



The Lonmin Massacre: ANC/SACP/COSATU Tripartite Alliance Government's Hands Covered in Blood of Striking Black Mineworkers

August 16, 2012, will go down in history for one of the bloodiest crimes *ever* committed against the workers movement in South Africa. About 100 kilometres northwest of Johannesburg, at the Marikana mine of the London-based company Lonmin—the world's third largest producer of platinum—the cops of the capitalist Tripartite Alliance government carried out a gruesome massacre of striking black mineworkers, killing at least 34 and injuring 78 others, many of whom remain in critical condition in hospital. The blood-drenched scenes aired on TV recall the most infamous apartheid-era slaughters: March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville; June 16, 1976, in Soweto. They provide a bloody, stomach-churning picture of the brutality inherent in this neo-apartheid capitalist system, where workers are gunned down like wild animals by police automatic rifles for the "crimes" of fighting against starvation and trying to defend themselves. Make no mistake: the blood of these massacred workers is on the hands of the *leaders* of the ANC/SACP/COSATU [African National Congress/South African Communist Party/Congress of South African Trade Unions] Tripartite Alliance and their government, who have demonstrated yet again their reliability to the Randlord rulers and their imperialist senior partners.

As communists, who stand for working-class emancipation from wage slavery and sweeping away this system to make way for a truly just society free of all exploitation and oppression, Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League, grieves along with the families of the victims, their comrades who survived the massacre and many others saddened by this tragic loss. The pain and suffering of this gruesome mass murder must be burnt into the memory of the working class—here and internationally—and all other opponents of capitalist oppression, as a reminder of the lengths to which the bourgeoisie and its repressive state machine will go to protect their class rule and profits. It will require iron determination, consciousness of the proletariat's independent interests and world-historic tasks, and a tested, uncompromising, revolutionary leadership, to rip power out of their bloody hands. ***Workers revolution will avenge the victims of the Lonmin massacre! Break with the bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party!***

This slaughter was clearly pre-meditated and deliberately carried out by the capitalist state. In the week leading up to it, the capitalist media mouthpieces, together with the Lonmin owners and government ministers, whipped up a hysterical frenzy denouncing the mineworkers as violent "thugs" and calling for a clamp-down to end their "illegal" strike. By the day of the massacre, the police commanders were speaking of a "D-Day" which would crush the strike. The hill next to one of the mine shafts, where thousands of striking workers had gathered, was cordoned off with barbed wire by the cops. This was accompanied by a massive mobilisation of repressive force, including police units mounted on horseback, armoured vehicles, SANDF (army) soldiers, and a deployment of up to 3000 police thugs in the Marikana area. The aim was clearly to teach the striking miners a bloody lesson, especially as "pay back" for the two police officers and two security guards killed during the week-old strike. That the cops were out for bloody revenge is absolutely clear from the comments made by Police Commissioner Riah Phiyega

(recently appointed by President Jacob Zuma) following the massacre, telling the cops she commands that they should not regret what happened (*Sowetan*, 20 August).

In a despicable attempt to cover up for their bloody crime, the leaders of the Tripartite Alliance—echoed by virtually all the bourgeois media, speaking in unison—are now trying to place the blame for the "senseless violence" ... on the striking mineworkers who were massacred! From COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, to the SACP's Blade Nzimande, to ANC President Zuma, this is the line of *all* the Alliance leaders. The aim of this campaign was spelled out clearly in a grotesque whitewash penned by the *City Press* editors, who wrote: "But this happened in a democratic state. And while the nervous and jittery police who pulled the trigger must answer for their actions, it is important to remember that the strikers were armed to the teeth and behaved in a threatening manner. The lines between innocent and guilty are not drawn as sharply as those at Sharpeville in 1960 or at Soweto in 1976" ("Marikana. Tragic, but it's not Sharpeville", 19 August). The truth is that the blood of black workers is just as cheap today as it was under apartheid rule.

For Workers Defence Guards!

Much is being made of the fact that the striking miners had weapons such as home-made spears, pangas, and even a few guns. To listen to the sanctimonious bourgeois editorialists and Alliance tops talk, the Zulu, Xhosa, and other native African warriors who were mowed down by the guns of British and Dutch colonisers should also have accepted part of the blame for the "senseless loss of life", because they tried to fight back with spears and other primitive weapons! We stand forthrightly for the right of ***armed self-defence*** of the working class against the bloody violence of the capitalist state, the bosses' security guard thugs and other professional strikebreakers. ***For workers defence guards to protect the picket lines!*** As the bloody massacre showed, the workers and oppressed have to be ***better prepared*** and ***better organised*** in the face of this brutal killing machine.

We reject with utter contempt the bourgeois propaganda lumping together the workers massacred on August 16 with the two cops and two security guards who were killed during the preceding week, allegedly by striking mineworkers. We do not pretend to know the precise circumstances surrounding these deaths, but one thing is for sure: we shed no tears over the death of the bourgeoisie's professional strikebreakers. This propaganda campaign is part of the ongoing repression against the striking mineworkers who survived the massacre. Some 260 workers who were arrested on August 16 are still being held in custody, denied bail, and are facing charges that include public violence, and even murder and attempted murder for the killing of these cops and security guards. Workers in South Africa and internationally must protest this bloody massacre and the continued repression: ***Drop all charges against arrested Lonmin striking workers!*** Notwithstanding the loss of their comrades the Lonmin workers have courageously vowed to continue their fight until their demands are met. The Lonmin bosses are holding the threat of mass dismissals over the striking workers' heads, demanding that they return to work immediately. We stand in solidarity with these

workers' demands for a living wage of R12 500 per month and improved conditions of employment. This week, strikes have spread to other mines in North West province, where workers are also demanding R12 500. Solidarity strikes in the mining industry and elsewhere are urgently needed to support the Lonmin workers and stand up against the government's bloody anti-worker terror.

NUM Misleaders Called for Blood of Striking Mineworkers

Despicably, the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) were among those calling loudest for a crackdown on the mineworkers strike in the week leading up to the August 16 massacre. Just a few days before, NUM general secretary Frans Baleni ranted, "[We are] alarmed that the escalating violence has been allowed to continue unabated by the law enforcement agencies in that area in North West Province," and called for "the deployment of a special task force or the SANDF to deal decisively with the criminal elements in Rustenburg and its surrounding mine" (*Mail & Guardian* online, 14 August)! NUM spokesman Lesiba Seshoka appeared on TV the same week, denouncing the striking workers as "thugs" who could not be negotiated with but must be met with force. Baleni and other NUM leaders came out in defence of *the cops* after the bloody massacre!

To divert from their wretched, class collaborationist betrayals of the mineworkers in their own union—betrayals now sealed with the blood of the 34 massacred workers—the NUM tops have sought to lay the blame on a rival union, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), which has been making inroads especially among the lowest-paid sections of the mineworkers. The extent of AMCU's representation among workers at Lonmin remains unclear, with contradictory reports from different sources. Certainly, NUM members were among the workers massacred in the state repression Baleni had called for. They, as well as many others who had left the NUM and went looking for another representative out of desperation, had gone into revolt against the NUM leadership. Similar developments have already been seen at Impala Platinum, where a bitter strike in February had to face down both state repression and betrayals of the NUM bureaucracy (see article reprinted in *Spartacist South Africa* No. 8, Winter 2012).

Following years of betrayals, the disgruntled mineworkers at Lonmin decided to make their demands themselves. These demands included a wage increase from R4 000 to R12 500 per month and decent conditions of employment. The NUM bureaucrats and their apologists denounce these wage demands as "unrealistic", showing how much they identify with the mine bosses, having become integrated in the privileged black elite who act as frontmen for the Randlords. Baleni earns a salary of R77 000 per month! Cyril Ramaphosa, a former NUM general secretary and a leading negotiator of the 1994 sellout deal with the white rulers, is a shareholder at Lonmin who recently bid R19.5 million for a buffalo!

The NUM bureaucrats and other Tripartite Alliance tops are calling for state repression against AMCU in the aftermath of the massacre, including a call by the SACP leadership in North West to arrest the leaders of AMCU. We defend AMCU against state repression, and we defend the right of the mineworkers to be represented by AMCU if that's what they desire. But the answer to the betrayals by the leaders of the NUM and other COSATU unions cannot be to simply leave and set up separate unions, which tends to weaken and divide the workers. The *base* of these unions must be set against the sellout *tops*. What's needed is a hard struggle to oust the current, pro-capitalist leaders and replace them with a class-struggle leadership, fighting for industrial unions to unite all workers for maximum power to fight the bosses. This is bound up with the fight for a revolutionary vanguard party, which is necessary to put an end to capitalism through workers revolution.

The Lonmin massacre underlines in blood the truth of what Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin wrote in *State and Revolution* (1917): "The state is an organ of class *domination*, an organ of *oppression* of one class by another." The bourgeois state cannot be reformed or pressured into acting on behalf of the working people and the oppressed. Both black and white cops carried out the massacre of

striking black mineworkers, highlighting the nature of *all* cops as professional strikebreakers and hired guns of the capitalist class. We say: ***Cops and security guards out of the unions!*** This *neo-apartheid* capitalist state continues to enforce the brutal oppression of the black majority and defend the rule and profits of the overwhelmingly white capitalist class. It must be overthrown through workers socialist revolution and replaced by a workers state.

This basic Marxist understanding of the capitalist state is in stark contrast to the reformist leaders of the SACP and COSATU, who consider the cops their "comrades", and to their left hangers-on who posture as "socialist" critics of the Tripartite Alliance leaders, only to peddle a different variant of reformist politics. For example, the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM, South African section of Peter Taaffe's Committee for a Workers' International), issued a statement protesting the Lonmin massacre that denounces the NUM leaders for "betraying every key principle of the workers' struggle". This is rich, coming from a group that pushes the grotesque line that cops are "workers in uniform"! True to form, the DSM statement goes on to scold the Lonmin strikers for "killing first two security guards, on Saturday, and then two police officers on Monday. This did not move the workers' struggle forward but divided it" ("For a general strike to end the Marikana massacre", 17 August). Thus the DSM fake socialists do their bit to chime in to the violence-baiting campaign against the striking workers, and advise them to submit to the bourgeois state.

NUM president Senzeni Zokwana went to address the striking workers at Lonmin, trying from inside an armoured police Nyala to convince them to end the strike. Not surprisingly, they shouted him down and he retreated to behind the police lines, showing graphically the seething discontent the workers feel toward their treacherous misleaders. This discontent has been building for years, as a result of the huge gulf between the "better life for all" that was promised when the Tripartite Alliance came to power, and the continued, desperate reality of neo-apartheid capitalist misery. The wretched conditions in the shacks around Lonmin and other mines in the "platinum belt" are a grim testament to this.

The reformists of the Stalinist-derived SACP, which recently elected Zokwana chairman, have for years churned out bogus "theories" about the different "stages" of the "National Democratic Revolution" with the aim of justifying their alliance with the bourgeois-nationalist ANC and their role in administering capitalism in the Tripartite Alliance. As we have repeatedly warned, the Stalinist "theory" of "two-stage revolution" is a bloody lie: the second "stage" is always the bourgeois-nationalists turning on and slaughtering communists and workers. Lonmin is a deadly warning! Trade union militants from COSATU and SACP members who genuinely want to fight for communism must be broken from the pro-capitalist programme of these organisations and won to a policy based on the independence of the working class from *all* bourgeois-nationalist forces. That includes former ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema, a populist demagogue who has gained a lot of popularity among the mineworkers. While Malema today poses as a friend of the workers, he is a *bourgeois* politician who stands for the maintenance of this bloody capitalist system and only a few years ago vowed to "kill" for Zuma.

Working-class independence from bourgeois nationalism is at the core of the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution. The national oppression endured by the black majority, imperialist domination, and many-layered oppression and backwardness characteristic of capitalism in South Africa can only be overcome through workers revolution, extending internationally. We need a ***black-centred workers government***, part of a ***socialist federation of Southern Africa***, which fights like hell to link up with workers revolution in the imperialist centres and create an international socialist planned economy. Then bloody horrors like the Lonmin massacre will belong to the past, part of a dark chapter in human history. This is what we fight for.

—23 August 2012