

In the spirit of the Pondoland Uprising Mokagwalakwena and Xolobeni must unite

Over the past two months protests have swept across the mining areas in Limpopo as communities rise up, resisting the pillaging of mineral resources, environmental destruction and impoverishment. The Marikana martyrs' uprising has both inspired working class communities and drawn attention to the greed of a platinum industry that enjoys global dominance, making massive profits from cheap labour and mineral resources but have done nothing for the communities affected – no jobs, no housing, no development.

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The revolt that is now spreading throughout Limpopo engulfing Ga-Mapela, Malamulele, Mokopane, Phalaborwa, Tubatse and Tzaneen has not sprung from nowhere, but followed the example of other communities in struggle such as the Amidaba in Xolobeni, Bizana in the Transkei in their struggle against Australian Mining Company Mineral Resources, (MRC). MRC is planning an open cast mine to profiteer from the world's tenth largest deposit of heavy titanium, used in aircraft manufacturing.

Led by the Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC), the community has not been seduced by MRC's promises of jobs and economic development. They are also determined to defend the 22km long and 1.5km-wide strip of land which also contains SA's highest flora diversity – one of only 26 such sites in the world – against environmental destruction by an operation with a lifespan of a mere 25 years. The ACC points out that the

number of jobs created would be insignificant. Instead, as in nearby Richard's Bay, they will be exposed to respiratory diseases like TB and asthma associated with open cast mining. Mining will displace 200 households and their livestock, leaving the community destitute when it ends. The burial site on the hill from where twenty revered leaders – the Mountain Committee – had commanded operations in the 1960-62 Pondoland Uprising would be destroyed.

Community resistance forced the government to cancel the 2008 license and the Constitutional Court overturned president Zuma's decision to depose a traditional leader who opposed mining – a classic divide-and-rule tactic used by the apartheid and colonial regimes. But the struggle is far from over.

A cabal involving MRC, traditional leader Chief Lunga Baleni, the ANC's former OR Tambo Mayor, Zoleka Capa,

Zamile Qunya, a Xolobeni businessman who founded the Xolobeni Empowerment Company (Xolco) as MRC's Black Economic Empowerment local partner.

MRC's representative, Carusso, has bribed Chief Lunga Baleni with a 4x4 Ford Ranger. The chief and his wife, both alleged to be Xolco directors, are believed to be in business with the Richtersveld Mining Company. Zamile Qunya is reported to be receiving R250 000 monthly for his services. The company's new "public consultation" process entails openly trying to divide the community by manipulating public meetings, manufacturing minutes and filling in attendance registers with the names of the dead.

This is part of the ANC government's wider strategy to prevent its rural support from going the same way as in urban areas in the 2014 elections. They are strengthening traditional leaders using the Traditional Governance and Framework Act - essentially the apartheid regime's Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. SA now has 10 kings, each on R1m a year salary, more than 800 senior traditional leaders and more than 5 000 chiefs being paid in excess of R650m (*Saturday Star*, 23 May 2015).

The conspiracy against rural communities is always hatched

through "Mining companies win[ing] chiefs over with substantial personal benefits, while the people whose houses and fields are destroyed are neither consulted nor rewarded" (Aninka Claassens, *City Press*, 7 June 2015).

The land reform programme brings together similar cabals for the same purpose. Aninka Claassens is dead right: "What we are seeing is dispossession dressed up as land reform. The only redistribution taking place here is from the poor to the rich." (*City Press*, 7 June 2015)



The Mokgalakwena Resident Association (MRA) in Mokopane, Limpopo, has united several communities in struggle. It is currently battling Anglo American. The ACC and MRA must link up. They must inscribe socialism on their banner as we struggle for a socialist South Africa.

IZWI SAYS:

The capitalist gangsters – the MRC, the ANC elite and traditional leaders – are involved in a nationwide campaign to exploit mining communities. For victory communities must mobilize around:

- The creation of democratic community committees to take over ownership of land
- For the expropriation and nationalization of the mines under democratic workers control
- Decent houses, schools, clinics, electricity, water, sanitation, public transport, tarred roads
- No N2 toll road through Xolobeni
- A mass public works programme
- R8 000, monthly, for unemployed, pensioners & disabled

Poor youth need free higher education

After two years of crisis in NFSAS (National Financial Scholarship Assistance Scheme) Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande has finally admitted that thousands of students who qualify would not receive any funding. *City Press* reported that the NSFAS budget has more than doubled from R2.82bn for 135 202 applicants in 2009 to R5.87bn for 194 504 students in 2012. NFSAS has failed and cannot be restructured. It must be done away with. The Socialist Youth Movement (SYM) argues that the only way to guarantee universal access is through free education.

Trevor Shaku

The question however, is how will free education, self-evidently more expensive, be funded? As with many other working class demands, free education is dismissed as unaffordable.

This argument is reinforced by the economy's poor performance. The budget is in deficit and is expected to remain so for the foreseeable future. The government argues that it is obliged to cut spending to stop the deficit from growing. This is why NSFAS claims that

its coffers are exhausted every year when it turns thousands of students away.

The government has been cutting spending since it adopted its neo-liberal capitalist GEAR policy in 1996. Cuts in university subsidies have reduced government's contribution to only 50% of the Higher Education Institutions' (HEIs) operating expenses (tuition fees contribute 25% and the remaining 25% from external fundraising) at a cost of R24bn. Free education would mean doubling the state's contribution to about R50bn.

Universities have compensated for these cuts by increasing fees resulting in a significant rise in financial and academic exclusion for black working class students – race-based apartheid has become class based. It has also led to corruption including students competing to control Student Representative Councils to control NSFAS applications.

The issue of free education cannot be approached in isolation from the broader economic landscape. Government generates its income from tax revenues. But after adopting GEAR, government reduced company tax giving cumulatively R100bn to the bosses – money that could have been used for free education.

It allowed a number of the biggest companies on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange to relocate to London, failed to monitor capital outflows and relaxed exchange control regulations. The result is that billions have left the country legally and illegally.

Lonmin, the mine at the centre of the Marikana massacre, transferred R2.1bn in profits overseas without paying any tax. According to Wits researchers, 23% of SA's wealth went abroad in 2007 – the equivalent of R450 billion, nearly half of the 2013 budget, far more than the cost of free tertiary education.

SA has the most unequal society on earth in which access to higher education is a privilege marginalising working class children destined to increase the pool of cheap labour. 3.7 million young people of university-going age of between 18 to 25 years old are NEETs – Not in any form of Employment, Education and/or Training.

Free education in SA would require the government to reverse the concessions they have made to big business by introducing capital controls, or increase company taxes. Itself committed to capitalism, the ANC government will not take such measures.

Free education would require mass action. Like free health, decent affordable housing, water and sanitation and jobs can only be achieved by nationalising the commanding heights of the economy under the democratic control and management of the working class to lay the basis for a socialist society.

