerned at their party's surrender of a class line in favour of the opportunistic politics of personality, and with rank-and-file Cosatu members concerned at the strangulation of the power of their class by the ANC yoke.

Only a consolidation of ethical, highly politicised, forces of the productive base of society and their reserves the poor can hope to successfully challenge the exploitative status quo. That is the lesson of this year's strike: only politically-mobilised class unity and shopfloor democracy can change the structure of the national economy in a way that puts the opportunists and the parasitic elites they serve to flight.



#### Notes:

1. CPIX inflation, which excludes mortgage costs and is the main figure tracked by the Reserve Bank for policy purposes, has been slightly lower at about 6.4% - and when the strike started, it

was still lower, below the bank's 6% target ceiling. On the other hand, food inflation is higher, around 9% over the past few months. This, of course, hits the working class disproportionately, as Cosatu and others (even some bourgeois economists!) pointed out during the strike.

2. In August, the *Mail & Guardian* wrote a story saying R1,7-million was either missing from party coffers or had not been accounted for (including R500,000 allegedly donated by businessman Charles Molele, R600,000 apparently given by ANC man Justice Pitsso, R360,000 ironically paid in error to the party by the Banking Association, and R300,000 donated by the Chinese Communist Party). Corruption by several party leaders Madisha and Nzimande has been alleged, but the matter has yet to be resolved.

3. The public's primary concern became the teaching time lost to Matric students, hundreds of whom have violently protested at the prospect of entering their final exams unprepared.

4. *The "Zumafication" of Left Politics in the Alliance: A Critical Review of the ANC Policy Conference & the SACP 12th Congress*, Amanda online edition: [www.amanda.org.za/Site/McKinley.htm](http://www.amanda.org.za/Site/McKinley.htm)

5. should read: Jacob Zuma's election as ANC President at the party's congress in December has been hailed as a victory for the Left by Cosatu and the SACP – but Zuma has made it crystal clear that he will not diverge at all from the ANC's neo-liberal, anti-poor agenda. The parliamentary Left has thus failed spectacularly to shift government policy in a more humane direction – but while the economic and political superstructure remains unaltered, Zuma's election shifts the social debate rightwards, in favour of macho populism and perhaps even dangerously Zulu chauvinism.

6. There is confusion over the SACP's true membership. In May, Nzimande claimed 40,000 members, and the July congress was told there were 51,872 paid-up members. But treasurer Phillip Dexter, suspended for railing against the party's Stalinism, put

the number at a more believable 14,000 (the bigger numbers having apparently been reached by simply adding the YCL's unproven and probably wildly over-inflated 20,000 members to those of the parent party).

**Note:** The unity of the strike paid off in November with the merger of the formerly PAC-aligned, blue-collared National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu), with the formerly white - and white-collared - Federation of Unions of SA (Fedusa) to form a new labour giant, the SA Confederation of Trade Unions (Sacotu). With 890,000 paid-up-members (perhaps 1-million members in all), it is bigger than the ANC with only 621,000 paid-up members, but still lags behind Cosatu's 1,8-million. While broadly social-democratic in orientation, Sacotu is deliberately non-party-affiliated, a fact that is the major stumbling-block to the much-desired merger with Cosatu to form a single national confederation.

It remains to be seen whether Sacotu's "a-political" stance becomes with time reduced to mere economism, whether it dissipates its strength by backing a future labour party, or whether its struggles against ANC neo-liberalism take it in a more militant, autonomous class struggle direction.

# The 2010 World Cup...

## the Neo-liberal Agenda and the Class Struggle in South Africa

by Lucien van der Walt

*The 2010 World Cup is part and parcel of the neo-liberal restructuring of SA capitalism. It is also, however, a major opportunity for social struggles.*

South Africa's success in winning the 2010 bid for the Soccer World Cup (the biggest international sports event after the Olympics) has been widely hyped as the solution to the country's huge social problems. In the speeches of the politicians, and the editorials of the bourgeois press, the 2010 World Cup is being presented as the great test of the country's ability to "succeed".

News of the successful bid was greeted by celebrations in the streets – celebrations that drew in large sections of the working class. Soccer's history as a working class sport, worldwide, accounts for some of the enthusiasm, and the fact that the Cup is going to be held in Africa also has some appeal to the nationalist sentiments that are, sadly, widespread.

### HOPE AND HYPE

Even those who have little interest in the game have grasped feverishly at the hope of benefiting from the billions the State machine is starting to spend on upgrading or building stadiums in the host cities and the money being earmarked for upgrading public transport. Some jobs will certainly be created, and, more recently, the State has announced that money will be injected into the run-down State health system, and that the main tourist hot-spots will be upgraded. Current estimates are R16 billion, but we should expect the figure to rise dramatically.

We believe the State will probably be able to get the country "ready" for the World Cup. But does it matter?

### THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

While improvements in transport and health, and some job creation, can only be welcomed, the question must be posed: why is the South African State so keen to host the 2010 World Cup? Why spend billions on this once-off event, when there are so many other serious problems?

The fact is that there are many powerful interests who stand to benefit. Our increasingly multi-racial ruling class – the politicians, top officials, and big business – see the 2010 Cup as a major opportunity. The ruling class believes that the 2010 project will attract investment by businesses, both local and foreign, into South Africa. Global games increasingly play a central role in marketing countries as destinations for investment.

Other semi-industrial countries have used these events in exactly this way: thus, we have seen major events in Malaysia 1998, and there will be more to come in China 2008, India 2010, Ukraine/ Poland 2012... A successful event will tackle the country's reputation for crime, low-skilled labour, and general inefficiency. In addition, the Cup will provide a focus for the State's commitment (made in both the neo-liberal GEAR and ASGISA programmes) to improve infrastructure.

bility has increased dramatically, cost recovery policies have cut municipal costs, and taxes on high income earners have been slashed.

### CLASS POLICIES

It is quite wrong, then, to suggest that GEAR has "failed", as if the policy can be judged in class-neutral terms: GEAR has "succeeded" for the ruling class *precisely* because it has "failed" the working class. In a class society, the "success" of a policy can only be judged relative to particular class interests and agendas.

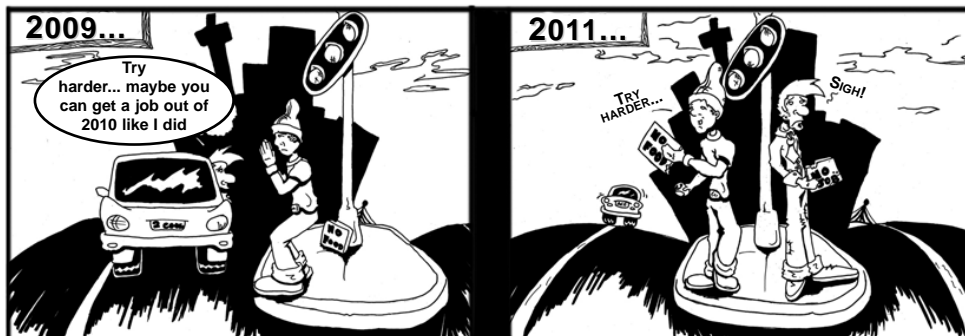
Now, one consequence of economic liberalisation has been the removal of various controls over capital investments (like prescribed assets policies) and movements (with a continually rising ceiling on capital outflows). The State is focussed more on attracting, rather than controlling, direct investments, which is where deregulation, marketing and infrastructure come into play

as major instruments for growth; the State is, equally, increasingly vulnerable to the perceptions of private and parastatal investors, with local capital itself "globalising" into foreign markets.

In line with neo-liberal theory

(expressed in its crudest, optimistic form in GEAR), implementing neo-liberal policies means more local and foreign investment, which means more economic growth, and then more jobs, which redistribute opportunities to the working class. For GEAR, the main areas of investment would be manufacturing (with a focus on exports), and services. Essentially, the theory goes, if the rich get richer, the poor supposedly also have a chance to get richer.

Hiding behind this cosy rhetoric of cross-class compromise and all-round friendliness, however, is the brute reality of capitalism generally (class inequality) and neo-liberalism particularly (restoring profitability through class war from above).



### NEO-LIBERALISM (AGAIN)

The focus on marketing the country, and on infrastructure, is in line with the State's commitment to a neo-liberal restructuring of the capitalist economy. Since the late 1970s, first the apartheid government, and, in the 1990s, the post-apartheid regime, has been set on liberalising the economy.

While many left commentators, like Ravi Naidoo, have helped expose GEAR's impact on the working class (in terms of job creation and service delivery, particularly), it is also important to understand that neo-liberal restructuring has massive benefits for the South African ruling class. Not only has the economy grown at over 4 % over the last few years (its best sustained performance since the early 1970s), but unions have been hammered, labour flexi-



## WINNERS, LOSERS

The class realities of the situation are easily seen in the 2010 initiatives. The State spending is mainly aimed at promoting opportunities for profit: lucrative contracts in infrastructure, a focus on upgrading health and transport in wealthier areas, while hiding the poor, a focus on stadiums rather than houses, schools and township upgrading. This is intended to attract investors, drop the cost of doing business, and making sure that major economic decisions remain out of the hands of the working class.

Money spent on 2010 is money taken from other areas. In 2005, the government allocated R48 billion to health, covering the whole government health system, including 400 hospitals. Of this, about R1,5 billion goes to upgrading hospitals every year: in other words, government will spend around 6 billion on repairing hospitals by 2010, which is less than half of the money government plans to spend on soccer stadiums. Yet hospitals are obviously more important than soccer stadiums. If the full 2010 budget went to hospitals, four times more repairs could be done. This tells you something about the priorities of the ruling class, and how low down on the list public health is compared to the neo-liberal project.

Where is the R16 billion going to be raised? First, from central government allocations (raised from tax on companies, salaries, VAT, and "sin taxes" on goods like cigarettes) and, second, from local governments (which means from various local rates and service charges, including charges for property, electricity etc.). The flip-side of the coin will, of course, be increasing service charges and tougher cut-off policies for municipal services. Social movements: beware!

## GAU-TRAINS

Talk about improving public transport must surely be welcomed. Around half of the millions who use the trains are from the lower ranks of the working class, earning under R1600 a month and unable to afford the taxis. However, the commuter railway system has not only been frozen for the last thirty years, but was actively run down in the 1990s; the trains cover only some areas, are in an appalling state, and around 20,000 jobs have been cut. Spoornet and Metrorail, part of the giant State company Transnet, have focussed on cutting costs to such an extent that even powerful capitalist sectors, like the big farmers, have been seriously frustrated by the lack of capacity and unreliability of the railway grid.

The focus on 2010, and ASGISA's revival of GEAR's promise to improve infrastructure, suggest a serious change in direction. Outright sell-offs seem to be off the agen-

da: the neo-liberal extremism that suggested that the railway grid be fully privatised has been replaced by a more pragmatic neo-liberalist view that recognises that major infrastructure is (as economist Milton Friedman puts it) a State responsibility - and absolutely vital to a successful export drive in agriculture and manufacturing. The same applies to ESKOM, the other giant parastatal, which has gained an unpleasant reputation for unreliability over the last few years (to which it has responded, predictably, not by improving services but by raising costs and running TV adverts telling people not to run major appliances-like TVs!).

The State is *not* planning to change its mind about continuing the commercialisation of Spoornet and ESKOM, and still has plans to partly privatise both entities. The optimistic view - championed by COSATU figures like Karl von Holdt and Randall Howard - that union "engagement" with the State had led to abandoning the neo-liberal project in transportation - has no real basis. Nor is there any reason to start announcing the death of local neo-liberalism.

But even the dullest bureaucrat supports taxi recapitalisation, and upgrading and even extending the railways, as with the new Gautrain project, which runs parallel to the 2010 initiatives. The Gautrain shows clearly the class character of the new course. A multi-billion rand high speed line between suburbs in Pretoria and Johannesburg, the self-proclaimed "middle-class express" will charge up to R60 a ticket, and is primarily designed to alleviate highway congestion by encouraging middle- and ruling class car owners to take the luxury train instead. It is not about helping out the working class.

The 2010 initiatives will create some jobs. The big construction contracts, in particular, will need large numbers of workers, and there is nothing this country needs more than jobs. But how long will the jobs last? Building a soccer stadium is not a lifetime job; at most, it is work for a few years. What will happen after 2010? We don't know what will happen in future, but the terrible record of South African capitalism in creating jobs provides reasons to be concerned.

## GRAVY TRAINS

Of course, there are many other benefits from the 2010 project for the ruling class. The politicians and the sports administrators will get a chance to make money, through various business partnerships and corrupt deals. As the arms deal scandal and the Gautrain have already shown, no major State project these days works without kickbacks, crooked tenders and contracts for pals.

Furthermore, worldwide, soccer is

becoming increasingly controlled by major capitalists, and run on capitalist lines. The big English teams, like Manchester United and Arsenal, came from the big industrial towns, and started as workers' clubs: today millions are made from their "official" merchandise, while the police diligently arrest sellers and makers of so-called "pirate" merchandise. There is a fortune to be made from owning soccer stadiums, selling tickets, TV rights and merchandise. In South Africa, this raises millions for people like Irvin Khoza (owner of Orlando Pirates), Kaizer Motaung and Primedia (owners of Kaizer Chiefs), and Patrice Motsepe (owner of Mamelodi Sundowns).

Finally, an event like the World Cup has the great benefit (for the ruling class) of promoting backward ideas like nationalism. The teams are organised by countries, and this provides a way for the ruling class to promote divisions between the working class around the world: a German worker is encouraged to support the German team, and think about being German, rather than about being a worker, and so on.

## SOCIAL STRUGGLES

The 2010 World Cup project is a ruling class project, but also provides an opportunity to mobilise social struggles, particularly as the State will be uncomfortable with bad publicity under the global spotlight. There are opportunities to mobilise not just for small things (like affordable tickets), but for more jobs, better transport, unionised well-paid jobs in the 2010 initiatives, and for resisting the commercialisation and privatisation of soccer. There is a serious danger that the process will be associated with major evictions of squatters and hawkers, as well as rising taxes and service charges. If the government wants to spend R16 billion, let them raise the money by taxing the ruling class.

Life doesn't end in 2010: what we need are sustainable jobs, pro-poor development and strong working class movements. This must be independent of the 2010 programme - reports that COSATU's investment arm may become involved in stadium building should raise alarm bells. 2010 is a chance to highlight popular issues, but this can only succeed if we avoid the poison of nationalism, with its Proudly SA, lets-hold-hands-with-the-bosses propaganda. We need a different type of society, and this needs struggles, equality, internationalism, and working class struggle. Human dignity and rights are not possible under the current social order.

*This is an edited version of a talk given at the 5 May 2007 Red and Black Forum, held at Khanya College, Johannesburg.*

# Students and Staff Protest University Privatisation

by Lucien van der Walt

*Announcements of steep fee increases and the planned privatisation of student accommodation sparked major protests at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, South Africa, in October. The fee hikes are the latest consequence of the university's neo-liberal "Wits 2001 plan", which has cut spending, outsourced workers and promoted the commercialisation of research and teaching.*



## REVOLT ON CAMPUS

Following a series of late night mobilisations in the university residences, hundreds of Wits students - mainly African and working class - marched on the morning of Wednesday 3 October to make clear their opposition to the management's decisions. Frustrated with official university forums that prevent student voices from making a real impact on policy, students disrupted lectures and an ever-growing crowd surged around campus.

By midday, tensions were mounting, and Wits management launched a media offensive against the students - and called on lecturers to report protestors. Lecture disruptions are forbidden under the university's Code of Conduct, but have long been a standard part of the student protest repertoire: class and race divisions amongst students mean that the African working class minority is not easily able to shut down campus activities by other means.

The protests continued the following day, and progressive academics, grouped in the Concerned Staff Committee, as well as a number of outsourced Wits workers, publicly joined the students' protests. That afternoon, riot police clashed with students, several of whom were arrested. Members of the Concerned Staff Committee were also called into a meeting with top management. The campaign continued over the next few days. Despite a hostile media, which routinely presented the protestors as vandals and troublemakers, the message was loud and clear: no to fees hikes, no to privatisation, open the bourgeois university!

The academics' support was warmly received by the crowds, now around 500 strong, and helped underline that the problems faced by the students were part of a

larger set of problems in higher education as a whole. What is happening at Wits is part of the post-apartheid ANC government's neo-liberal agenda, which is backed by the local ruling class and is reinforced by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), the World Trade Organisation treaty that promotes the commercialisation of social services; the ANC government is a GATS signatory. In the higher education sector, this has involved a combination of funding cuts to public universities like Wits, and pressure to turn the universities into profit-driven "market universities". Wits, for example, saw its State funding fall by a third in the late 1990s; in the mid-1980s, around 80% of university money came from the State; today the figure is around 39%. The result is fees hikes, declining financial aid for poor students, and a drive to cut costs and promote commercial activities.

## WITS 2001

Back in 1999, Wits adopted the Wits 2001 programme as its manifesto for neo-liberal restructuring. The immediate consequence was the dismissal of over 600 workers - a quarter of Wits' total staff- and the outsourcing of their jobs in catering, cleaning, grounds and maintenance in 2000. The struggle to prevent this outsourcing - covered in *Zabalaza*, and widely in the anarchist press elsewhere - was a key moment in the rise of new social movements like the Anti-Privatisation Forum, which have come out directly against the ANC's programme. The outsourcing was accompanied by a series of mergers and rationalisation of academic functions, and then the establishment of a special unit, Wits Enterprise, tasked with commercialising university activities. As profit and power are so closely intertwined, it is also not surprising that the restructuring was accompanied by a rapid centralisation of management power as well.

The conflicts this year - centred around a proposed 25% increase in upfront fees, a 500% increase in admin fees for students coming from outside southern Africa, an average increase of student fees by 8%, and the planned privatisation of two student residences - must, then, be seen as

part of a longer struggle around the nature of higher education - and the future of Wits. The defeat in 2000 quietened the campus.

The silence was broken in 2004 by student riots, a strike by outsourced workers in 2006, and now, more struggles. Anarchists have been involved in these university struggles for many years, as militants, as organisers, as speakers, as writers.

## THINK GLOBALLY

As we write, it seems the struggle is ending in premature negotiations that will perhaps win some important concessions for students. However, a sustained struggle can only take place if links are made between the different campuses, between the students and the staff (including academics, but also support and administration workers), and if the weak and divided trade unionism in the sector is overcome. This requires a unifying programme including demands for access to higher education for the working class, the reversal of outsourcing, the end to privatisation and commercialisation, and a challenge to State policy.

As struggles without clear ideas are often struggles aborted too soon, it is important to recognise that the struggle in higher education is part of the struggle against the ANC's neoliberal policies, and the ruling class which lies behind them. Many of the student protestors were, in fact, members of ANC-linked youth groups, and the role of the ANC was consequently obscured.

But we are confident that the links are being drawn between neoliberal policies at Wits, at the universities more generally, the massive layoffs in the country, the community struggles against cut-offs and evictions, and so, too the ANC, the State and capitalism. The struggle continues: protests against fee hikes, partly inspired by the Wits protests, have begun at the University of Johannesburg. And these are, in turn, part of the global resistance struggles in universities and elsewhere, struggles that are against the GATS, neoliberalism, and capitalism.

**Note:** This article was originally written for *Le Combat Syndicaliste* and will also be run in an upcoming issue of that paper.

## A Short History and Introduction to the Anarchist Black Cross

There is much debate over the exact date of the organisations formation. According to Rudolph Rocker (once treasurer of the Anarchist Red Cross London) the Anarchist Red Cross was established between 1900 and 1905. However, Harry Weinstein (one of the two founders of the organisation in Russia) insists it was founded after his arrest in 1906, when he and a group of Anarchists supplied clothing to prisoners in exile in Siberia.

During the Russian civil war (1918-1920) the organisation changed its name to Anarchist Black Cross (Black being the colour of Anarchism) as not to be confused with the Red Cross relief program.

In 1967 the ABC Britain was re-formed by Stuart Christie and Albert Meltzer. The decade saw the formation of ABC groups all around the world especially in Europe and North America. In 1995 chapters in the US merged into a federation - the Anarchist Black Cross Federation. In 2001 the ABC Network, an international network of anarchist anti-prison groups, started. This net-

work includes the Emergency Response Network, a network designed to spread news of new political prisoners and repression actions from around the world, in order to get a quick response and aid from global activists.

In August 2002 a group of Johannesburg based Anarchists started the ABC (SA) as a response to the escalating number of class struggle activists who had been illegally arrested (some 72 from the Landless People's Movement, 98 from the Soldiers Forum etc...) which, unfortunately phased out in 2004.

As a result of an increase in activist arrests and repression actions, brought about by the dramatic increase of protests and other demonstrations in the country, we are pleased to announce that the Anarchist Black Cross Southern Africa has been re-formed.



### OUR AIMS

The ABC SA aims to be a valuable resource for imprisoned class struggle activists. This means aiding them financially, materially as well as mentally, by providing them with reading materials, legal funds (when possible), necessities etc...

Our actions will transcend only prisoner support in the form of community organising. This means engaging with communities that have been affected by the injustice system; this can be in the form of relatives or community leaders being imprisoned, "urban cleansing", unfair discrimination by the authorities (we all know that poor communities are often unfairly targeted by the police) and eviction campaigns.

Our ultimate goal is the freedom of all class struggle prisoners and the freedom of humanity itself.

contact - [sawcacsolidarity@riseup.net](mailto:sawcacsolidarity@riseup.net)

**Remember "they are in there for us so we are out here for them!"**

## Vigilante Farmers Want Refugee Camps on the Borderland

Under the guise of so-called humanitarianism farmers in the Limpopo province, on the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe, are calling on the South African government to establish refugee transit camps where the thousands of Zimbabwean refugees that have been flooding illegally into South Africa to escape the miserable situation in their country of origin can be "fed and inoculated and processed properly without fear". The harsh reality, however, is that defectors will more than likely be processed back to Zimbabwe, which is something to be very afraid of.

These farmers have been using "vehicles designed for game hunting to track down illegal immigrants", making citizens arrests and then handing them over to the police for deportation. Police Chief Commissioner Calvin Sengani, however, has since warned that farmers doing so could face charges of kidnapping and assault.

Farm-watch patrols which, during Apartheid were a frontline defence against "terrorist" Zimbabwe, are said by Jody

Kollapen of the South African Human Rights Commission to be racist "paramilitary" organisations which are acting against black Zimbabweans.

According to the regional manager of the Transvaal Agricultural Union, Marie Helm, responsible for the organisation of the farm-watch patrols which track the refugees down, farmers are concerned that in the wake of the flood of immigrants "will come organised crime, drugs and smuggling" and that because it is hunting season, refugees risk being mistaken for game and being shot. They are apparently not so concerned with the theft of livestock by starving Zimbabweans, but that the holes they leave in the fences could allow dangerous animals to escape and that refugees' fires could become runaway wildfires under the dry tinder conditions.

As anarchists we are strongly against the establishment of any refugee transit camps, and the role of these farm-watch patrols. Every Zimbabwean should have the right to a dignified life and, as that is not possible under the tyrannical rule of a mad-

man, we support their efforts to seek asylum in South Africa. Furthermore, we believe that every South African who believes in human rights and democratic principles, however much they may have been distorted by our so-called democratic government, should do everything in their efforts to make Zimbabweans feel welcome and at home and try to assist, where possible, in making their lives better.

### Footnote:

#### ZANU-PF and Mossad

On 27 September 2007 *The Zimbabwean* reported that, according to highly positioned government sources, the ZANU-PF government has hired Israeli intelligence operatives to implement systems that will enable the regime to gather intelligence against key opposition figures. It is said that the Zimbabwean regime is paying huge sums of foreign currency for the work of Mossad agents, and the spying equipment that they have brought with them.

Full story here:  
[http://www.issafrica.org/static/templates/tmpl\\_html.php?node\\_id=2678&link\\_id=5](http://www.issafrica.org/static/templates/tmpl_html.php?node_id=2678&link_id=5)

# Swaziland: The Royal Assassination of Our Dear Comrade

by Swaziland Solidarity Network  
- South Africa Chapter

*The SSN has learnt with great shock the shameless cowardly co-ordinated assassination of comrade Ntokozo Ngozo by the ruthless and dogmatic royal police of Swaziland whose hands still drips with blood of the many martyred Swazis. These shameless cowards should know that, by killing comrade Ntokozo Ngozo, they have crossed the line of acceptable engagement and declared war on the democratic movement as a whole.*

The SSN has learnt with great shock the shameless cowardly co-ordinated assassination of comrade Ntokozo Ngozo by the ruthless and dogmatic royal police of Swaziland whose hands still drips with blood of the many martyred Swazis. These shameless cowards should know that, by killing comrade Ntokozo Ngozo, they have crossed the line of acceptable engagement and declared war on the democratic movement as a whole.

The democratic forces as well as the entire peace loving Swazis will not idle by and fold their arms when their own blood is spilt in shameful manner by the royal police who criminalises the people's struggle for a democratic Swaziland and outlaws revolutionaries and declares them outcast. They can never kill the living revolutionary spirit of comrade Ntokozo Ngozo. Comrade Ntokozo was not a criminal, the Royal regime knows that very well, he was a product of the prevailing conditions created by the regime in Swaziland, they murdered him with impunity and for that we will not rest until we get to the bottom of the truth and indeed they shall pay heavily. He will not be another statistic.

Indeed the Royal regime has succeeded to test our tolerance levels. We are angry with those who killed him, we are angry with the royal autocracy, we are angry with the intolerance of King Mswati III. He must reign on his police or face the anger of the revolting masses.

Comrade Ntokozo Ngozo was a committed young revolutionary of the People's United Democratic Movement and a mem-

ber of SWAYOCO who cut his political activism in the Swaziland student movement, Swaziland Association of Students.



He was a dedicated freedom fighter, a true servant of the people and a committed revolutionary.

The SSN is proud that comrade Ntokozo did not die a coward running away from the royal system, he confronted the system with unflinching courage of a dedicated people's warrior, conscious of all consequences, he died in full combat fighting against the un-democratic autocratic regime of Nkanini and its oppressive Tinkundla system. He died fighting for the total liberation of his country for which his blood will nourish its many seeds of freedom and galvanise the youth to fight for freedom until full liberation in Swaziland.

The SSN has no equivocation in calling for all his comrades, his peers and those who love freedom to turn all against the royal regime until it is down on its knees at

the mercy of democratic dispensation. We say to all comrades spare no efforts in your attack on the cruel system, it should not be allowed to take one more revolutionary soul, the time is now or never to end once and for all this evil nonsense of royal lunacy masquerading as tradition and culture but yearns for life of the innocents.

To his family and friends and the liberation movement as a whole we pass on our heartfelt condolences and share your pain of losing such a committed cadre and are saddened by his untimely death for which its revenge is democracy in Swaziland. We call on all of you to take up his spear and carry on the fight in whatever way possible for a legitimate cause - the total liberation of the suffering Swazi people.

May his undying spirit live on until the day of freedom dawns when we shall dig the truth and punish those responsible for this cowardly act of maiming human life.

**Long live his memory!  
Freedom or Death - Victory is  
Certain!**

**Issued by the Swaziland Solidarity  
Network - South Africa Chapter  
Mapaila Solly - National Chairperson**

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## Footnote by the ZACF

We are disgusted, yet not surprised to learn that the killing of C'de Ntokozo Ngozo (27) by the Royal Swaziland Police was indeed, as confirmed by an independent post-mortem, an intentional murder. The post-mortem revealed that C'de Ngozo was shot twice at close range by a low velocity firearm, like a 9mm handgun. Eye witnesses confirmed that the police continued to shoot him after he had fallen

to the ground and was crying for help.

The independent pathologist from Durban, Doctor Perumal, stated "As a result of my observations, schedule of which follows, I conclude that the cause of death was, gun shot wound through the chest".

Although Ngozo was found to be wearing a shirt, Dr. Perumal said that "the deceased was not wearing a shirt at the time he was shot as tattooing was observed", indicating that it was put on his

body after his murder. Dr. Perumal said that no perforations on the extensively blood-stained shirt corresponded to the gun shot entry and exit wounds on the body.

Our sympathies go out to the family, friends and comrades of the victim of this heinous act of political repression, and hope that this dreadful incident will not lead people to despair but rather serve to fuel the fires of the Swazi struggle for freedom.

# Europe, Africa and the Neo-Liberal Strategy of Co-Optation

by Manuel Baptista

*The overall strategy, at governmental level, for the EU-Africa summit on the 7th and 8th December in Lisbon, presents itself in a very clear form. It consists of co-opting the NGO's, be they international ones or from European and African countries, in order to pursue a series of strategic partnerships.*

What is being pursued, after all, is a development model for aid to Africa, a policy which forgets the EU states' promises concerning aid to Africa voiced at countless summits, the barriers abolishing promises for African agricultural goods in European markets, the promises to cancel debt, and the achieving of the so-called "millennium goals".

It is a strategy that seeks to ensure that some countries (mainly ex-colonial powers) can continue to benefit, in what is practically a monopoly, in some market sectors. Even the weak Portuguese capitalism has important economic interests and groups that invest in strategic partnerships, for instance in Angola, in the public engineering sector, the oil sector and most recently, in the banking and finance sector.

Such a strategy allows NGO structures to be the visible image of African countries' increased dependency on EU capitalism. After the dismantling of the health, education and public sectors in general by the criminal policies of the IMF and World Bank as part of the infamous "structural adjustment plans" in the '90s, this is now taking place with the full agreement of the European powers.

It is also aimed at getting the institutions of civil society to submit to the logic of the State, and the goals that their governments "generously" assigning them.

One must stress the importance in the EU-Africa Summit preparations of the trade-union meeting held in Lisbon behind closed doors on 26th and 27th October. The meeting was jointly hosted by the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation) and the EU Presidency (the Portuguese government) together with the CIS (International Trade Unions Confederation) and African Unions.

The ETUC unions (the Portuguese UGT and CGTP confederations are full members \*) habitually make "recommendations" to such Summits. But, on the other hand and given the political dependency of such unions, these unions will be even more dependent on the governmental and inter-regional institutions' goals.

In practice, the same can be said about the "officially sponsored" NGO meeting in late November, again in Lisbon.

These proposals and recommendations,

made by either the NGOs or the unions, will only be taken into consideration at the December Summit to the extent that the governments want. But, by contrast, they themselves will be requested to or co-opted into carrying out the programmes that the governments approve and find interesting.

Neither at the informal forums or meetings or the official Summit will there be any real compromise in order to achieve things, either at an economic level or at a social or humanitarian level.

Some will show "concern" about constant Human Rights violations in some African countries or even in "Fortress Europe", where immigrants are expelled, persecuted, humiliated and exploited by every means. It is well known that most migrants to Europe are mostly from African countries. Nevertheless, efficient means to put pressure on the States to fulfil their obligations will not be deployed.

It will be just another stage for the institutional actors to perform on: they will make out that they are doing something and there will be no shortage of those who come solely in order to promote their personal image and policies.

These summits are ceremonies, with little concrete effect at the level of what is actually talked about, as the relevant questions are negotiated months ahead, before the protocols are signed. They are important only on the level of "political marketing", to perpetuate the illusion that something is being achieved to "eradicate hunger in Africa". These oft-repeated lies do convince the people, after all, in spite of the evidence that nothing meaningful is done!

But beyond denouncing this "circus", it is time to strengthen the ties of cooperation between social militants from both continents.

Recently, in April-May, the I-07 Conference was held in Paris, with the participation of alternative trade unions and collectives from various continents, not to mention a conspicuous representation of African bodies. From 16-18 September, there was a meeting in Malaga of trade unions and collectives from both shores of the Mediterranean, with representatives from Algeria and Morocco in Africa and Spain, France, Italy and Portugal from



Europe.

In open and fraternal cooperation with all those collectives and social struggle groups that are willing, to continue what has already been achieved, it would be of great interest to have a conference or meeting to coordinate our strategies against the neo-liberal and neo-colonialist attacks in our countries and to promote the respect of the rights of immigrants and their families. A meeting that will have a certain continuity and which can achieve, be it for Portuguese organisations or those in the other countries participating, the following goals:

- ★ assessment and monitoring of the policies of the EU and its member States, denouncing all obvious Human Rights violations either on European soil, or in Africa;
- ★ periodical meetings with social militants from our countries. This would require a frequent exchange of information and a permanent coordination network between our organisations;
- ★ the creation of support structures for African immigrants wherever there are none, and strengthening those that exist already.

The organisations (trade unions, associations, collectives, etc.) who are active in the social field, those supporting immigrant struggles or other precarious situations, would do better to unite their efforts, while remaining outside the influence of neo-liberal political hegemony. If they allow themselves to be "bought", they will soon be neutralised, bureaucratized and will lose all purpose for their existence.

#### NOTE:

\* Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Britain and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) in Ireland.

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# Blood, Water & Oil: Fallacies of the Darfur War

by Michael Schmidt

Much has been written on the crisis in Darfur, the three arid westernmost provinces of Sudan, so I will not repeat it here.

Suffice to say that the USA alleges genocide against the Fur, Masaalit and Zaghawa tribes by Khartoum-backed Janjaweed militia – an interest spurred no doubt by Washington's desire for access to Sudan's oil reserves which are currently being exploited exclusively by China and to a lesser extent, Malaysia and India.

On the other hand, Nafi Ali Nafi, the deputy leader of the ruling National Congress Party admitted that Khartoum armed and trained a "popular defence force" from among civilians to be used to support the Sudanese Defence Force in its battle against rebels in Darfur, while denying any genocidal campaign.

Sudan remains, in World Bank terms, a highly indebted poor country. But oil is changing all that: by 2006, oil accounted for over 25% of Sudan's gross domestic product. However, little of the wealth from that 120,000 barrels of crude a year finds its way into an economy propped up by Bangladeshi guest workers lured to Sudan on false promises (winding up sweeping floors for about US\$100/month), or into neglected extremities like Darfur.

The International Monetary Fund has been pushing the fatal policy of privatisation in Sudan, which has on the one hand adopted unpopular austerity measures at home, while joining the initiative for a Free Trade Area for east and southern Africa abroad.

Also, by last year, it was estimated that up to 200,000 people had died in Darfur either directly or indirectly as a result of the war and 2.2-million people have been displaced. There is no known oil in Darfur, but the China National Petroleum Corporation is keen on laying a pipeline through it to connect Port Sudan on the Red Sea via Sudan's oil-rich Abeyi region to new reserves in Equatorial Guinea. But there is also a giant aquifer, which runs from the Libyan border under Darfur to the Nile, and groundwater will soon, I predict, run a close second to oil as a valued commodity, as sustainable use of the Nile reaches capacity.

After spending time in el-Fasher and Nyala, the capitals of North and South Darfur respectively, last month, I offer these brief thoughts on the situation in Darfur that I hope will shed a different light on the war:

1. The conflict in Darfur is not between "Arabs" and "Africans". In Darfur it is patently obvious that such distinctions,

while embraced by a minority of the people, do not hold up in fact because those so defined all speak Arabic, dress identically and have the same culture. Within the same family, facial features express the mixed heritage of Darfurians. The differ-



*A Sudanese AKM assault rifle lies at a guard-post outside a National Intelligence & Security station in el-Fasher, Darfur.*

*Picture by Michael Schmidt*

ences that do exist are rather tribal than ethnic, which begs the question of why the Darfur question has been racialised in the Western media? The conflict in south Sudan could easily be used emotively for geo-political ends by the West by suggesting it was a battle between an oppressed



*An office of the China National Petroleum Corporation on the banks of the Blue Nile in Khartoum.*

*Picture by Michael Schmidt*

southern Christian culture and a dominant northern Islamic culture. The same argument cannot be applied in Darfur which has a largely homogenous population – and yet a subtle, dishonest version of it (of Arabs

versus Africans) continues to be peddled in the West. This can only be about the demonisation of Arab and Islamic culture by America's Christian fundamentalist lords of the New Crusades.

2. Sudan is not an Islamic fundamentalist state. Despite the introduction starting in 1983 under a previous regime of certain aspects of shari'a law and of a policy of Islamisation that technically only applied to northerners, Sudan's Islamic tradition is overwhelmingly Sufi with its emphasis on personal, ecstatic communion with Allah. The austere Salafist Islam that has produced groups like al-Qaeda remains a minority tradition within Sudan and of very little social and political effect (even though Osama bin Laden lived in Khartoum in the early 1990s). In politics, the long-lived Umma Party may recall the anti-colonial mania of the Mahdist Revolt of 1881-1885, but in reality, it remains merely the hobby-horse of the Mahdi's grandson, Sadiq al-Mahdi. Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood was not consulted (as it should have been according to the shura principle of shari'a) on the Islamisation policy of the government, and some aspects of the legal code were in direct conflict with shari'a so the legal code remains unacceptable to many Sudanese – Muslims included.

3. The cause of the conflict is not only political. It is clear that many rebels took up arms because they saw that route as the only way (based on the apparent success of the southern struggle) to convince Khartoum to devolve power and resources to the Darfuran backwaters. But of greater general concern is the implacable eastward march of the sands of the Sahara, at a rate approaching 10km a year. For example, as recently as 1992, the edge of the desert stood a good 120km west of Nyala. Today, the desert is only 5km from the city limits. So desertification and environmental degradation – exacerbated by the decimation of Darfur's trees by wood-sellers – has compressed the tribes into ever-smaller areas where they bicker and battle over shrinking water resources and grazing land. Modernisation since the Nimeri era (see below) also eroded traditional methods of dispute resolution, and as in Somalia, the addition of automatic weapons has spiralled tribal bloodletting beyond its normal bounds.

4. The deployment of United Nations peacekeepers will not help. It is clear that the very establishment of camps for "internal displaces" all over Darfur works in favour of Khartoum. The camps, like the one at Abu Shouk north of el-Fasher where 50,000 displacees live, are run by the

regional governments, aided by a plethora of United Nations and other aid agencies, and policed to a degree by the African Union. But though life in the camps is relatively good, with everything from cell-phones to cosmetics on sale and health rates that appear better than the towns (at least in my comparison of Abu Shouk and el-Fasher), they remain concentration camps in the original sense of the term. That is, they forcibly concentrate formerly nomadic tribal peoples in an artificial "town" for years, urbanising them and exposing them to the seductions of the market – and of course, removing on-the-ground support from the rebels. The deployment of UN blue-helmets will most likely merely reinforce this pattern, which heavily favours Khartoum at the expense of Darfur.

That said, Darfur is clearly occupied territory, with Sudanese Army "technicals" (Toyota trucks with heavy machine-guns mounted on the back) much in evidence, with Chinese helicopter gunships at el-Fasher and MiGs on the runway at Nyala – and with a strong plain-clothes National Intelligence and Security service presence.

We anarchist-communists naturally need to condemn Khartoum's brutal use of proxy forces – and its cynical use of displacee camps – to control the civilian political process in Darfur.

But we also need to reject both the racialisation of the debate by the Western media and the false solution that an armed UN presence would bring. We should also appreciate the environmental and tribal roots of this complex war and see that, as the Darfuri rebels appreciate all too well, the only guarantor of a modicum of democracy in Darfur is the devolution of power to the people armed (though this is not to be read as an endorsement of any rebel platform).

The obvious question then becomes, what is the alternative? For that I will turn to a brief overview of the Sudanese left. The Sudanese Communist Party (HSS) was founded in 1946 during the global postwar upsurge of anti-colonial sentiment, and got its first brief taste of power in 1964 when a transitional government embraced all factions including the Muslim Brotherhood. But after elections in 1965 were followed by serious fighting by southern secessionists, the government swung rightwards and the HSS was outlawed.

The party was reinstated in 1969 thanks to the coup by Colonel Gafaar Mohammed Nimeri, who struck a military-HSS alliance and laid the groundwork for a one-party Soviet-aligned state. But in 1970, Nimeri, Libya's Muammar Gaddafi and Egypt's

Anwar Sadat announced they were to unite the three countries in a federation. This was unacceptable to the HSS and it staged a coup under Major Hashim al-Ata which ousted Nimeri – but he was restored to



*Victims of alleged Janjaweed massacre at Wadi Hour, Darfur, passed on to me by a very nervous informant*

power within three days and the HSS was driven underground again.

Nimeri's political orientation meanwhile swung towards the USA in the wake of the 1981 assassination of Sadat, who had displeased him by reaching a separate peace



*Another Wadi Hour picture*

with Israel. In 1985, a general strike brought Khartoum to a standstill and precipitated the fall of Nimeri who was on a visit to the USA, in a bloodless coup. Dr Gizuli Dafallah, a trade unionist prominent in the strike action, was appointed prime



*Another grim image from Wadi hour*

minister by the transitional military council, an indication of the growing power of the Sudanese trade union movement.

But the government proved unstable in the context of the emergence of a new secessionist force in the south, the Sudan

People's Liberation Movement / Army (SPLM/A) and with deepening divisions over Nimeri-era Islamicisation of the legal code and in 1989, Brigadier Omar el-Bashir staged a coup in the name of the Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation.

The left nationalist SPLM/A enjoyed the support of the Stalinist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam in neighbouring Ethiopia, but he himself was overthrown in 1991, echoing the general collapse of the East Bloc and the liberation movements it backed.

In 2001, the Bikisha Media Collective in South Africa – which went on to form the core of today's Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front – had contact with a major who was a rebel commander within the National Democratic Alliance (TWD). Formed in 1989, the TWD was based in exile in Eritrea, embraced 11 northern and southern opposition groups including the HSS, SPLM/A and various trade unions, and aimed at replacing the el-Bashir regime with a parliamentary democracy.

The TWD major asked: "With great respect as comrades at arms, I would like more information regarding the revolution for it is the right of everyone to fight for freedom which we have been denied as peace-loving Africans since we have remained prisoners mentally..."

He went on to request information on the "best formation" and "defined techniques" necessary for victory and we directed him to the *Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists*. Although contact was later lost, this demonstrates there was a hunger for the sort of practical politics that anarchist-communism can deliver.

This is not to overstate the potential for an anarchist-communist project in Sudan today. For one thing, the drawing of the SPLM into government through the comprehensive peace agreement struck in 2005 has undercut the potential of its more radical tendencies (and dissidents within the movement tend to be ethnically-based).

Legalisation has seen the old Stalinist edifice of the HSS fracture, however, with several "ultra-left" tendencies breaking away, primarily among students at the University of Khartoum. Although these mostly have a Maoist flavour, influenced as they are by conditions of rural warfare, the potential remains for anarchist-communism to make inroads here with fresh ideas. And the trade union movement, though heavily urban, remains strong, which is a good sign for any who wish to see an empowered Sudanese working class.

# The Congo's Dilemma

## Why the Congo is yet another example why we have to rethink our political system

by Stefanie Knoll

### A Small Summary of the Congo's History

The Congo became the private property of King Leopold II of Belgium at the Berlin Conference held in 1884/5. Leopold used this to exploit the Congo's natural resources, most of all to collect rubber, in which the Congolese were forced in a gruesome way. It has been estimated that within the first decades of outside rule 10 Million people in the Congo have died, many others have been mutilated. In 1908 the Congo became a Belgian colony due to outside pressure. This didn't change much in the situation of the Congolese people. Political parties were still not allowed and only "tribal" unions could emerge. This led to an ethnically and regionally fragmented country and at the eve of independence in 1960 to many crises. Patrice Lumumba became the Congo's first Prime Minister but was soon to be eliminated by Joseph Mobutu with the help of the US government

who wanted to have the Congo as a strategic partner in the Cold War. Mobutu installed his dictatorship finally in 1965 and banned all opposition parties. After 30 years of dictatorship and hardships Zaire (the name the Congo was given by Mobutu) the regime could only be overthrown because of problems in eastern Congo due to the genocide in Rwanda and the millions of refugees that fled across the borders. A rebellion in the east led to the overthrow of Mobutu in 1997 but the Congolese soon realised that the new president Laurent Kabila turned into a new Mobutu and a second rebellion emerged to overthrow Kabila. This rebellion is generally referred to as the big African war because of numerous actors, African states as well as international states and mercenaries. In 2001 Laurent Kabila was killed and his son Joseph Kabila was made new president. Soon peace talks were started but they were always interrupted by new fighting. The peace has always been very instable and fights are still going on. Last years elections have been advertised as a triumph in Congolese history but have not amounted to many changes.

We all have at least once in our life heard of the "First African World War" or the "Heart of Darkness", a Western cliché which was used to justify colonialism and post-colonial intervention. We all seem to know that the conflict in the Congo is, on the one hand, about so-called "tribalism" and the exploitation of mineral resources by Western companies on the other hand. But a closer look shows that the situation is much more complex and even if one is not an anarchist one has to agree that the roots of all problems in the Congo are actually capitalism and the nation-state system of arbitrary borders.

### OUTSIDE INFLUENCE

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is not only the third biggest country in Africa, it is also one of the most strategically located and richest in mineral resources. It has been subjected to outside influence since the beginning of the Arab slave trade and then Western colonialism. Belgium ruled the country for its own wealth and, through decades of plundering the Congo, became one of the richest states in the world. The Congo, on the other hand, is one of the poorest countries in the world. Outside influence in the form of colonial administration with the help of the Church destroyed old structures and old political affiliations and sometimes created new groups in the form of "tribes". Colonial borders divided people between different colonial states; nationalities were thrown together that didn't have anything in common. The economy was regionally

uneven, leading to regional conflicts. The maintenance of colonial borders in the post-colonial era, accepted by all African States through the OAU, is still a major factor in conflicts, be they national or ethnic.

### CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The Congo is geographically diverse and so is its population. There are about 250 ethnopolitical groups with their own distinct culture and most even have their own language. The Congo is a vast country whose regions differ greatly from each other and the tropical rainforest at the centre has always made traffic from one side to the other difficult. Because of these factors one can see that there is no real unity among the citizens of the Congo. I do not speak of "tribes" since there are no "tribes" in the Congo or anywhere in the world. All groups have been created for political purposes even if there is some "ethnic" root to them. Sometimes they have even been created by the colonial administration and the Church who tried to group people to rule them more easily and also to divide them among each other so that there would not be a united anti-colonial movement. Later also Mobutu used this form of divide and rule tactic. In the Congo this has been done by preferring one group over the other - just as in Rwanda the

Tutsi over the Hutu - the Luba over the Lulua, the Hema over the Lendu and many more examples. Sometimes the Belgians even created chiefs in societies without chiefs. This is why I prefer to use the term ethnopolitical groups instead of "tribe" or "ethnic group". Most of the time these so called "tribes" are seen as natural descent groups caught up in their web of traditions and age-old rivalries. The most serious problem with the term "tribe" is the distinction between Africa and Europe when implying that "tribes" only existed in Europe until the Middle Ages whilst they still exist in Africa today. What is more, while ethnic conflicts in Europe are called national they are referred to as "tribalism" in Africa.





Nevertheless, ethnic differences continue to play a major factor in Africa. This is due to the fact that they are either based on natural descent groups that always used to have such loyalties, or that - even though they have been created by outside factors - people came to believe in such differences themselves and now act according to that.

This does not mean that such groups are just classes and ethnic conflicts are just hidden class conflicts. Only in some cases, as for example in the case of the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, this is true. But one cannot deny that there are different classes within ethnopolitical groups as well. In most of Africa opposing social classes as in Europe have never even developed. Most of the time conflicts occur along regional lines. Therefore, in Africa we have to accept a plurality of cultures and the struggle has to point out cultural diversity and not just classes. Also, the struggle for more rights of women is crucial and part of the anarchist struggle and should therefore not take a minor position.

## CAUSES OF THE WAR

There are many causes of the war in the Congo. The most recent ones have been the collapse of the Mobutu regime due to the collapse of the Cold War in which the Congo had been a strategic partner for the United States but became unimportant afterwards. Outside interference by neighbouring countries, Rwanda and Uganda, was a major factor in the actual outbreak of the war. Another recent source for the continuation (not the roots of the conflict itself) has been the plundering of the Congo's resources by foreign states and Western corporations.

The major factors for the Congolese war, however, are capitalism and the state-system. Both have plundered and made a periphery out of the Congo to keep prices for resources low in the West. The State has always only been used to gain private wealth. Due to colonialism and the horrible conditions in which Congolese people had to collect rubber for the Belgian state, 10 million people died and others were mutilated. The population of the Congo was reduced to half within just a few decades.

As Mobutu's regime collapsed, civil war began and nearly 4 million people died, not to speak of the thousands that still die every week as a result of the war, because they do not have enough food and medical treatment. The people who suffer most from the war and its consequences are of course women and children. There are still child soldiers in the Congo and neighbouring countries and women still get raped and mutilated by various local militias. The regime of Laurent Kabila was seen by many as a promising new hope for the

future, but soon followed in the footsteps of Mobutu, and another war broke out to get rid of Kabila.

Overall this war has been about power and profit. It originated in the Eastern Congo where there are conflicts about land. Certain groups (most of all Tutsi who have been living in the Congo for decades) don't have access to land and therefore started a rebellion to fight against Mobutu. As the situation didn't change with Kabila they started a second rebellion. Both rebellions have been backed by Rwanda and Uganda. The regimes in Kinshasa have been backed by various other African and international countries.

## THE NATIONAL QUESTION

Nationalism has also been a major factor for the Congo's problems. There have been various attempts to make a nation out



of the Congo, a country which is too diverse for that. Patrice Lumumba is always seen as a pan-African hero who tried to unite the Congo but in fact he also has to be blamed for various massacres and conflicts. Mobutu tried to do the same and this led to some stability, but later he also began to use ethnic diversities to divide the opposition.

The idea of a Congolese nation is an illusion and whatever the roots of the ethnic tensions, there are continual pressures for secession. Many people are unhappy with the borders in the Congo and this has fed into the current war, as many want the country to be split into different states. This might lead to peace in the short-term, but more certainly to other conflicts. The only way to solve the Congo's problems is therefore to rethink the whole system of the nation-state and to completely change it.

## SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination and autonomy are the only solutions to the Congo's problems. It just does not make sense to retain such a large country as a single unit, especially

when people do not believe they belong together. By self-determination and autonomy I mean real self-government and not merely the creation of new states. States are one of the problems we have to get rid of. To keep the Congo a state as it is at the moment will lead to more violence because it is an artificial construct that has not evolved from the inside but was forced upon the region from the outside. Only a new global system will bring about the necessary change.

## ANARCHISM - A WAY OUT

Especially in Africa it has become clear that the state, and capitalism that is upheld by the state, are the biggest evils. Most people live and work without ever getting anything positive from the state. They only see its negative aspects: paying taxes when there is no money for it; suffering from wars that are led by politicians to gain more power and wealth. We have seen in many cases that Western democracy is not the solution for Africa. Also, what some call "African democracy" is just a nice word to hide a one-party state, such as Uganda, which is nothing else than another form of authoritarian rule. Most people already live outside of and in opposition to the state. Anarchism therefore would not be new to Africa and there were already many traditional societies that used to live in a way close to an anarchist system; some of them still exist. What we have to do now is to organise people across Africa and the world, to fight for a better global system.

Africa has always been dominated by outside influence. Only a new global system can change this dilemma and only anarchism allows for a truly international system that once and for all does away with the unjust exploitation of many by only a few. Only anarchism allows for real self-determination. No state is suitable, whether it has cultural boundaries (as some ethnopolitical groups demand) or not, because if cultural and national boundaries are the same then the state is in danger of becoming nationally oppressive by excluding people with different cultural backgrounds. Similarly, a multicultural state always runs the risk of having one group try to assimilate others.

Summing up, states - even democracies - only exist because they help some people to be more powerful and to accumulate wealth by means of power. This becomes especially clear when looking at the Congo. We do not need states; there are many examples that people can organise themselves, even on a global basis. Another world is possible; we have to start believing in it and fighting for it.

# A New Guantanamo in Africa?

A new “Guantanamo-style” military camp has started operations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from where a South African man, Abdul Hamid Moosa, was recently released after six months incommunicado detention, where he suffered assaults and lengthy interrogations at the hands of mostly American soldiers.

“Abdul was a victim of enforced disappearance” said his lawyer Zehir Omar, “a crime against humanity”. Moosa was abducted from Somalia, but how he got there from Damascus is uncertain.

News of Moosa’s detention came via *Reprieve*, a London-based charity organisation that helps victims of the “war on terror”, when a Swedish national known as Muneer contacted them after he was released from detention at the camp

and returned to Europe, informing them of Moosa’s fate.

On the camp he said, “I have no doubt that the camp in Addis Ababa is one of the secret hideouts of the United States. Our interrogators at the camp were mostly Americans”.

Muneer was abducted in December last year when soldiers surrounded a village mosque in Kenya where he was praying, taking 13 people including his wife prisoner. They were then interrogated, taken to and detained in Nairobi for about 10 days before being put on a plane to Somalia. There they were detained for about another 10 days before finally being flown to a military camp in Addis Ababa. Abdul Moosa was already there detained, in an isolated section of the camp. He later joined the new arrivals, all kept in isolated cells. They were shackled, guarded and had their hands tied behind their backs for 24 hours a day, unchained only to eat and use the toilet.

When Muneer arrived, he said, there were about 60 detainees at the camp but, when he left, there were only 20, mostly Africans. The pattern of releases indicates that those from more powerful Western states are more likely to be released than those from African and Arab states, suggesting that it is a political, rather than legal process through which prisoners are given their rights.



Australia's Christmas Island “Guantanamo”

## Zabalaza Introduction to *Misrepresentation of Self-Management in the Caribbean*

This is a 1975 analysis from the Caribbean anarchist journal *Caribbean Correspondence*, which was based in Jamaica, Antigua and the USA. It was kindly supplied to us by Mitch Miller of the Workers' Solidarity Alliance of the USA, an anarcho-syndicalist group which has a long history of support for the struggles of oppressed black people, whether in the USA itself, the Caribbean or Africa.

The document is important both because of its excellent analysis, and because it is an important testimony to the anarchist and syndicalist tradition in the Caribbean.

The most notable anarchist movement in that region was, without a doubt, that of Cuba. The Cuban anarchists pioneered the labour movement, organised across racial lines in both the workplace and in working class communities, and opposed racial segregation. In addition, the Cuban anarchists played an important role on the independence struggle against Spain in the 1890s, and against the subsequent influence of American imperialism. The strength of the Cuban movement was demonstrated by the fact that when the Cuban Communist Party was founded in 1925 with under 100 members, the anarcho-syndicalist Cuban Workers' National Confederation (CNOC) had 200,000 members; that is not even mentioning the Cuban IWW section, and the Federation of Anarchist Groups of Cuba (FGAC).

What is rather less well known is the more slender history of anarchism and syndicalism in the English-speaking Caribbean. This was a minority movement, not a mass one. Whereas the movement in Spanish-speaking Cuba and Puerto Rico dated back to the late 1800s, the movement in Antigua and Jamaica appears to have only emerged with the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s. This was in the immediate aftermath of both decolonisation, and of the so-called “Cuban Revolution” under Fidel Castro. Castro’s regime is often misunderstood to be socialist: it is, in fact, state-capitalist and was based from the start on the naked repression of the working class movement, not least its anarchist wing. Yet Castro’s example had a major influence on many who

were frustrated by the post-independence situation: Michael Manley of Jamaica, and later Maurice Bishop of Grenada were prime examples of figures who were inspired by the Cuban model and who used the language of “self-management” and “communism” to promote a state-capitalist project.

The ZACF reprints this historical article because it covers much ground that remains very topical today: illusions in Cuba, and in nationalism, and in cross-class racial movements remain prevalent. What is needed is an autonomously organised self-managed movement by the oppressed classes, not another set of leaders. On reflection, Montgomery Stone, the author, suggests that there is a real alternative: revolutionary self-management, embodied by anarchism. His cutting article exposes the bankruptcy of Statist solutions, and of nationalism, and shows that real self-management is a fundamentally revolutionary project that cannot be reconciled with the two great structures of class rule: capitalism and the State.

This is something that the great Caribbean revolutionary, CLR James (1901-1989), never fully grasped. While James was increasingly critical of the Soviet Union, concluding it was simply a new State-capitalist regime, he nonetheless continued to adore Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and believe self-management was compatible with a Marxist regime. Likewise, he turned a blind eye to the crimes of post-independence regimes across Africa, lavishing uncritical praise on the radical nationalism of figures like Kwame Nkrumah, who crushed labour and democracy in the pursuit of an independent national capitalism and powerful African State.

**Note:** a few very slight changes have been made to the original text to ensure clarity and eliminate grammatical crudities (although the original American spelling has been retained); additional footnotes have been added for explanatory purposes; and sub-headings have been added to break up the text into thematic sections.

# Misrepresentation of Self-Management in the Caribbean

by **Montgomery Stone**, *Caribbean Correspondence*,  
**June 1975, New York City (USA), Kingston (Jamaica)**  
**and St Johns (Antigua)**

Self-management is what the revolution is all about. The struggle being waged by the masses of people to gain direct control over all areas of social life, the absence of which is responsible for their poverty, oppression and alienation. Relating directly to the place of work, self-management does not mean that management consults the workers on what it, management, intends to do. What it means is that the workers themselves should collectively manage their work in all its aspects and put an end to any management other than they themselves. However the concept of self-management, to be meaningful, could never relate to only the place of work or any other separate part of social existence. Because of the interdependence of all areas of our social life, and because humanity demands liberty in all areas of social life, then [for] self-management to be meaningful and real [it] must embrace life in its totality.

Within the Caribbean today, the concept of self-management is being terribly distorted and prostituted, both by the ruling bureaucracies and the host of Marxist-Leninist bureaucracies which are seeking to replace them. One could sit back with a sort of naïve satisfaction and say that it is a testament to the high level of revolutionary consciousness of the Caribbean masses that the tyrants should be forced to include promises of self-management, as dishonest as they are, within their arsenal of false promises.

The fact is, that while on the one hand it is the day-to-day struggles of the poor and oppressed in the Caribbean that forces them to talk about self-management, their talk of self-management is nevertheless a direct reaction to that struggle and is meant to spread confusion and ultimately defeat the oppressed masses in their struggle for true liberation.

It therefore becomes of critical importance that every effort be made to unmask these wolves in sheep's clothing, and to maintain a clear vision of the struggle for self-management, for a society in which the masses of people exercise direct control over the means of production, the production process, the products of their labor, and in every area of their social life.

Caribbean society is boiling and seems to be bursting at the seams. In territory after territory, we see employed workers waging a struggle on two fronts, as they openly

challenge so-called management prerogatives at the same time that they are waging a relentless struggle against their unions.

With the endless number of strikes that seem to have become a permanent feature of Caribbean life, wild-cats [rank-and-file illegal strikes] are more the rule than the exception. Increasingly, workers are realizing that so-called industrial agreements, the deals worked out between union and management, not only place a limit on their decision-making, but also place restrictions on their methods of struggle. Thus, today in the Caribbean, it would not be incorrect to say that union bureaucrats are usually the last people to hear about a strike.

## THE ELITES, THE MARXISTS AND THE UNION BUREAUCRATS: AN UNHOLY TRINITY

The editorial of the *Trinidad Sunday Express* of December 15, 1974, should give us a feel for the present state of affairs. It said, "The utter disregard of the Industrial Relations Act (IRA) has resulted in strikes becoming an almost daily happening with workers prepared to withdraw their labor under the slightest pretext".

It went on, "It is up to the unions to exercise control over their members if they are to justify their positions as bargaining representatives. It is not sufficient for the unions to take the line that the workers had been advised by them and that there is nothing more they can do. If a union is unable to exercise such control, then its leadership ought to be changed..."

*"The act of striking, which is illegal anyway, for what is certainly a matter falling outside the industrial agreement, can only be regarded as irresponsible action, and it is hoped that those responsible for advising the workers will indicate to them the folly of their actions."*

It then turned to the workers saying, "It is time that the workers of the country realize that action like this, grasping at all sorts of extras, is reaching to the point of absurdity, and a government might well be forced to take such action that might cost them their precious freedom."

And should any of us harbor any doubts about how seriously the union bureaucrats

take their jobs of controlling the workers, let us look at what Basdeo Panday, President General of the All-Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factories Workers Union, told his workers after they had taken just such an action.

In its issue of 12/14/1974 the *Trinidad Guardian* reported, "The union leader explained to the workers that their actions were an embarrassment to the union and a hindrance in the current negotiations for a new three-year industrial agreement".

This is the scene throughout the Caribbean and it is complemented by frequent seizure of lands by peasants in their on-going struggle against land-owners and the state.

However, we have only been looking at those people lucky enough to be employed. The Caribbean youth, who make up the greater proportion of the high percentage of unemployment in the region, have not been sitting idly by. From Jamaica to Antigua to Dominica to Trinidad to Guyana and in between those, it is the same thing. The ruling classes and the state machinery have virtually declared war on young people.

And in their day-to-day struggle against the state, young people, once attracted by the revolutionary rhetoric of the various bureaucratically centralized groups in the area, are more and more rejecting such groups because of bitter experiences and are by themselves trying to throw up more democratic organizational forms. They are moving away from the vanguard organizations, which stifle their initiative and seek to set up a "leadership" over them.

It is against this background that we have the middle-class state bureaucrats on the one hand and the various Marxist-Leninist parties and movements on the other, all talking about workers' control and self-management. And as if not to be outdone, the union bureaucrats too have begun to call for workers' control and self-management. All three of these forces are as different from each other as the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

What keeps them apart is their power struggle, which results from their common desire to be in control of the state machinery. What makes them one is their equally common desire to continue the oppression and exploitation of the masses of the people, under the hierarchical organization of work for their commodity economy, with

themselves as professional specialists in charge of the factories and state institutions.

## THE ERROR OF NATIONALIZATION

Around the world, capitalism is in the midst of a crisis. From Sweden to America to Cuba to England to Yugoslavia, they are all talking about "worker participation". Worker alienation seems to be getting more acute, and whether it is the worker in Moscow who stays home and drinks vodka or the worker in Detroit who goes to work and sabotages machinery, workers around the world are fighting back. As a result of this, production is not increasing the way the capitalists would like it to and in some cases even dropping. Their intellectual agents have told them that the workers' sense of alienation could be reduced by allowing them to "participate!" in management and ownership.

We in the Caribbean are very much a part of the world capitalist system. Thus let us sit back and listen to what the Hon. Michael Manley [Jamaica's pro-Castroist prime minister 1972-1980, and 1989-1992] has to say on the subject:

*"May I now turn to a vital area: worker participation. One might be tempted to feel that one has discharged the obligation to change and restructure the society when an industry is nationalized. This is a trap into which many an unsuspecting socialist has fallen.*

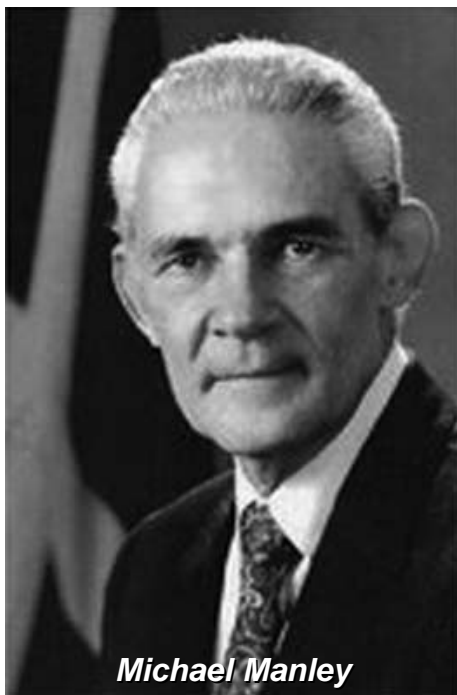
*"Here, however, we are in danger of confusing institutional shadow for the substance of change in the experience of human beings. The nationalization of the industry does not in itself bring any change in the experience of the worker. The motivation for workers' exploitation may be reduced when we substitute the state for the private shareholder. But the worker may find out that he is, as before a blind cipher in a machine that is controlled and managed by powers that are remote and insensitive.*

*"Hence we are planning to use the method of nationalization, where it is appropriate, as more than a bridge to public accountability. We see it as an opportunity to develop full worker participation in all significant aspects of social and economic activity."<sup>1</sup>*

I am afraid that the second [half] of Manley's statement proves that he is totally unaware of the piercing profundity of the first. He has unwittingly put forward the fundamental criticism of the nationalization theory (the current fad) and the Marxist-

Leninist theory of state socialism. Both theories in fact amount to the same thing.

Not for a moment must we imagine that Manley, [Forbes] Burnham [leader of Guyana 1964-1985] or any of the others have any intention of restructuring society.<sup>2</sup> The big power breed of the metropolitan capitalists, from their position of dominant control of the network of international capitalism, along with the general chaos in trade and capital investment, add up to make the particular foreign investors insensitive in negotiations with the local state bureaucrats over what percentage of the booty they must get from exploiting the human and material resources in the Caribbean.



**Michael Manley**

At the same time the current assault from the prisons, from the factories, in the streets and through occupations of land, has taxed all the means and weapons of social control, particularly the army, the police and academic education. This is the crux of their government problems of power-relations. The motivation behind their rush to nationalize is the need to earn more income for the state. This becomes necessary because of the increasing cost of operating an ever-growing bureaucracy on the one hand and, on the other, their position as state bureaucrats is the basis of the wealth of a large section of the Caribbean middle-class.

## WHAT OF FIDEL CASTRO'S NATIONALIST-CAPITALIST FRIENDS?

[Yet] Manley is perfectly correct when he says that nationalization is confusing institutional shadow for the substance of change in the experience of human beings. Caribbean workers have moved quickly to burst the illusion that the nationalization of

an industry changes their position in relation to it. Note the strike of Guyana bauxite workers right after "their" company was nationalized.

However, what we are up against now are all the talk and fraudulent schemes being put forward as "workers' control". Workers in Guyana have recently been appointed to the management boards of four public concerns. They have now become bureaucrats who were once workers, or to be more precise, worker bureaucrats. It seems as if an old chapter in Caribbean history is being replayed.

Let us look at the tyrants and semi-tyrants of today. George Walker, Eric Gairy, Robert Bradshaw, etc, etc, etc.<sup>3</sup> Were they not the workers of yesterday? How many of us still believe that you could end a system of oppression by integrating one or any number of the oppressed into the oppressive bureaucracy?

No! Even if the entire board of management was made up of workers, nothing would have changed. Now as then, the same system of management would remain intact.

The examples can go on and on. The schemes range from co-operative farms to selling hotel workers shares in some hotels. Worker participation is now official policy. Management consultants and university academics are making it clear to the state and private business that some strategy of worker involvement has become necessary to save the system of capitalist exploitation.

We can not take Manley seriously when he talks about bringing people into the fullest participation, because that would mean real self-management which would get rid of Manley and all like him, and which he is not prepared to deal with. For them, workers' control is just another reform of the capitalist system made necessary by developments within the mass struggle.

What must be of concern to us is the degree to which the poor and oppressed allow themselves to be taken in by such things as "workers' banks" and buying shares in the company. These schemes serve the double purpose of raising capital for the state and other capitalists at the same time that they harbor in the workers the illusion of involvement. Historically, one of the worst handicaps of the poor and oppressed has been their own illusions.

The free-market capitalists and the Third World champions of nationalization are not the only ones who find it necessary to integrate fraudulent schemes of "workers' control" into their program.

## AND WHAT OF THE MARXIST-LENINISTS?

The Marxist-Leninists, known to be the defenders of hierarchy and authoritarianism, have begun to unfurl theories of self-

management. We should now be able to understand why the confusion is total.

The theory of socialism expounded by Marx and Engels, which calls for the concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state, is in contradiction to the theory and practice of self-management. Marx himself brilliantly pointed out that unless production relations were changed, a change in property relations by itself (ie: a move to state ownership of the means of production) would only mean a society of one big capitalist, but the same capitalist production relations would continue.

It was Marx's naïve belief in the eventual withering away of the state, plus his belief in the very need for the state, which led to his hierarchical and authoritarian view of "socialist society". The fact is that if we were to have an immediate change in production relations (ie: a move to direct control by workers over the production process and products of their labor), this would bring the power of the workers into conflict with the power of "their" state.

The fact is that genuine self-management and state power can never exist side by side. It could only mean a situation where the state bureaucracy "allows the workers to make certain decisions," but maintains the final power within its hands.

But history has shown that the so-called peoples' states were never willing to do even that, because it puts wrong ideas into workers' heads and the workers may move to make their state-controlled "self-management" real. This is the controversy which is raging in Yugoslavia today, where self-management in commodity production operates under the centralist control of the communist party and the state.

How is it then that Marxist-Leninist groups like the New Beginning Movement, the Afro-Caribbean Liberation Movement, the New Jewel Movement, the Movement for a New Dominica, the Workers' Liberation League, the Revolutionary Marxist Collective, etc, etc; how is it that they present themselves as people who are advocating self-management?

## THE VANGUARD VERSUS POPULAR ASSEMBLIES

To answer the question, we must first find out what they mean when they say self-management. Make no mistake about this: they are Marxist-Leninist, they see themselves as the Vanguard; they intend to seize state power and set up a dictatorship. We can only take consolation in the fact that they promised to make their dictatorship a temporary one. But whatever became of self-management? Well, we have not gotten to that yet.

Lenin saw "workers' control" as a temporary measure which should be instituted to guard against the counter-revolution, upon the defeat of which we should revert to good old socialist centralized planning. Also, he was of the opinion that this workers' control thing was a good means through which workers could keep an eye on the bureaucrats whom he intended to appoint to man the scientific system of one-man management! <sup>4</sup>

But did not Michael Manley say something about nationalization being a bridge to public accountability? (And worker participation too?) Anyway, the Marxist-Leninist concept of self-management was never any different from what we presently have in Jamaica, Great Britain, Guyana, or Yugoslavia.

For these Caribbean revolutionaries then, self-management is nothing but a secondary part of their program and a fraud to boot. How can we reconcile the dictatorship of their Vanguard and these popular assemblies which they love to make so much noise about? Where will the power rest – with their Vanguard or with the assemblies?

Will they be just another set of (Party-controlled) rubber-stamp parliaments, or genuine forms of organization for workers'

self-management are not irreconcilably opposed to each other. They run around calling themselves the New Left, the new this and the new that, trying to hide the fact that theirs is the same old authoritarianism.

Can we solve the problem of the exploitation of man by man without simultaneously addressing ourselves to the authority of man over man?

The fundamental question of the revolution is not one of making more commodities available to people. However that seems to be the limit to which our Marxist-Leninist friends are willing to go. They are always quick to point out the statistics of how many children are in school after their seizure of power, how many bottles of milk are produced, and the tripling of the production of shoes.

But whenever one raises the question of hierarchical authority, there is always "the counter-revolution and the backwardness of the masses" to justify it. Added to that is the Marxist dogma which says that human society only becomes capable of freedom at a certain level (?) of commodity production. So we in the technologically underdeveloped areas of the world are faced with the added burden of having to wait until "our proletarian dictatorship" has taken us to that magic level of commodity production before we can put in our claim for freedom.<sup>5</sup>

## SO WHAT IS SELF-MANAGEMENT?

The movement to self-management is one that sees the question of alienation as fundamental – and therefore one that seeks to deal with the question of exploitation and authority at the same time. It is not that we don't see the question of more food, clothes and housing as being of the utmost importance. It is just that we have no intention of becoming only better-fed slaves.

Still, this is not to say that exploitation does not continue under the Marxist-Leninist state. Under the socialist state ([or] final state of monopoly capitalism), surplus value goes to the state bureaucracy instead of private capitalists. It should be clear then that self-management is not an arrangement worked out by any state (Marxist-Leninist or not) for worker participation.

Seizure of control over the production process and the products of labor are key elements in any attempt to end alienation. They will also be key elements in any attempt to establish self-management. We do not intend to concern ourselves with the legalities of who owns the means of production; whether it is the people, the state, or private capitalists. What concerns us is that we establish effective control over



power? The fact is that if you push these self-styled revolutionaries far enough, they will admit to you that their version of self-management only becomes meaningful after the "transition period". The only trouble with that is that there is no end in sight to this transition period. The transition period, like the "temporary" dictatorship, is permanent.

These so-called revolutionary organizations are carrying out a program of mass deception. On the one hand they run down the Marxist-Leninist ideology which can only lead to a state bureaucracy ruling over a society based upon capitalist production relations. On the other hand they babble about self-management and workers' control. They are stuck in the same confusion that CLR James <sup>5</sup> has been stuck in for so long, pretending that state socialism and

them. Let that determine the property relations.

All those who preach the virtues of hierarchical authority will accuse us of being opposed to organization. Ironically, in our struggle to establish a society of self-management, where decisions are made by those whom they affect, it is precisely our organization (or lack of it) which will determine our success (or failure).

They confuse bureaucracy and its hierarchical authority for organization. It becomes more absurd than ironic when one realizes that direct democracy, especially in today's world, requires an amount and quality of organization that is as yet to appear in any society. On the other hand, their organizational form, with the vast masses being directed by the few, is an absolute minimum of organization, and anything less would be no organization at all.

Far from being a program for worker participation within capitalist (or state capitalist) society, the struggle for self-management is a revolutionary project for the total transformation of society. The number of instances in which workers have thrown out management and proceeded to reorganise production on their own are acts that go way beyond the most liberal programs of the authoritarians.

Yet such acts are just the beginning. The occupation of a particular place of work by its workers, together with a continuation of production under their collective management, can not continue in isolation for too long before it is recuperated in one form or another. Therefore it is a continuing revolutionary process in which other work places and communities come to the defence of this occupation by initiating their own occupation.

It is only a generalized movement of self-management, a final appropriation of the appropriators, that can get the poor and oppressed out of the vicious circle of strikes and strikes and more strikes. It is only at the point of production that the poor and oppressed masses can seize power.

## THE SELF-MANAGED REVOLUTION FROM BELOW

Workers at particular workplaces must collectively manage the production process through their workers' councils, factory committees, or what have you. And since individual workplaces could never decide what to produce in isolation from each other, plus the necessity for community input in such decisions, there will have to be widespread co-ordination of activities between the workers' councils and community councils of the various areas of production and other social activities.

These councils are the organisational forms which will allow people to seize direct control of the production process, the

means of production, and all areas of their social life. The process of co-ordination, carried out by mandated delegates who are subject to immediate recall, will be demystified from the state mystification in which it exists under the system of capitalist production, to the simple administration of things.

The defence of the new form of socialist organization will have to be taken up by the armed masses themselves, co-ordinating the defence of the revolution in the same manner in which they co-ordinate production. Any attempt to leave the question of defence in the hands of specialist military leaders and their hierarchical form of military organization, can only result in the defeat of the revolution. There can be no power in the new society but the power of the workers' councils.

To repeat, it is only at the point of production that the poor and oppressed masses can seize power. The masses could never seize state power, because the state is a hierarchical form of social organization and could only be seized in the name of the masses by somebody else. Whereas a state machinery is needed by the minority oppressors to carry out the oppression of the mass population, the masses do not need a state machinery to suppress the minority oppressors.

The armed population co-ordinating the defence of the revolution is not only enough and most efficient. It is also the only form of military organization that will not end up defeating the purpose of the revolution.

The history of past struggles has already proven the utter uselessness and the parasitic nature of the bureaucrats of whatever ideological brand. Their sermons of how society would be in chaos without their mediation are now bad jokes. They mistake the clear demands made by the masses for control over their lives, as requests to self-manage their own oppression. However, the final critique of them will be the act of removing them.



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

### NOTES:

1. Address given by Manley at the UWI, St Augustine, 12-14-1974. A former trade unionist, Manley (1924-1997) rose to power in Jamaica in 1972 on a programme of "people's power". His People's National Party viewed Fidel Castro's corporatist "communism" as its model, but became increasingly embroiled in political violence from 1976 onwards. In that year, a state of emergency was declared and 500 opposition supporters were detained. In his second period in office, Manley adopted a watered down, moderate stance because his favourite dictatorship, the USSR, had collapsed.

2. In 1970, Burnham, another president-for-life Castroite, declared Guyana to be a "co-operative republic". Like all other such pseudo-socialist experiments, this meant in reality that the popular classes were required to co-operate in their exploitation by the republic and its capitalist allies. And yet then, as today, the Marxist-Leninist left remains deluded that Castroite capitalists Hugo Chavez (Venezuela) and Evo Morales (Peru) can rescue their statist dreams from the trash-heap of history. Burnham's increasingly authoritarian regime is held responsible for the 1980 assassination of radical Guyanese historian Walter Rodney.

3. Walter was a former unionist who became second prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda (1971-1976) as head of the Progressive Labour Party prior to the country's independence from Britain in 1981. Gairy was a former US Navy sailor and strike-leader whose United Grenada Labour Party took Grenada to independence from Britain in 1974. His paramilitary "Mongoose Gangs" were responsible for street violence against the equally "labourite" New Jewel Movement that eventually ousted him in 1979. Bradshaw was a former unionist who became the dictatorial first premier of St Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla in 1967. He apparently stole his regime on that of Haiti's notorious "Papa Doc" Duvalier.

4. Lenin mentions the need of "highly advanced technology". Technology is presented as an impersonal and impervious force in the same way as matter and finally history, understood as the history of matter, is presented within a dogmatic Marxism. Thus, all power to the technicians who know the secrets of technology, and know how to command it while obeying it, and who therefore command others without having to obey them. The politician himself is nothing but the engineer or revolution and of popular happiness. The organizational technique of Leninism is only effective in the context of an alienated revolution. And the hierarchical setting, which Gorz points out in the capitalist enterprise, is immediately found functioning politically and not technically in the Party with its structure,

its top directors, its assistant directors, the secretaries, the union bosses, and the official ideologues. In a word, the "professional revolutionaries" whose profession is precisely to remove the revolution from the proletariat, to transform politics into something external and transcendent, requiring their science and their skill. — Forgetting Lenin: TELOS #18

5. CLR James (1901-1989) was one of the Caribbean's foremost journalists, theorists and social analysts. Hailing from Trinidad and Tobago, his political orientation was originally Trotskyist, but he later embraced pan-Africanism, though he had an influence on autonomist Marxism.

6. Consumer Human is satisfied by an ever-increasing volume of commodities; his labor is nothing more than a means in his life — his means of acquiring (by its sale) commodities, of appropriating property, of consuming. Work is seen as an activity which has no intrinsic value, hence its substance is unimportant, its form important only in relation to other goals. It is good to shorten it, to routinize it, to mechanize it, to increase its return — that's all that matters. For Creator Human, his work activity is his fulfillment, hence it cannot be ordered in such a way as to preclude meaning, enrichment and pleasure. — Administration Theory: TELOS # 12

## Caribbean Correspondence

### Misrepresentation of Self-Management in the Caribbean



Look, I'm exactly six months older today and there are many things I want to do.

Montgomery Stone

The text of this article has also been published in pamphlet form as part of the Zabalaza Books *African Resistance History Series*.

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# Some Thoughts on Theoretical Unity & Collective Responsibility

by Jonathan

***This article aims to examine, briefly, the relationship between theoretical unity and collective responsibility, and their mutual dependence within an anarchist-communist organisation. It also poses some questions regarding the problems that may arise within an organisation surrounding these notions, and the challenges that these may present to the growth and endurance of the organisation and the movement.***

We agree that in order to maximise efficiency and potential, theoretical unity is the desired tenet of an anarchist-communist collective or organisation; in order for an organisation to develop an effective tactical orientation towards an oppression, it needs to be informed by a collectively deliberated and agreed upon strategy, reflecting said organisation's collective theoretical understanding thereof.

The success of Platformism depends on the fact that entry into a group relies on the candidate's acceptance — beforehand — of the group's core positions, which are debated but not negotiated with the prospective entrant. Of course this is not to say that they are not open to criticism, are permanently fixed and cannot be changed at a later stage. What is important, however, is that militants are accepted into a group based on their being won over to its positions first, and not admitted and then convinced of the positions at a later stage. Acceptance into the specific anarchist-

communist group must imply acceptance of the major line for the group's day-to-day activism, including the willingness to defend that line in public, even if the participant has disagreements with it. Of course there must also always remain a climate of comradely debate, so that positions are continually being criticised and refined, but this must come from within, as the result of the introspection of the organisation, and not as a means of attracting more members.

Failure to maintain this culture of comradely debate could result in the creeping in of a "false peace", in which internal criticism and debate is avoided, and the theoretical and practical approach of the organisation is therefore not developed further and does not evolve. This false peace of fake agreement could be based on silencing people through various tactics in an argument, like sectarianism and name calling, or through tactics like extreme forms of consensus decision-making. It could also

be deliberately applied in order not to offend certain members, or upset the internal relations of the organisation, and could have disastrous effects.

An organisation might form on the basis that all its members are brought together by a common ideological vision; but what happens if, in the course of the life and development of an organisation or collective, it emerges that militants' opinions on a particular issue differ from one another? Perhaps because the issue in question was not considered at the outset, or due to the uneven growth of each member. The latter can be avoided by paying special attention to the internal education of the group, so that militants are able to advance theoretically simultaneously, preventing them from developing their ideas in different directions.

Theoretically, and in practice in a directly democratic group, all members should



have an opportunity to present and argue for their ideas, and try to win the others over to their positions. Perhaps in the process of debate new ideas come to light, and the organisation is able to develop its own position, which is guided by and acceptable to all its members, resulting therefore in the growth of both the individuals and the collective.

This ties in with the idea of collective responsibility; everyone in an anarchist communist organisation or collective is responsible for its ideological character and its members have the duty to argue for and promote their positions as a means of refining the ideological and theoretical understanding of the collective as a whole, not just leaving it up to the intellectuals and so-called experts to develop the politics of a group. This is why, no matter how seemingly trivial and unimportant a specific issue might appear to some, all the members of a collective have the responsibility to participate in that dialogue in order to ensure that the outcome is informed by and satisfactory to all. This could help to prevent bigger differences from arising later on, because the ideological and theoretical character of the collective will develop in tandem with its members, serving to keep them in constant theoretical closeness.

But what if irreconcilable theoretical differences emerge in the development of an organisation? If it is a minority of people who hold an opposing view, should they be expected to compromise to the will of the majority? If they do so, how will it affect the collective responsibility shared by all, knowing that some might be engaged in something in which they do not fully agree? If it is a minor difference, yet unlikely to be overcome, should the organisation proceed as before? And if it does so, and more differences arise, where do you draw the line between a platform inspired group, with theoretical unity, and one more resembling a synthesist organisation? How is an organisation to prioritise which are minor, and which are major differences; when a major issue to one, non-class oppressions for example, may be of less concern to another?

It would be helpful here to make a distinction between issues that are fundamental (issues of major analysis and principle), issues that are critical in practical terms (e.g. bor-

ing-from-within unions) and those that are not seen as important or are specifically not addressed within an organisation (e.g. religion in the case of the ZACF).

Fundamental issues are those that the organisation presents to the public as its core principles and specific anarchist-communist analyses, and it is essential that, despite any minor disagreements within the organisation, all its members are committed to supporting these in public. Failure to do so would result in the conception of the anarchist-communist organisation as theoretically weak and disunited. Moreover, it is essential to the health of the organisation that these fundamental issues of major analysis and principle are agreed to and supported by all militants. Disagreement over fundamental issues is likely to lead to fracture and dissolution or splitting of the organisation, which again gives the impression that the anarchist-communist organisation is disunited and theoretically weak.

Issues that are critical in practical terms are those that guide the strategic and tactical nature of the organisation. As the effectiveness of the organisation depends on the full participation of all its members in its activities, it is vital that collective agreement on these is reached. Once again, if militants enter an organisation knowing that they are in slight disagreement over certain issues, they nonetheless chose to do so by free association, and the responsibility lies with them not only to defend and argue for the organisation's principles and analyses but, by participating in the activities of the organisation, to share in the collective responsibility implied by the practical engagement of the organisation in the class struggle.

Those issues that

are not seen as important, or are specifically not addressed by the organisation, are those that do not detract from the efficiency and proper functioning of the organisation, nor its perception by the public, despite a possible lack of theoretical unity. These are most often issues of personal preference and interpretation, do not influence the core principles and analysis of the organisation, and are therefore of lesser concern.

To attempt to answer some of the questions posed: it is not uncommon that, in

the life of an organisation, members will sometimes be in disagreement. A healthy organisation should accept different points of view, and members should not be expected by the organisation to renounce their opinions but rather to accept and defend, provisionally and at least in public, that of the majority of the organisation.

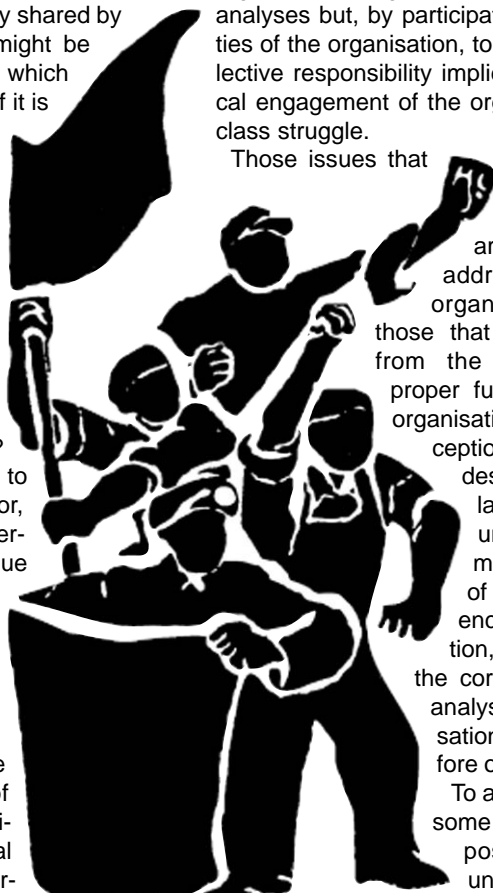
If a majority of members hold a different point of view to the official position of the organisation, then it might indicate that either the organisation has grown beyond its original framework, and needs to revise its positions or, possibly due to a lack of coherent internal education, members have developed their ideas in a direction different to that envisioned at the outset.

As far as possible it should be attempted to iron out and overcome differences through internal education and discussion but, while trying to stay as close as possible to the core principles of the organisation, a diversity of views should also be respected and accepted.

Of course, we want our organisations and movement to grow, but we are also convinced of the necessity for theoretical unity and collective responsibility for them to be effective. In trying to maintain this character, our organisations will grow more slowly than others, and strict membership criteria might give the impression of sectarianism. This can lead to frustration within our organisations, and some people might become disillusioned and modify their views to make them accessible to more people, while others may drop out altogether. The question that faces us, then, is how we can build our organisations and movement by being non-sectarian and open to a diversity of ideas, while retaining our specific anarchist-communist orientation and without compromising our principles of theoretical unity and collective responsibility.

If we are successfully able to build a core group of anarchist communists with a coherent and theoretically unified understanding of anarchism, and a clear strategy of engagement in the class struggle, the first step is taken. Having done so, the opportunity for building our organisations and movement lies within our non-sectarian ability and willingness to engage with a diversity of groups and tendencies on the left, and in our finding a social insertion for anarchist ideas and practice within the movements and structures of the oppressed classes.

This organisational dualism, on the one hand the specific anarchist communist organisation, and on the other its social insertion within the popular classes, is the answer both to retaining our anarchist communist orientation and building our movement.





# Clarity on What Anarcho-Syndicalism Is

In the 14-20 September 2007 edition of *ANC Today: online voice of the African National Congress*, in an article entitled "A fundamental revolutionary lesson: The enemy manoeuvres but it remains the enemy" Anarcho-syndicalism (or what has been termed Anarcho-Syndicalism, but may have been more directed against the shopfloor militancy displayed during the public sector strike) has been accused of a number of truly illogical things in an article by the ruling party in South Africa. This article is primarily a response to these nonsensical claims in an attempt to clarify to those who are clearly ignorant of what anarcho-syndicalism is, what exactly it is.

One of the accusations is that "anarcho-syndicalism has not served as a force for progressive change". Does the author not consider the victorious struggle for an 8 hour working day a progressive change? It would do them well, when making such pronouncements, to research a bit about what they write. Assuming that they had (otherwise how would they quote Rocker to such an extent), they should know that the movement for the 8 hour working day was led by anarcho-syndicalists, and 7 of them were convicted to death for their role in this struggle. International workers day, May First, is a commemoration of these anarcho-syndicalists' sacrifice in pursuit of progressive change. This claim by the author/s therefore amounts to nothing more than deliberately ignoring history to suit their own political agenda.

Another example of politically motivated selective memory; the first trade unions for black, coloured and Indian workers in southern Africa were founded by syndicalists between 1917 and 1919. The ANC itself, as a result, in that period, had a marked syndicalist tendency (at least in its Johannesburg branches). If this was all somehow, as they will no doubt claim, immature, then why did the party choose to align itself with the left and labour during the time of the struggle?

How can the call for "one big union", consisting "of all the workers" be construed as an attempt to "principally ... divide and weaken the progressive movement, serving the interests of right wing forces"? Anarcho-syndicalists have consistently worked against right-wing forces and reaction. We flatly reject the accusation that anarcho-syndicalists have "carefully avoid-

ed a political offensive against capital and the bourgeoisie". Anarcho-syndicalism is politically-conscious revolutionary trade unionism that specifically targets capital and the bourgeoisie, and is in no way apolitical. Anarcho-syndicalists have deliberately avoided engaging in bourgeois politics such as parliamentarianism, true, because they believe it to be a red herring, and that no matter who wins a political struggle, via the ballot box – be they reactionaries or so-called progressives – when they end up in the seats of power they will inevitably capitulate to the interests of capital. There is enough proof of this all over the world including here in South Africa. Anarcho-syndicalists recognise that power corrupts, and that is why their struggle is political, economic and social, as opposed to just political.

They



want to make immediate and revolutionary economic and social gains for the working class and poor, and believe that this is best done through the organisation of the working poor independent from political parties and the state.

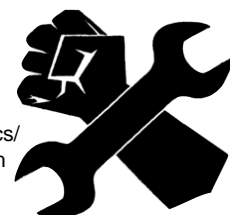
As in Russia and elsewhere, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists long ago said that, the moment that any liberation movement parties get into power, that is where the revolution will end, that it will never progress beyond the first phase of the national democratic revolution, that of seizing state power. That is the fundamental problem with the authoritarian models of socialism, and that is what caused the great controversy between Marx and Bakunin. Bakunin quite rightly saw that, when a so-called workers party enters into power, it creates a new ruling class that will do anything to keep its newly acquired power and privilege. Namely; it will label as counter-revolutionary and persecute anyone who expresses dissent about this

newly emerged elite, while it does everything in its power to bring every aspect of the popular revolution under its control.

The authors of the article in the *ANC Today* are, once again, quite ignorant in their understanding of anarcho-syndicalism when they say that "the trade unions must be welcomed and accepted as the natural leader of the entirety of the progressive movement". This is quite contrary to the most elemental of anarchist theory, which holds that people, be they workers, peasants, students etc., i.e. the 'progressive movement', actively participate in the struggle and, in so doing, determine the ways and means best suited to their peculiar struggles and circumstance. We again flatly reject the accusation that anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism has no "central ideas and strategy". No *centralist* ideas and strategy, sure, because the very point of anarcho-syndicalism is to be decentralised and flexible, able to adapt to the particular conditions of a certain socio-economic-political environment. But to claim that it has no *core* ideas and strategy is to say that it is incoherent, chaotic and ill-defined which, as anyone who has researched a bit about the history of anarcho-syndicalism and who is not deliberately trying to tarnish its name should know, is nonsense. The core idea of anarcho-syndicalism is that trade unions are a potentially revolutionary force which, through the general strike, can be used to overthrow capitalism and the State, replacing it with a federation of democratic and self-managed trade unions and civil society collectives with the underlying principal of the equal participation of all in society.

It would be worth noting here that many anarchist-communists have criticised anarcho-syndicalism, saying that it is a strategy for organising in the workplace, but not an end in itself, and that this workplace organising should be accompanied and reinforced by organisation of communities, educational facilities and of the unemployed.

The full article in the *ANC Today* can be found at  
[www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/ancoday/2007/at36.htm](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/ancoday/2007/at36.htm)



# Towards an Anarcho-Syndicalist Strategy for Africa

by Jonathan

Between 28<sup>th</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2007 about 250 militants from five different continents came together in Paris, France for the CNT-F organised International Syndicalist Conference i07, a follow-up to the industrial Syndicalist Conferences held in San Francisco, USA, in 1999, called i99, and that held in Essen, Germany in 2002, called i02.

The goal of the meetings was to share experiences, debate and to start rebuilding links between different organisations and uniting workers of different countries, to appropriate the means of information, struggle and action by organising international solidarity against capitalist domination and exploitation. The weekend included discussions, workshops and debates dealing with syndicalist issues (co-operatives, repression, representativity, the European Union, casualised and unprotected labour, and relocation...) as well as social issues (anti-sexism, the campaign against Coca-Cola, migrant workers, anti-fascism, housing struggles, anti-imperialism and neo-colonialism...). Branch meetings (metallurgy, education, construction, postal services, health, culture, archeology...) and meetings devoted to geographical regions (Palestine, Europe, the Americas, Africa, the Mediterranean zone) also took place. The conference ended with an anarchist/ anarcho-syndicalist/ syndicalist bloc of about 5,000 participants from every corner of the globe at the May 1<sup>st</sup> demonstration in Paris.

What is particularly interesting to us, and the focus of this article, is that, for the first time, the Industrial Syndicalist Conference had a significant African presence this year, with delegates representing trade unions from Algeria (Snapap), Morocco (UMT, CDT, ANDCN, poor peasants, FDR-UDT), Tunisia (CGTT), Guinea (CNTG, CEK, SLEG), Ivory Coast (CGT-CI), Djibouti (UDT), Congo DRC (LO), Mali (Cocidirail, Sytrail), Benin (FNEB, UNSTB, AIPR), Burkina Faso (UGEB, CGT-B, AEBF) and Madagascar (Fisemare).

The politics of the workers' CGT-B and the students' UGEB from Burkina Faso are described by the CNT-F as "class struggle, revolutionary syndicalism from a Marxist point of view". In a similar way the Madagascan Fisemare is described as an independent Marxist revolutionary union, while the Algerian Snapap is independent but not revolutionary, although it is of interest because it opposes what used to be the

only union in the country, the UGTA. The Guinean CNTG is the biggest union in the country, affiliated to the mainstream International Trade Union Confederation, and won a big strike this year. A representative from a Guinean students' union-in-exile was also present at i07 and the CNT-F has said that the Cocidirail and Sytrail railway unions in Mali, affiliated to the main Mali union the UNTM, are very solid comrades. The UNSTB in Benin used to be a Marxist union linked to the state during the socialist period of that country and as a result is rather reformist. There was also a "very strange union" from the DRC Congo, Lutte Ouvrière, which the CNT-F says they needed to see "on the field" to assess their politics properly. The Congolese do, however, have links on their website to the CNT-F and fellow syndicalist unions the Spanish CGT and Swedish SAC. The CGT-Liberte and the public sector CSP from Cameroon were unable to attend because of visa problems, but they are "very interesting" according, once again, to the CNT-F.

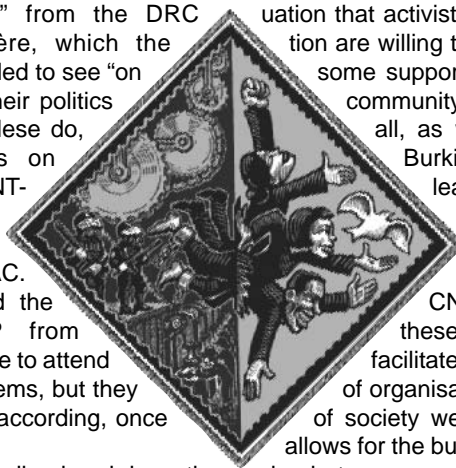
As seen by the preceding breakdown the African delegates present, entirely paid for by the CNT, seemed all to have come from a range of independent and radical unions influenced by Marxism, and it is interesting to consider what might have attracted them to attend an anarcho-syndicalist conference, and what this means for creating an opening for spreading libertarian socialist ideas in Africa. One cynical participant commented that they got the feeling that a lot of these people were present because the CNT wanted to have a big impressive event, and that they invited organisations to participate which they would otherwise have been a lot more wary of had they been from Europe. I don't think that that is quite the case however – that the CNT was doing it for show – and either way, it is crucially important for militants from a libertarian socialist tradition to engage with organisers from Africa coming from an authoritarian socialist (Marxist or otherwise) tradition. The reason being that one needs to consider the context in which their political identity would have developed, bearing in mind that there is very little libertarian socialist tradition in Africa as a whole, and that many people on the continent with Leftist inclinations would invariably have

been attracted to authoritarian/ statist models of socialism and Marxist ideas or, for example, the type of "African socialism", as practiced notably in Tanzania and that was explicitly anti-Marxist, as that was all that most were exposed to.

It is also important to note that "African Socialism" has been tried and found wanting, and that radical Leftists in Africa might be becoming disillusioned with mainstream state socialism and be looking around for alternatives. Perhaps this is what attracted the African delegates to i07? Perhaps they feel so isolated and in such a desperate situation that activists from a statist orientation are willing to try anything to garner some support from the international community. Or perhaps they were all, as with the delegate from Burkina Faso, just there to learn.

Whichever the case may be, it is a sound strategy for the French CNT to be in contact with these groups as it helps to facilitate a dialogue about forms of organisation, visions of the type of society we want to create and it allows for the building of solidarity struggles between groups in the so-called first and third worlds. Hopefully those delegates who attended from Africa would have learnt something and have been inspired by the anarcho-syndicalist and revolutionary syndicalist movements they encountered. I strongly feel that the CNT-F has taken an initiative that I would love to see being followed by the other more developed and stronger anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groupings and movements, with the capacity to do so, from the former colonial regimes.

There is also, encouragingly, another similar initiative to i07, the "International conference on the co-ordination of base unionism and social connection in Europe and the Maghreb" being organised by the Spanish CGT, due to take place in Malaga on 28, 29 and 30 September 2007. According to the CGT "a network of relations, information and solidarity actions has been developing between organisations on the northern and southern sides of the Mediterranean..." and these meetings will have the "objective of opposing the current neo-liberal politics [...] The principal objective is not to share long expositions on the different problems, but to achieve a consensus to establish some minimum agree-



ments that will allow us to develop actions in a way that shows a clear and organised response to neo-liberalism”.

The legacy of Marxism and the Soviet Union is fading into history, and as a result, there is a vacuum of ideas in the African Left. At such a time it is crucial for anarchists to step in and try to fill this vacuum, at a point when people may be looking for alternatives and might be open to libertarian socialist ideas. Anarchists should not be sectarian about their engagement with the broader African Left as, without a doubt, if we fail to take the initiative and try to fill the vacuum of ideas with a libertarian socialist - or more specifically an anarchist communist alternative, the larger and still, regrettably, better organised authoritarian socialists will certainly seize the opportunity to provide material and ideological support to the African trade unions, social and anti-globalisation movements who, often desperate and uneducated as to the flaws of state socialism, will take whatever help they can get.

If, however, anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groups abroad are going to try and develop contacts with unions in Africa, and try to spread anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist tactics and ideas, they would need to have a strategy for doing so. One key point to note however, when embarking on this strategy, is that every effort must be made to try to make contact with the rank-and-file workers, not the union bureaucrats, or to try and ensure that union leaders disseminate the information and ideas they receive from anarchists abroad at the base. They would need to make a commitment to persistence and patience in building such networks. It would also be advisable for delegates to be sent to Africa to make direct contacts with African organisers and in order to gauge the impact of their attempts, adjust and revise strategies where necessary, and measure the adequacy of the dissemination of their materials, via the union leaders or contact persons, at the base.

Another point worth noting for anyone keen to help spread anarchist ideas in Africa is that - given the small size of the African working class, high levels of unemployment and relative lack of industrialisation - anarchist intervention from abroad in industrial struggles, and the cultivation of anarcho-syndicalist tendencies in Africa is not sufficiently going to help spread anarchist ideas on the continent, and special attention should also be paid to ways and means of carrying industrial struggles into communities. In order to effectively spread anarchist ideas across the continent, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists should not confine themselves to industrial struggles, but should try to find ways for taking up and supporting social and community struggles in the industrial arena, as well as encouraging workers who may become influenced

by anarcho-syndicalist ideas to try and take these ideas back to their communities, and organise there too.

The CNT-F have already taken libertarian socialist debate on Africa significantly forward with the publication of what was intended to be *Zabalaza's* sister journal, the French-language Africa-focused journal *Afrique XXI*, and I hope that measures are being taken to ensure that this publication finds a decent circulation in Africa and that it is not confined to the Francophone African immigrant communities in Europe (although its circulation there would also serve to spread libertarian socialist ideas amongst African immigrants to Europe who, in turn, could send such ideas back home). It should be noted, though, that this journal is not produced by the CNT-F alone, and that there are also some groups and organisations that do not come from the libertarian tradition, which might moderate its message to a degree - but which also ensure a wider readership than a purely anarchist journal would reach.

Given the scarcity of known libertarian socialist socio-political traditions in Africa, which were mainly confined to North and southern Africa and its small and thinly spread anarchist movement, the support and intervention of anarchists coming from regions with more developed anarchist traditions is vital for the spread of the anarchist idea on the continent. In particular the anarchists of the former colonial powers (who have the advantage of linguistic and cultural ties with Africa) should try to support the growth of anarchism in Africa. Also, sharing experiences of struggle and methods of anarchist organisation under similar socio-economic conditions, such as in Latin America or other parts of the developing world, would be very beneficial.

#### **To this end we need to consider a few things:**

1. How can anarchists abroad work with, and assist, existing anarchist groups and individuals in Africa?
2. How can they establish and maintain contacts with African trade unions, social movements and Left-wing groups?
3. What are the priorities when doing so: to spread anarchist awareness; to support existing struggles (materially, ideologically or through solidarity actions); or to counter authoritarian traditions?
4. How can they embark on joint international campaigns involving African groups?
5. How can they show practical

solidarity with African struggles?

6. How can they work towards turning single-issue and reformist campaigns and struggles into revolutionary movements and promote horizontal, egalitarian, participatory democracy?

When engaging with African trade unions and trying to facilitate the establishment of an anarcho-syndicalist presence on the continent, it is wise to avoid or to set aside the sectarian infighting which has plagued certain sectors of the movement thus far. In the old debate of whether or not anarchists should bore-from-within existing unions, to organise inside or work alongside existing and probably reformist unions, what must be avoided in the African context is the “purist” line (which argues against this boring-from-within), which does not work except in very particular circumstances - which don't obtain in Africa at present. The hard reality in Africa is that the purist position of trying to establish new, specifically anarchist unions will probably fail - until such time as there is a significant growth in the African anarchist movement itself. Until then, new anarcho-syndicalist formations are likely to remain isolated, numerically and strategically insignificant - if not totally ineffectual.

To conclude, there are two possible options that may contribute to spreading the ideas and methods of anarcho-syndicalism in Africa. The first is for Africa-based anarchists to agitate for anarcho-syndicalism either within existing unions or, possibly at a later stage, by trying to set-up new unions along anarcho-syndicalist lines from scratch. The second and more viable option - because of the insignificant number of organised anarchists in Africa and their relative lack of capacity - is for anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists from abroad to intervene and assist by trying to establish contacts and build pragmatic solidarity with any existing African unions - preferably independent and revolutionary ones where possible.



## Where We Stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## New ZACF Formed

On December 1 2007, by mutual consent of all its members and following consultations with the WSM (Ireland), OCL (Chile) and FdCA (Italy), the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation was replaced by a new, unitary organisation, the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front. The new ZACF retains all the assets of the former federation, including this journal and the [www.zabalaza.net](http://www.zabalaza.net) website. On December 2, the members of the new ZACF held talks with our Swazi comrades with a view to establishing a new unitary organisation in Swaziland.

The organisations are almost the same, but the differences between the Federation and the Front are the following:

1. The Front is a unitary organisation of individual militants, whereas the Federation was a federation of militant collectives. This means individuals are directly responsible to the entire Front and there is no additional "layer" between the individual member and the policy-making Congress of all members.
2. The Front is organised within South Africa, whereas the Federation linked collectives in South Africa and Swaziland. In practice, communication troubles has meant it has been difficult to democratically endorse each and every Swazi decision by having to poll the South African membership (and visa versa). It is easier for the Swazis to run their own collective which will remain affiliated to, and supported by, the Front.
3. The Front's membership rules (not its politics, but the responsibilities of membership) have been relaxed somewhat to allow those who are unable to be fully committed due to work, domestic or other pressures, to nevertheless remain involved. The Anarchist Black Cross SA is now an autonomous collective, but it has some cross-membership with the Front, which will ensure the Front's continued support for its efforts.

## ZACF CONTACT DETAILS

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