

# **BULLETIN**

# **November 2012**

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## **Namibian miners' appeal**



*TCL workers and supporters march through Windhoek, Namibia, fighting for restitution of their stolen company pensions (see their appeal for solidarity on page 3)*

### **INSIDE THIS BULLETIN**

#### **AFRICA:**

**Interview with Didhard Muduni Mparo, Secretary of the TCL workers** p2

**WIRFI Statement on the Marikana Massacre** p8

#### **EUROPE:**

**Call for Europe-wide action on 14 November** p6

**Action conference Against Austerity in Europe: Report** p6

**Conference Statement and WIRFI comment** p7

**Background: Over a decade of struggle by Namibian copper workers:**

## **TCL miners fight to recover their pension scheme**

**Interview with Didhard Muduni Mparo, Chair of the TCL workers' committee, 21 September 2012**

In March 2008 the TCL (Tsumeb Copper Limited) workers came to the Workers' Advice Centre and established a joint committee to get back their pension fund. That same year we took out a labour (i.e. social) case against the Namibian Government, Namibia Financial Institutions Supervisory Authority (NAMFISA) and an insurance company.

The High Court subsequently made this a civil action.

The company started operating in the late nineteenth century. The original miners came on foot and by ox cart from Kavango Region to Tsumeb. The current President of the country and other politicians used to work in this mine.

I started work there in 1981. There are three mines: Kombat, Otjihase and Tsumeb. The salary was very low, 120 rand per month. When we asked for a pay rise, the Miners Union of Namibia (MUN) was our mother and our father. The MUN was always negotiating for a wage increase.

In 1996 MUN demanded a 13% pay increase. The company offered us 0.5%. We expected they would meet us half way, but the company would not budge. The workers came down to 10%, but the company stuck at 1%.

Because we couldn't reach agreement, the workers downed tools. The company and the union decided to go to the Labour Court. The court only listened to the company, not the union. The company felt strengthened by the support from the court, and said if the workers did not accept the offer they could leave.

While we had been on strike, the company had asked us to let 30 people in to work the pumps and stop the mine flooding. We let them do this.

When the company told us to go, the court did nothing.

When the Tsumeb workers heard the judgement, they decided not to accept it and decided to stop the team working the pumps. They decided to picket the bus bringing those workers to the mine. The bus turned back because the picket

had been waiting all night and were angry.

While they were picketing, the white workers went in and worked and slept at the mine. These white people and the managers had weapons: hand grenades, guns and rifles.

So we decided to storm the mine and we took all the guns and grenades and the managers had to run away. They ran to the police station to raise charges against us. They had to run a long way across the veldt.

By early afternoon, about 350 police rolled up to the mine in trucks. The workers were guarding the main gate to the mine. The police tried to intimidate the workers and told them to move away from the gate so they could get into the mine.

The workers said they would not move away or let the police in. They demanded to see the minister Moses Garoeb. The police got out of their vehicles and started cocking their weapons as a threat.

So we ran at them with knobkerries and surrounded them. We got mixed up among them so that they could not fire without hitting themselves. They informed the workers they were going to move 300 metres away so they could shoot. They got back into their trucks, but as they started to drive away the workers started to run alongside the trucks.

(Interjection from Paulus Mangundi: "Workers, workers! In those days we talked together and what we decided, we did!")

The police commander said "What do you actually want? We only want to get into the mine". The workers stood there and said: "If you want to kill us, we will kill you and we will kill each other." They explained they had grenades and guns, and told the police: "You see those men in the hills over there? They have guns and they will shoot you and you cannot hit them."

The police sent a car to get the Minister Garoeb. The pickets and the police talked together and an hour and a half later they came back with

# THE TCL WORKERS SUPPORT COMMITTEE APPEAL

*Dear comrades, brothers and sisters,*

The former TCL workers urgently appeal for financial support for the following: They will be staging an indefinite protest including a march in central Windhoek from 7 November 2012 to demand a date of hearing from the High Court of Namibia. They launched a case to recover their stolen pension moneys from the State in 2008. Since then they experienced hostility and corruption in that the registrar threatened them with the police and army; their 9 representatives were not given seats in court; the registrar refused to give them a date for hearing of their cases. It is now more than 4 years and they still have no date for hearing; their advocate has found that they have a good case; the thieves have admitted that they took the money.

They are facing an unfair and corrupt hearing. They demand a fair hearing and a date of hearing.

Hundreds of their members will come to Windhoek from as far as 800 km in the north, 800 km from the South, 300 km west, 200 km east. Many are unemployed. Some of them are re-employed at Othihase, Matchless, and Tsumeb mines. This group carries the administrative expenses of their movement.

They however need further funds for large tents for sleeping, outdoor toilets (chemical) and catering. They need at least R70,000.00 (£5000, \$8000, e5,600).

Their bank account is Standard Bank, Katutura branch, Windhoek, Ongopolo Employees Social Bank Account, 348016956, surplus.

You may also donate via moneygram to Didhard Mparo, Chairman of the TCL Workers Committee, Erf 4479, Dodge Avenue, Khomasdal, Windhoek. Tel: 00264 61 260 647.

Your most important solidarity will be to fax and email your support for their demands for a hearing date on the basis that 'justice delayed is justice denied' and a fair hearing to the following addresses: (from abroad dial 00264 61 for Namibia / Windhoek)

President : 245 989 [ljimmy@op.gov.na](mailto:ljimmy@op.gov.na) ;

Minister of Finance 227702 [selma.iihuhua@mof.gov.na](mailto:selma.iihuhua@mof.gov.na);

Minister of Justice 246769 [ps@moj.gov.na](mailto:ps@moj.gov.na);

Attorney-General 245989 [ps@moj.gov.na](mailto:ps@moj.gov.na);

Supreme Court 224979;

High Court.221686 [jpassistant@npcmobile.com.na](mailto:jpassistant@npcmobile.com.na)

Prime Minister 249546 [elizabeth.nghendevali@opm.gov.na](mailto:elizabeth.nghendevali@opm.gov.na);

Minister of Information & Communication Tech 222343 [namunime@mict.gov.na](mailto:namunime@mict.gov.na);

Anti Corruption Commission 300952 [pnoa@accnamibia.org](mailto:pnoa@accnamibia.org)

Ombudsman 220550 [ivanwyk@ombudsman.org.na](mailto:ivanwyk@ombudsman.org.na) .

We ask you to do so on an individual or organisational basis.

**AMANDA TSOEU**

On behalf of the TCL Workers Support Committee

27 October 2012.

Garoeb's secretary.

Our chairman from the union side explained our position to the secretary. We explained everything, so that the secretary understood it very well and he sent the police away. When we reached that decision we handed all the weapons over to the police. We said: "Now everything is in the hands of the law". The police said we could have all died because they had not known what was going on.

At 11 next morning one of the managers came

from Windhoek and said that we should all go back to work without any negotiation. The afternoon shift went back to work and we all went back to work with an increase of 13%.

(Interjection: We stayed up the whole night celebrating.)

They made excuses that because of our actions the company was losing millions, but it was only to get rid of us.

On 30 April 1998 the mine was closed. We only got a month's wages, the holiday money we were

owed and two weeks severance pay. The company said: "Go home and wait for your pension". We are still waiting.

From time to time the union called us together to report on the pension issue and plans for new people to open the mine. They told us three overseas companies wanted to take over the company.

In September 1998 MUN General Secretary Peter Naholo called us to the office and told us: "Comrades, the money has come through. You will all get the money divided fairly". He reported it amounted to 116 million Namibian dollars.

It was also reported in *The Namibian* newspaper 16 September 1998, but when we later went to look for that issue in the archive it was missing. We kept asking for that issue, but in the end we found the same report in *Die Republikein*.

When they said the 116 million Namibian dollars had arrived, we were told to wait and we agreed to wait.

After two or three weeks they called us back and said: "Comrades, it was 116 million, but 2 million got lost. But don't worry; the rest is there and we will find the two million."

We listened to them because the MUN was our father and our mother.

A month later they called us in again and said that all of the money had gone missing but "don't worry; we will trace it".

We waited like they said. When they called us in again, we expected they would talk about the missing money, but instead they talked about jobs. They spoke about three overseas companies plus two Namibian companies which wanted to reopen the mine, and the government was now deciding which one to accept.

The workers asked what had happened about the missing money. They replied: "Comrades, if you just worry about the missing money you will be waiting around without a job. You know, wouldn't it be better if you went back to work?" In fact they had this proposal ready to hand.

We had experience of being out of work and we have families and children, so we chose to go back to work in 2000. That year the new owner Ongopolo Mining started operating and invited all the former workers to go back and register.

When we started back, we were surprised to see that the very people who had told us the money had gone missing were now in top management jobs and that a new insurance company, Nammic, was now offering loans to miners. One

## **Workers' Advice Centre**

**Hewat Beukes and Paul Dausab formed the Workers Advice Centre in 1994, initially to assist workers in labour disputes in the labour courts.**

**Erica Beukes formalised the centre after 2001 and registered it as a resource centre assisting individuals and groups of workers and poor peasants politically and legally. The consultants include Jacobus Josob.**

**The centre has since fought with groups such as the homeless, home owners, the TCL workers and the landless in the south on the following issues:**

**It assisted homeless families to build homes for themselves in a fully serviced area in 2001; it researched systematic fraud and theft committed by banks and legal firms in home loans leading to massive loss of homes; it put up a defensive political structure for 'land grabbers' in the south and averted assault by the police; since 2008 it fought with the TCL workers for the recovery of their stolen pension.**

**The centre is more political than legal.**

of the owners of this company is Sackey Iipinge, who is a former MUN official.

While we were at work, they kept telling us about fluctuations in the price of copper. When they called us in to discuss this, we kept asking them what had happened to our money. They got angry and said: "Why do you keep complaining about that when money is coming in to Namibia?"

We realised that we, the workers, must start to look for the money ourselves.

In 2005 employees from the 3 mines met together to form a committee to recover the money missing from the pension fund. There were 7 members from Otjihase, 3 from Kombot and 3 from Tsumeb. So the committee met in Windhoek to decide where to start to look for the money.

We decided to ask the MUN first. We told the new MUN secretary, Josef Hengari, about the missing money, and he said there was no such

money. So we showed him the cutting from *Die Republikein*, which we had, and he got a fright. He kept saying: "Where did you get that?" He then got scared of his own union leaders and of the workers and he got ill.

He was in hospital for a week after we went to see him. The second time we went, we were told he was at home. The third time he was at his son's funeral. The fourth time we called for him at the union office, his receptionist said he did not want to see us again. We must go away and never ever come back.

After that, we decided to approach the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) because they had interviewed Peter Naholo when he had taken up a director's position. We wanted to see if they had any information.

Staff there said: "If we put you on air we will all be sacked".

So we went back to the drawing board. What were we to do now?

We decided that since the case was already in the High Court we would go back to the High Court, so we went there and asked: "We are the TCL workers and we just want to get our money". The clerks in the Registrar's office said: "We know about that. Didn't you get your money?"

We said: "No". So the clerk said: "Just sit and wait. I'll get the file". When she came back she said there was nothing in the last file, and we should come back the following week.

We did, and there was still nothing. We spent a month waiting. Then they referred us to the Master of the Insolvency Court.

There the lady also asked us to wait and then she said she could not find any files. So she also said: "Come back next week. The file might have been filed wrongly". We spent a month waiting for that.

So we discussed what to do next. We decided to go to the director of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Paulus Noa. He was very angry and said that so much money could not simply go missing, and that we should come back next week, he would trace it.

The second time we went he phoned the MUN office and told them they should call us in and explain what had happened, since he was not in office when the money went missing.

The third time we went he just sat there reading a newspaper, so we left.

When the director of the Anti-corruption Com-



### **What they are fighting against**

mission turned us away, we went to the Ombudsman, and he explained that he was sorry, but he doesn't handle cases of missing money.

We were told we should go to legal aid, and they might help. Legal aid's answer was that the entire workforce would have to come to their office to sign up, which was impossible.

After that we heard about a man in Windhoek who was in possession of the TCL money. We spent three months looking for this Bob Meiring. When we eventually found him we sat down with him and asked him if he knew anything about the 116 million. He said he did not know what we were talking about.

So we went away to discuss it and then decided to go back and ask him as a board member of Namibian Financial Institutions Supervisory Authority (Namfisa) if he had any information about this.

The second time we went he said the money he had got was the money for people who worked for TCL from 1960-1979. Then he made a sketch showing how he had invested the money in South Africa, then the government told him to bring it back and when he checked, it was 130 million short, leaving only 70 of the original 200 million.

So I asked him: "Who did you give the 70 million to?" He said: "I cannot tell you that, it is confidential".

He later sent me some documents, but since then every door was closed.

Then someone told us about the Workers Advice Centre.

## **Support European-Wide strike action 14 November**

On Wednesday 14 November there will be general strikes in Spain, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and Malta. The European Trades Union Confederation (ETUC) is calling for solidarity action throughout Europe. Italian, French and Belgian trade unions have decided to join the action and there will be solidarity action in Germany and Britain too.



***Hundreds of thousands of trade unionists marched through London on Saturday 20 October on the TUC-organised march "For a Future that Works"***

The Coalition of Resistance arranged for delegations from across the continent to join the TUC march in London on 20 October.

The following day Unite the Union provided the Discus room at its national headquarters for a Conference Against Austerity in Europe.

Panel speakers at the conference included teacher trade unionists Dimitris Gkinis (OLME) and Haralambos Kokkinos (DOE) from Greece, Giorgios Charisis (ADEDY TU confederation, Greece), SYRIZA MP Stefanos Samoilis, Stathis Kouvelakis (SYRIZA, London-based), Elisabeth Gauthier (Transform/Parti communiste français), Myriam Bourgy (CADTM Belgium), Danielle Obono (Front de Gauche, France), Florian Wilde (Die Linke, Germany),.

Alex Kenny (UK National Union of Teachers), MEP Marisa Matias (Bloco, Portugal and Euro-

pean Left Party, Natalie Bennett (UK Green Party) were also on the panels. Dot Gibson, national secretary of the UK National Pensioners' Convention, spoke in a personal capacity.

From the floor, secretary of the North East area of the UK National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) Dave Hopper reported on solidarity actions with Spanish miners struggling against the effects of budget cuts and also on the devastation wrought on his own Durham coalfield by earlier attacks.

Decades after the last coal-mine in the area closed, the union is alive and active and fighting for its members' communities and rights against the coalition government's onslaught.

The conference adopted a statement (p.7) and a resolution protesting against the Israeli government's seizure of the ship "Estelle" attempting to deliver aid to the people of Gaza.

# **Europe against Austerity Action Conference Statement**

Europe is plunging deeper and deeper into crisis. Its governments are continuing with their failed austerity policies in spite of the ever-increasing struggles of the peoples of Europe in defence of the social and economic gains that they have made over many decades.

The economic crisis has increasingly become a social and political crisis as people face poverty, hunger and even death, as a result of the catastrophic and government-imposed failure of health systems and social services. The far right is attempting to profit politically from the suffering inflicted on working people and vulnerable groups are being targeted together with those most militant in their opposition to the re-emergence of fascism.

Across Europe we are seeing escalating opposition and resistance to austerity: in Greece, in Spain and in Portugal, we have seen huge mobilisations, and in some areas an increase in the unity on the left so desperately needed. Yesterday in London, we saw a vast demonstration, led by the trade unions, and drawing together people from all walks of life in opposition to the savage and unnecessary cuts to public spending. There can be no mistaking that this class war against working people must be opposed even more strenuously.

At this conference today we commit ourselves to continuing to develop and consolidate the ongoing cooperation between organisations fighting austerity across Europe, to stand in solidarity with those on the front line of the struggle – most notably in Greece, and to work together to strengthen the economic, social and political alternatives to neo-liberal capitalism and the austerity policies it has adopted.

We will work together in the months ahead, cooperating for the ETUC Day of Action on 14 November, moving towards the Alter Summit in 2013, and increasing our work for left and movement unity, for common action, mutual solidarity, communication and coordination.

*London, 21 October 2012*

## **Workers' International comments:**

*The international gathering on 21 October is living proof that workers in Europe want to unite to fight the policy of austerity imposed by finance capital on the whole continent.*

*It shows in the most material possible way that they understand there is a deliberate international and general attack on the economic, social and democratic advances embodied in the various national versions of the Welfare State.*

*The violence of the destructive austerity plans and the brutal actions of world capital's 'Troika' in Greece, Portugal, Spain and elsewhere overwhelmingly testify to this.*

*The directly European character of the attacks means that a broad international front is needed to fight all these various outrages, a front which goes beyond the energetic resistance struggles in each country and takes them to a higher level.*

*It is clear that workers are determined to bring about such a movement.*

*Greek, Portuguese and Spanish workers have unleashed waves of strikes and demonstrations, but, each isolated in their own countries, they have not been able to halt the onslaught.*

*We are faced with this situation and the requirements it places upon us as workers' representatives and individual political activists. We are obliged to respond to these needs and aspirations for international co-operation and unity in struggle.*

*We therefore propose to work with all who will agree for the formation of a European Front of Struggle Against Austerity and the establishment of a Standing European Committee of that body to advance and organise the struggle at a European level.*

## **South Africa:**

# **Massacre at Marikana**

This statement, first published as a draft in the September WIRFI Bulletin, was discussed at our meeting in London on 6 and 7 October 2012. Below we present the amended version which arose from these discussions.

On Thursday 16 August 2012 South African police shot down 34 miners at Lonmin's Marikana platinum mine, wounded 80 more, and arrested more than 250. It was a bloodbath of a kind unknown since the days of apartheid, but with the difference that the killers and their victims are both black, while the mine owners and those giving the orders are still white.

The miners had launched militant action to demand a decent living wage, a share in the riches that their labour, and the natural resources of their own country, continue to produce for the likes of Lonmin – and the other predatory multinational companies which continue to exploit black labour 18 years after the fall of apartheid.

Workers are not only fully entitled to launch such actions to attain such ends, they (along with the rest of the South African masses) have the right to reclaim all such profits and riches for themselves – and they should have their own party putting forward exactly those demands.

South Africa today is the world's most unequal country following the economic "liberalisation" that came after apartheid. When that system fell, 90 per cent of land was owned by the white elite, and 10 per cent by black people. Eighteen years later, a mere ten per cent more land has been acquired by black South Africans. Youth unemployment stands around 45 per cent. There is a huge crisis in health, especially the continuing spread of HIV/Aids; decent housing, education and other public services are out the reach for millions and prices of food, power and water are going through the roof. A huge social crisis is manifest in the figures for rape, including the rape of children, which are the highest in the world.

Now we see the African National Congress (ANC) government through its police force shoot black workers down like dogs – just as the apartheid government and its police force used to do. How have we arrived at this point after the im-

mense, self-sacrificing struggle (during which many gave up their lives) undertaken by the South African masses against apartheid? How is it the masses don't have their own party which speaks out clearly and angrily and unites them to fight for their interests? What happened to the leadership of the masses developed during that convulsive struggle?

### **How the ANC/South African Communist Party came to power**

The ANC leaders were in the main in jail or exile during the titanic wave of strikes that brought the apartheid system to its knees. At a certain point in this class uprising the mineowners, the bankers, and the other capitalists understood that they could no longer rule in the old way. However, above all they were clear that they had to preserve their iron grip on profits. To continue the exploitation of the mines and the labour of South Africa, they had to establish a different mode of rule – but one which could destroy the possibility any socialist solution, of the black masses gaining power and ruling for themselves.

The mining companies and bankers found their instrument in the African National Congress, and its "think-tank" the South African Communist Party (SACP). The ANC had a reputation as a resistance organisation, chiefly built through the propaganda machine of the Moscow-backed Communist Parties and their popular front instrument, the worldwide and respected Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Through this well-organised apparatus, most of the world was kept ignorant of the fact that the ANC/SACP leaders had carried out a systematic campaign of terror, torture and murder against their own young militants in their camps in Angola, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Uganda.

The best-documented actions in this campaign



took place in Angola in 1984. This (and other) “mutinies” involved the young fighters protesting against being sent to wage armed struggle outside South Africa when they wanted to fight the apartheid regime in their own country. They also demanded a more democratic regime inside the ANC.

Jakob Zuma (now standing for re-election as ANC president) was at that time in charge of the ANC’s security apparatus. (See the 1992 report by Amnesty International on the torture carried out in the ANC camps .<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR53/027/1992/en> “Based on first-hand research among surviving victims of such abuse, it documents a long-standing pattern of torture, ill-treatment and execution of prisoners by the ANC’s security department.” )

Workers International participated actively with others in a campaign to expose the nature of the ANC/SACP manifested in the brutal treatment of their young militants in the early 1990s. In particular the ANC/SACP was determined to suppress the revolutionary aspirations of these young fighters, who wanted to liberate their country from its oppressors.

The existence and nature of the ANC torture/death camps is known inside South Africa, but hardly at all among workers outside South Africa. In the UK for example Stalinism (despite the collapse of its material base in the Soviet Union) has maintained a grip on the consciousness of the most advanced workers.

The former TGWU (merged with Amicus to form Unite, the biggest union in the UK) was a major supporter and funder of the ANC/SACP in exile, and its meaningless trade union federation-in-exile, SACTU. The only workers’ paper still widely read in the UK trade union movement is the *Morning Star*, which consistently supports the ANC.

The Marikana massacre shows every sign of being a “turning point” in workers’ (and middle class peoples’) understanding of South African politics – but it will be a huge shock for them.

It is a breaking point at which working class political leadership could make some headway if we proceed on the basis that most workers, even the most advanced, simply have not had sufficient information in the past to know what the real situation is in South Africa.

On a much smaller scale it is reminiscent of Hungary 1956, in terms of the possibility of smashing up the old Stalinist grip on working class



***The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa led the development of a powerful, class-conscious trade union movement in the 1970s***

consciousness.

Mandela and the other ANC leaders entered talks about the construction of a new South Africa as early as 1982, initially with the secret service, then with Nationalist politicians and then with the owners of the mines and the banks. Central to those talks was an agreement that the socialist current taking leading roles in the movement against apartheid would be scotched.

Mandela had never pretended to subscribe to a socialist programme. Speaking about the (recently adopted) Freedom Charter in 1956, Mandela said it would provide a source of hope for the “development of a prosperous Non-European bourgeois class . . . (with) the right to own mills and factories and trade” “Private enterprise’ he went on, “will boom and flourish as never before”. (Nelson Mandela: “In our lifetime”, *Liberation*, no. 19 June 1956, p6. Subsequent re-issues by the ANC deleted these sentences.)

The ANC leaders (like Cyril Ramaphosa, former General Secretary of the South African NUM) acted out of conviction that there is no socialist path, and that the establishment of a bourgeois democratic government was the way forward for South Africa.

They rapidly jettisoned those elements of their own Freedom Charter that spoke of redistribution of wealth and land (well before the UK’s Labour Party threw out Clause 4).

With extraordinary arrogance and rapidity they took advantage of the new South Africa they had negotiated to enrich themselves at the expense of the black masses.

(Ramaphosa as we know went on to become a Director of Lonmin – the company which took advantage of the ready collaboration of the ANC government with the mining companies. The Mandela and Sisulu families have big investments in the gold mining companies.)

The South African Communist Party (SACP) acted out of ideological convictions, handed down from the Stalinist bureaucracy – the “two stage theory”, integrally allied with the theory of socialism in one country, promulgated through the Communist International.

It was aimed at heading off revolutionary developments throughout the world in order to protect the Soviet Union by enabling a modus vivendi with imperialism. (The collapse of the Soviet Union has profoundly weakened the grip of that ideology and the international propaganda machine with its strong base in the working class.)

### **The unions and the struggle between the Workers Charter (which promoted socialism) and the Freedom Charter (which promoted reformism)**

The super-exploitation and brutal suppression of the South African masses through the ruling system of apartheid produced its own grave digger in the birth of a powerful, organised, class conscious trade union movement in the 1970s based in Durban.

This movement was led by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) which allied with other unions to form the Federation of South African Trade Unions. NUMSA and FOSATU

developed the “Workers Charter” a trenchant declaration of socialist principles demanding expropriation of the white ruling class, and ownership of the land, industries and banks by the South African masses.

To quote a paragraph or two from the Workers’ Charter:

“In order to ensure: that victory in the national liberation struggle is not hijacked by a new exploiting class, of whatever colour...”

“. . . we see the winning of such a non-racial democracy as part of a continuous process of creating conditions for the building of a socialist society which will be in the interests of all our people; a society free of all exploitation of person by person which alone can complete the liberation objectives in all spheres of social life.”

“The commanding heights of the economy shall be placed under the ownership and overall control of the state acting on behalf of the people. Such control shall not be exercised in an over-centralised or commandist way and must ensure active participation in the planning and running of the enterprises by workers at the point of production and through their trade unions.”

There was opposition from the Anti-Apartheid Movement and European trades unionists (under the influence of the AAM and the Communist Parties in their countries) to the formation of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in 1985. They wished to impose their own trade union federation SACTU, which had existed in the 50s-60s inside South Africa, had been banned, and then only existed in exile. It never participated in the struggles against apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s and was unknown to the workers in those unions which had.

You can read the **Workers’ Charter** at  
[http://workersinternational.org/?page\\_id=60](http://workersinternational.org/?page_id=60)

The **Freedom Charter** is available at  
<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=72>

The **Pulacayo Theses** of the Bolivian miners’ union FSTMB, adopted in the late 1940s, are essential background reading for the whole question of the place of the workers’ movement in imperialism. They can be accessed in English online at

<http://www.permanentrevolution.net/?view=entry&entry=1371>



**Bongani Mkungho: attended 1985 union merger conference**

When FOSATU merged with the NUM to form COSATU, the FOSATU unions fought for the Workers' Charter to remain the manifesto of their movement – but this was opposed, in particular by the NUM (under Cyril Ramaphosa) who wanted to impose the ANC's "Freedom Charter" with its minimum demands. As the NUM was the biggest union taking part in the merger, it had great influence. The FOSATU unions opposed this on the basis that the Freedom Charter was not a socialist programme.

It was agreed at the merger conference in 1985 which our late comrade Bongani Mkungho attended that that two Charters would be merged, and that a committee would be set up to do this. However this never happened. The Workers Charter with its openly socialist programme – the wealth of the country to belong to the masses – was pushed under the carpet. (There have been ongoing demands within COSATU, in particular from the metal workers' union NUMSA, for a Workers Charter, and for workers' socialist demands, e.g. nationalisation of the land and mining industry, to be enacted through provisions in the Freedom Charter.)

When the ANC leaders were released from jail and returned from exile, they held a big series of rallies throughout the country. Those who tried to give out leaflets about socialism at those meet-

ings were physically driven out by the ANC stewards in fear for their lives. This process carried on after the return of the ANC, and together with the violence in the townships between the UDF and Inkatha supporters caused a massive loss of confidence in the working class, and a destruction of socialist consciousness.

(The United Democratic Front. [UDF] was a broad alliance of churches, community, youth, student and women's organisations and trade unions which adopted the ANC Freedom Charter and was active during the 1980s. The Inkatha Freedom Party was established in 1975 by the leading Zulu politician Mangosuthu Buthelezi. During the 1980s these two organisations were often involved in violent clashes.)

The workers in South Africa were badly handicapped by the lack of an international party representing the interests of the world working class, around which they could unite, and which could have helped preserve that socialist consciousness in a more organised, and thus more powerful way.

Ramaphosa, who went on to become ANC secretary general in 1991, was central to the negotiations which built the "new" South Africa, and then left politics to enter the world of big business, taking advantage of the ANC's Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy to make himself an extremely wealthy man.

Ramaphosa's company Shanduka is the BEE partner of Lonmin – the very company making vast profits through the super-exploitation of the miners shot down by the police at Marikana on 16 August.

### **Background to the Marikana massacre**

The Lonmin miners were getting a poverty wage and living in the most appalling of conditions, pretty much identical to their wages and conditions under the 18-years-gone system of apartheid.

They were members of a union which had broken away from the NUM. The General Secretary, Joseph Mathunjwa, at the time chair of the local branch of the NUM, led a two-week long unofficial strike, including a 10 day occupation, and was sacked. The 3,000-strong workforce protested against his dismissal and he was reinstated. Mathunjwa then faced a disciplinary hearing from the NUM for bringing the union into disrepute.

Mathunjwa refused to have his hearing conducted by Gwede Mantashe, then General Secre-

tary of the NUM (later General Secretary of the ANC and chair of the SACP) with whom he had previously clashed. Reading between the lines you can see opposition to the ruling ANC expressed in the politics of his union. He was expelled from the NUM, and (with his members) formed the breakaway Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU).

See this article for more information: [http://www.miningmx.com/special\\_reports/mining-yearbook/mining-yearbook-2012/A-season-of-discontent.htm](http://www.miningmx.com/special_reports/mining-yearbook/mining-yearbook-2012/A-season-of-discontent.htm)

NB: The current NUM General Secretary, Frans Baleni, who earns R100 000 a month, denounced the Marikana miners' demand for R12 500 a month as "unreasonable". The desire within the leadership of the ANC/SACP is to see the miners who survived Marikana crushed and defeated – preferably dead – along with all others who oppose the existing status of South Africa. (It appears that it would also be true to say that the ANC/SACP itself is not completely homogenous, and that there are dissenting currents within both those organisations.)

### **The government-appointed Judicial Enquiry into the Marikana massacre**

The ANC/SACP government has appointed a judge and two advocates to oversee an enquiry into the massacre.

While publicly affirming that the world must wait for the results of the enquiry, the COSATU leadership issued a statement on 24 August condemning the creation of breakaway unions (like the union involved at Marikana) in all circumstances and for all time as "inherently reactionary".

SACP deputy general secretary Jeremy Cronin, who is also deputy minister for public works in the ANC/SACP government is quoted in the *Morning Star* (Friday 31 August 2012) saying that the origins of AMCU (the breakaway union involved in Marikana) could be "traced back to BHP Billiton Coal at Witbank deliberately financing a union split to undermine the strength of NUM." According to the *Morning Star*, he spoke about earlier violence and instability in the Rustenberg platinum belt over a decade ago, linked to a "pseudo-union" encouraged by corporate management.

As has already emerged at the enquiry, ANC EC member Cyril Ramaphosa called the miners "criminals" in an email sent to Lonmin manage-

ment 24 hours before they were mown down by police.

These statements from the ANC/SACP and the COSATU leadership reveal their clear desire to crush and destroy the legitimate aspirations of South African workers to their rights, as expressed in the Marikana miners' strike.

The whole history leading up to Marikana points to a cover-up by this enquiry (along the lines of the Hillsborough enquiries in the UK), and to the miners' being held responsible for their own deaths.

### **The two-stage theory versus Permanent Revolution**

The South African situation is a crushing indictment of the Stalinist two-stage theory for the liberation struggle in the former colonies and semi-colonial dependencies of the imperial powers. This theory asserts that such a country must first achieve independence and develop a capitalist economy and society. Only then can there be talk of a socialist revolution.

These events are a resounding endorsement of Leon Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution. They show clearly that only a struggle led by the working class on a socialist programme can ensure the winning of such demands as nationalisation of the land and industries, economic equality, full employment, public services for all, rights for women – not to mention the right not to be shot down for demanding your rights.

The creation of a tiny black middle class has left the condition of the masses virtually untouched 18 years after they brought down apartheid. The upholders of the two-stage theory cannot provide the most minimal of rights to those who sacrificed everything to defeat that most brutal of regimes.

The development of the South African (and world) working class towards revolution has been hampered enormously because the Fourth International, the party founded by Leon Trotsky to fight the degeneration of the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement under Stalin and his supporters, has itself undergone a long crisis and needs rebuilding.

We also need to understand the particular concrete reasons for that crisis and the developing conditions which will overcome it.

Marikana can and must be a key turning point for the development of our movement.