

# **The Jacob Zuma Cargo Cult and the “Implosion” of Alliance Politics**

Michael Schmidt

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Much printers' ink has been shed by pundits and politicians in attempting to explain, excuse, laud or condemn the rise of Jacob Zuma to the ANC Presidency from where it is just a short hop, skip and jump to the South African Presidency following the 2009 General Election. The rest of us, the people, are reduced to either disgruntled witnesses or ecstatic cheerleaders of "JZ" shifting the weight of his gut from foot to foot in his monotonous mshini-wam song. He knows it doesn't have to be a particularly energetic dance, for it is pretty much guaranteed that the ill-gotten gains he allegedly sought so assiduously for so long will soon be his when he holds the keys to the Treasury.

Just how did arguably the world's most famous liberation movement implode so rapidly into a venal kleptocracy, a cabal of back-slapping thugs? Did it in fact implode? Did it descend from great ethical heights or was the rot there all along?

## **The Lies of Democracy-for-the-Few**

There are numerous outright lies concerning the state of democracy in South Africa that are slavishly repeated by our centrist-neoliberal mainstream press and all our conventional political parties – especially those that consider themselves part of a "National Democratic Revolution" tradition. The most obvious, so close-up that most people can't see it, is the lie that some 400 MPs can in any way, shape or form actually *represent* the interests of almost 50-million people living within our borders. In the anarchist form of democracy, direct democracy, only you can represent your own interests (or only mutually-agreed groups can represent their own) – and have the responsibility to do so. In any case, the inexorable shifts from parliamentarism towards a president-dominated system advanced under Thabo Mbeki (and ironically, shortly to be taken advantage of by Jacob Zuma) has meant that Parliament is merely "a rubber stamp" for the will of the ANC executive. Those were the words of Independent Democrats leader Patricia de Lille. Even veteran ANC MP Prof Ben Turok, who was involved in the drafting of the Freedom Charter in 1955 and who has been intimately involved in ANC policy-making at least since the Morogoro Conference in exile in 1969 (when he castigated his cadres for their drunkenness, authoritarianism and maladministration), admitted on a recent SAfm radio interview with Tim Modise that Parliament was a powerless talk-shop: "We [MPs] just *talk*; the executive *does*." This weakened parliamentary system has been further bastardised by the opportunism of floor-crossing (where MPs are able to continue to eat off the fat of the land while betraying their voters), by many MPs' complicity in outright defrauding of the public (the Travelgate scandal), by the fact that parties with seats in Parliament get SABC election coverage – *and taxpayer's funding for their campaigns* – depending on their current seats in the House, and by the maintenance of the paper-thin farce that MPs have "constituency offices" in which they work for the good of all people in their constituencies (whereas in fact MPs have no constituencies and these offices are party-political offices where they serve party interests exclusively). And on top of all this, it is blindingly clear that our parliamentary parties, whether they are "communist," "revolutionary socialist" "African nationalist," faith-based, or outright neo-liberal, are all staunchly pro-capitalist, for how else would they feed off the labour of the majority like ticks on what would otherwise be a healthy dog?

## ANC Minority Rule in South Africa

But by far the biggest lie is that South Africa has a majority-rule government. In September 2005, I examined this widely-repeated lie in a newspaper column which is worth repeating in its entirety:

*On a couple of occasions over the past two weeks, I've sat at night around a candle with a group of black "squatter camp" youth and listened to talk of the forthcoming local government elections. The less-than-weatherproof, concrete-floored shack we met in was far away from the Matrix-style world of groovy youth of the "Power of X" advert promoting voter registration on television. The government pays so much to persuade people to register for local and national elections because South Africa is experiencing a very real – but officially denied – crisis of confidence in paper politics. No I'm not talking about Armsgate, Travelgate and Oilgate – or even about floor-crossing. Those national issues were far from the minds of the group of four young women and twelve young men squeezed into the gloomy shack. What concerned them was the lack of development in their settlement over the past decade. Let me begin with what will prove the most controversial assertion: that the ANC is in power thanks to a minority of eligible voters – not the more than 2/3 majority it so brashly claims. In 2004, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) claimed a 76,7% turnout in the national elections. But our comrades of the Landless People's Movement (LPM) – which had conducted a "No Land, No Vote" campaign – replied with a stinging critique that broke this figure down, noting that the IEC's own figures claimed 20,7-million people registered to vote, yet only 14,9-million actually did so. This showed, the LPM argued, that only 72% of registered voters actually voted – and that almost 28% of registered voters chose not to embrace the "Power of X". Even ignoring a 2% per annum population growth, the latest census showed at least 27,4-million South Africans aged 18 and over were eligible. So with one in four eligible voters having failed to or having chosen not to register, and with almost one in three registered voters having failed to, or having chosen not to vote, in real terms, the ANC government garnered only 10-million votes – a shoddy 37,3% of eligible voters. Party spin-doctors performed damage-control rain dances, as did scores of policy wonks and media pundits, most of whom spewed hot air, laced with cognac fumes, about the "laziness" of the country's "depoliticised" youth. The more honest of them were only prepared to admit that South African voting patterns were settling downwards in the direction of the "normal" (read: abysmal) poll levels that mark most "mature democracies". The rest simply pretended the crisis did not exist – and made it seem that the ANC had achieved its desired "two-thirds-majority" mandate.*

*But the youths I was listening to, unlike the gravity-defiant youth in the "Power of X", have their poorly shod feet firmly planted in the mud. They are active and political – and they were debating whether there was any real power in "X". They subscribed to the gamut of political allegiances, from anarchist-communist to ANC. But common cause among the youth clustered by candlelight was that the current ANC ward councillor was a useless, ne'er-do-well bastard who was never available to speak to the community or to receive its petitions for development. Also common cause was that the lack of development is dire: there are no proper houses, no electricity, sewerage, schools, in fact*

*no facilities other than a muddy soccer field and a library built by the community [with anarchist assistance]. Beyond that, there were two blocks of opinion among these earnest youth: one that favoured the election of their own councillor, under community control, taking orders directly from mass meetings of residents; and one that favoured surrendering the hard-won right to vote in favour of a militant protest boycott. Last Friday, on the eve of voter registration, a democratic community mass meeting decided in favour of a boycott. This was despite the pleas of the faction that argued for electing a “controllable squatter camp councillor” – and despite the late arrival of the ANC councillor, flanked by police thugs, who ordered two youths arrested for “intimidation” (apparently they walked away from him while he was trying to speak to them). Come voter registration on Saturday the turnout was deliberately, defiantly, exceptionally low. Beyond the flicker of the wafer-thin world of television, thousands of residents of this shabby, but proud squatter camp, young and old, played their game of noughts and crosses. The game was won by participatory politics, by the “Power of O”.*

And from what I’m told by an anarchist resident of that particular squatter-camp (Elias Motsoaledi, next to the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto), on the eve of the 2009 General Election, nothing much has changed – either in their lack of access to development or in the arrogant attitude of their ANC councillor. The truth that *the ANC is a minority-rule government* dramatically undercuts the argument that COPE’s challenge may cost it its prized 2/3 majority – *because it never had one!* But all parliamentary parties go along with this fiction because it supports their pork-barrel politics which is entirely dismissive of the wishes of the *majority* of South African residents. This is the logical conclusion of the “democratic centralism” practiced by the ANC and all other mainstream parties: the disembowelling of the very meaning of democracy, but reserving it to ever tinier elite circles of the wealthy where we the people not only have no say, but are daily mocked over snifters of cognac for our gullibility in believing that the political aristocracy rules in our best interests.

## **The Elephant in the Room: the Unelected State**

As communists we need to ask ourselves the pressing question: what exactly is “democratic” about our society? If our Parliament for whom we are begged to vote by its thieving beneficiaries is toothless and ruled by a one-party executive – according to both De Lille and Turock – then where else in our society is true democracy to be found? Is our working life democratic? Can one really openly challenge the owner of a business to debate about their workers’ starvation wages? Look at the hierarchy of bosses, from foreman up to deputy-director, a group of lazy, shady operators telling those who really know how to do the job how best to do it! Is this army-style rule any different in the mainstream media where owners tell editors and editors tell journalists what to do? OK, so the corporate world is obviously not democratic, but is our civil society life democratic? Sure, we don’t have to register all social organs from chess clubs, to churches and mosques, from soccer clubs to stokvels and debating societies with the police as in many other African countries, but how are these civil organs structured? Do they not replicate the oppressive hierarchy of the capitalist system with a minority of committee members determining the policy, direction and health of the majority of the membership? Again we see the dead hand of “democratic centralism,” and again, we must answer “No, this is not democracy!” And what about

the state itself, that elephant in the room, the one question most people avoid addressing? There is this naïve socialist assumption that the state in the hands of a “progressive” elite, especially one that *calls itself* socialist, and revolutionary, is transformed by that “socialist” ruling party into a democratic organ that functions for the good of the downtrodden at large. Well, on the one hand, the state *is a capitalist employer* of tens of thousands of public servants who are poorly paid and shabbily treated; and on the other hand, the state is the armed wing, the repressive force, of the bosses who run the national corporation nick-named “South Africa Incorporated,” an artificial entity like all states, based in this case on colonial borders, that is *the capitalist business of the political elite*. But the state is more than that: it is an *unelected bureaucracy* that, as an organisation that outlasts all political parties, has its own interests that are sometimes different from those of its political bosses (in this case the ANC), but always radically different from the interests of the people.

This is the truth that communists who have succumbed to Stalinism and other forms of state socialism fail to recognise: that even under “communist” regimes as in the USSR, China and elsewhere, the state becomes the capitalist landlord and acts harshly towards its “tenants,” the hungry work-force that keeps its parasitic power alive. And if we look within specific entities of the state, is the SANDF internally democratic? Hardly! Is the National Intelligence Agency a democracy? Obviously not! Are our health services, the police, our schools, our refuse-removal systems or anything else that the state does with the money they steal from every loaf of bread bought by a poor woman feeding her family, in any way democratic? If the entire state is not a democracy, and our civil society, fails to operate along democratic lines, and the parliamentary system is not only unrepresentative but powerless, then *where does democracy reside in South Africa?* The answer is: only in our hearts and in the way in which we treat each other with respect. The anarchist model of direct democracy is the total opposite of these vertical systems: firstly, the entire membership of an organisation is its policy-making body (ie: there is no “central committee” that takes decisions over the members’ heads); secondly, those who take decisions are those who carry them out (ie: there is no class/labour division in the organisation where a lazy overseer group gives orders to those who do the actual work); thirdly, members given tasks by the membership are narrowly mandated (ie: they cannot take broader decisions that affect the majority without being authorised to do so) and immediately recallable if they fail in their duties (ie: they lose their positions immediately if they betray the majority); lastly, our organisations are federated horizontally with sister organisations who work alongside each other in mutual respect in our struggles (ie: there is no pecking-order of organisations in partnership as with the ANC telling the much larger Cosatu what to do).

## **The Truncheon**

OK, so that’s the old US imperialism that we are accustomed to, and which, as outlined in *Zabalaza #8* is expanding into Africa. But what about South Africa’s role as an alleged upholder of democracy on our troubled continent? Surely, as the continent’s supposed leading light regarding the advancement of at the very least the adult franchise across Africa, we are in good standing? Well, I don’t believe so. For instance, Midrand between Joburg and Pretoria is the host to that farce called the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), which must surely be seen by all true democratic revolutionaries as a poor-woman’s meal of pap without meat! How is it possible to have a

continental “parliament” when many of the countries represented there are oligarchies, personal multi-decade dictatorships and military juntas? This is a monstrous lie that we must not suffer to live another second! The lie’s most noxious recent offspring is this false settlement achieved in Zimbabwe – only after South Africa tolerated murder, rape, expulsion, torture, arson, starvation and robbery of the public purse on an astronomical scale for the better part of a decade. In short, the MDC and ZANU-PF, having ignored the cries of dying Zimbabwean civil society, finally shook hands over the corpses. We, the ZACF, find *nothing* to celebrate here: instead we grieve for the destruction of a people by the cynical parasitic elites on both sides of the border. Then we look at South Africa’s reputation abroad for business skulduggery: whether it is Shoprite apparently dumping its rotten produce on the shelves of its Mozambican stores, or Tokyo Sexwale/Sun International’s failed bid to bulldoze a woman’s modest hotel on Ilha do Luanda in cahoots with a friend in the Angolan Cabinet to erect a multi-storey monolith, our reputation out there sucks. And let’s not forget the drunken, rapine behaviour of our troops abroad. We currently have more than two battalions of our soldiers out of SA on “peace-keeping” missions: one in the DRC as part of the UN contingent, one in Burundi as part of the African Union force, sizeable contingents in Darfur (AU again) and on the Eritrea/Ethiopia border, as well as military advisors and observers from Namibia to West Africa. Sadly, despite honourable members in their ranks, their reputation has been sullied by our troops raping under-aged girls, and a wide variety of ill-disciplined behaviour such as theft, corruption and public drunkenness. So despite our best intentions, we come across looking like the region’s rapist and scavenger, and worse, its corrupt, swaggering policeman wielding the truncheon against the poor in favour of parasitic US, EU and SA interests.

## The Baited Hook

So what was the baited hook that induced the leaders of our “National Democratic Revolution” to so fall from the manufactured heights of grace of the Mandela myth to the sleazy swamp in which they now wallow? There is a foolish argument on the left, that replicates the delusional Trotskyist argument around the succession in Russia, that Lenin was cool and right-on, but he was supplanted by treachery by Stalin who was an outright bastard – and only Trotsky stood up to him as a critic of the decay of “real, existing socialism”. The SA lefty argument goes similarly: Mandela was cool and right-on, but he was supplanted by Mbeki who was an outright bastard – and only Zuma stood up to him as a critic of the decay of “real, existing democracy”. Unfortunately for these partisans of wishful thinking, it was Lenin, not Stalin, who reintroduced capitalism via the New Economic Policy, Lenin who had established the Cheka and had crushed the revolutionaries at Kronstadt – and it was Trotsky who ordered Kronstadt and the Ukrainian Revolution destroyed. Likewise, sadly for the SACP and Cosatu who somehow conjure up a “socialist” in their *balyoyi*-like [witchdoctor-like] probing of the lower intestines of Jacob Zuma, it was Mandela who scrapped the quasi-socialist Reconstruction and Development Programme and substituted it for the outright neoliberal GEAR, Mandela who in 1997 granted neo-fascist, mass-murdering dictator Mohamed Suharto the Star of Good Hope for his \$60-million donation to the ANC – and it is Zuma who has sworn to business backers abroad that it will be business as usual during his reign. In other words, the corruption and anti-working-class violence of the current government stems directly from Mandela, that smarmy glad-hander of parasitic inter-

ests, and there is a direct line of virulent, albeit disguised, anti-worker self-interest that runs from Mandela through Mbeki to Zuma. I have argued in a piece shortly to be published in the Chilean journal *Hombre y Sociedad* entitled *PW & Pinochet: The Dictatorial Roots of Democracy in South Africa and Chile*, that the Mandela regime (and those who got fat off it including Mbeki and Zuma) was the logical culmination and realisation of the strategy of the old PW Botha regime: that so long as real, structural apartheid kept the poor apart from the precious classes, the Nats had achieved in Mandela and the ANC what they were incapable of achieving themselves because of the lack of a popular mandate. But in more specific terms, what is it that induced the alleged corruption of Zuma over whose head a corruption and racketeering trial still appears to hang? It is sufficient, to my mind, to note that during the trial of Zuma's erstwhile financial advisor Schabir Shaik in October 2004, it was revealed that while he was still KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Finance, Zuma had accompanied Shaik to Indonesia where he blatantly lied to Indonesian Cabinet ministers that Shaik's Nkobi Holdings was a major SA defence contractor. Not only was this when Nkobi pretty much existed only on paper, but *four years before* French arms dealers dangled the bait of an alleged half-million/year bribe in front of Zuma. Of course the National Prosecuting Authority screwed up by not trying Zuma alongside Shaik, but it appears clear that Zuma's *mens rea*, his "evil intent," to engage in corrupt dealings well before he could even be induced by actual cash was proven long ago. He has lurked in the shallow waters of our body politic for years like a fat trout with his greedy mouth open... well before any baited hook was dangled in front of him by the French.

## The "National Democratic Revolution"

So how exactly did "Jay-Zee" (note the Americanised hip-hop pronunciation) rise to the top? Well, this is laid out in better, if mind-numbing detail, by various books on the topic (such as Jeremy Gordin's *Zuma*), all hoping to cash in on our sickly fascination with the creature of the moment. But one has to look deeper, to find the origins of such a golem, deeper to the very roots of the ANC's bogus "National Democratic Revolution". The roots of the rot lie in the very concept of the NDR – the doctrine of the ascendancy of black nationalist aspirations and the capitalist economy that is wielded by ANC ideologues as a tub-thumper wields the Bible. But what is the true nature of this "Revolution," and how transformative is it truly for the poorest of the poor? The NDR has its roots in the opportunistic 1928 saddling-up of the black nationalist petit-bourgeoisie by the then-tiny and pretty much all-white Communist Party with the "Native Republic" doctrine, a fatal idea that has firstly allowed an anti-working class ideology to corrupt liberation politics, and which secondly has raised up the inheritors of this betrayal to fat-cat positions of power over the poor. There is a general fallacy that the anarchist movement, because of its implacable opposition to the reactionary nature of *statist nationalism*, had nothing to say over its 150 year history about *national liberation* struggles against colonialism and imperialism. This is fundamentally untrue.

In fact, as will be demonstrated in great detail shortly in the book *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1880–1940: class politics, imperialism and the national question in three continents*. Co-edited by ZACF associate Dr Lucien van der Walt, this groundbreaking book examines critically how anarchists engaged with the national question in the Andes, Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Far East. What the book's collection of new



academic studies makes clear is that the very reason that anarchism gained significant ground among mass working class organisations in the pre-1917 period (and classical Marxism was relegated to tiny ineffective grouplets) was that it actually *did* engage with the national aspirations of oppressed and colonised peoples. This engagement took three main forms, but each sharing as Van der Walt put it, “a fundamental opposition to empire in favour of some form of secession”: a minority of anarchists were entirely opposed to working alongside nationalists who they argued intended to be just as capitalist and oppressive as the empire they wanted to break with (so in effect they abstained from the nationalist struggle to concentrate on working class organisation); and yet others believed that national liberation struggles would inexorably be forced by circumstance to become revolutionary (so in effect, they merged with the nationalist forces and pushed for a revolutionary line within them); but the majority of anarchists welded the class struggle to the struggle against empire, insisting that class aspirations dominate the liberation process by forming class-based fronts rather than multi-class fronts (in effect pushing for social revolution as the content of the national liberation vehicle). By stark comparison, the Marxists, driven by their mechanical view of progress towards socialism that in effect limited its possibility to the developed North Atlantic countries (in effect the *colonial powers* themselves), saw no possibility of a socialist revolution arising in the *colonised and post-colonial* worlds against those colonial powers. This disdainful North Atlantic attitude in classical Marxism lies at the base of why anarchism and syndicalism rooted themselves deeply across much of Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Far East in the 1860s-1920s, with their militants dominating the organised working classes in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Ukraine and Uruguay, establishing powerful minority movements in Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Korea, India, Peru, Poland, Puerto Rico, South Africa, and other countries, and founding important pre-Communist Party revolutionary socialist networks in colonised countries like Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Malaysia, Macedonia, Morocco, Mozambique, the Philippines and Vietnam. Lenin and the Bolsheviks finally took the national question seriously and broke Marxism out of its North Atlantic ghetto, but “solved” it in the crudest fashion possible: by lumping together genuine working-class communist aspirations with bourgeois-nationalist plotting, and by short-circuiting the hard work of building mass revolutionary organisations of the class in favour of militarist coups d’etat, with the result that merely adding a red star to one’s flag and an appeal for financial aid was sufficient for the Soviet Union to consider a post-putsch country to be “socialist”, an instant “people’s republic”. In addition, most versions of Marxist-Leninism have always been hostile to worker’s control of industry and the socialisation of life in general, preferring state-capitalist nationalisation and centralisation under iron-fisted totalitarian control.

## The JZ Cargo Cult

According to the late SACP leader Joe Slovo in his 1988 piece *The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution*, “A tendency, loosely described as ‘workerism’, denies that the main content of the immediate conflict is national liberation which it regards as a diversion from the class struggle. Even if it admits the relevance of national domination in the exploitative processes, ‘workerism’ insists of a perspective of an immediate struggle for socialism. A transitional stage of struggle, involving inter-class alliances, is alleged to lead to an abandonment of socialist perspectives and to a surrender of working class leadership. The economic struggles be-

tween workers and bosses at the point of production (which inevitably spill over into the broader political arena) is claimed to be the 'class struggle'. This is sometimes coupled with a view that the trade union movement is the main political representative of the working class." What Slovo describes as "workerism" is a caricature of what we anarchist-communists would call revolutionary syndicalism. Syndicalism is anarchism's industrial strategy – horizontal, directly-democratic revolutionary unions organised by industry, not craft – and it entirely dominated the organised working classes in Spain, Cuba, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Portugal, the United States, the Netherlands, and briefly Russia, at different periods in the decades from the rise of anarchism in the First International in the 1860s until the First World War in 1914. But unlike those revolutionary syndicalists and especially of explicitly anarchist unionists (the anarcho-syndicalists) who feel that radical trade unionism is sufficient to win the battle for the overthrow of capital and the state (and in line with Marxist-Leninists), we recognise that a specific political organ of the working class is also necessary to push forward the struggle *within* class-based mass organs of the national liberation struggle such as trade unions. Unlike the SACP's pretensions, however, the ZACF recognises that it is not the only communist organisation in the country and willingly works alongside any communist who takes a working class line, rather than a cross-class line like the SACP.

Slovo, the SACP's prime apologist for the Party's shift in the early 1990s from putschist Marxist-Leninism towards watered-down parliamentary social democracy, continued: "A more sophisticated version of the left-workerist position has recently surfaced among union-linked academics. This version concedes the need for inter-class alliances but puts forward a view of working class political organisation more appropriate to a trade union than a revolutionary political vanguard." This approximates in some respects De Leonism, a version of syndicalism that tries to fight on both the union and parliamentary fronts. While recognising De Leonism's historical origins in the anarchist movement, the ZACF avoids this flawed line of march. Instead, the ZACF concedes the need for a revolutionary political vanguard – but we use the term in its truly communist sense of anarchist and other communist militants being at the forefront of struggle, not directing it from the rear as with Lenin, Trotsky, Mao & Co. Warnings about the inherent flaw in the cross-class nature of the NDR were spelled out so by Peter Hudson in the journal *Transformation* in 1986: "That the oppressed nation needs to reappropriate from the oppressing nation its economic resources if it is to attain a proper independence does not guarantee the anti-capitalist character of such a reappropriation. The resources in question could conceivably be transferred into the control of a class of black capitalists and state functionaries. This is precisely what seems to have been envisaged by Nelson Mandela in 1956." I've already summarily dispensed with the money-grubbing Mandela and his tacit endorsement of mass murder. But what Hudson could not see – and his fears are echoed in the left's whining about the supposed implosion of ANC Alliance politics, the rise of pork-barrel patronage and the opportunism of the supposedly selfless cadres of the NDR – is that the very reason for the rise of the JZ Cargo Cult lies at the heart of the NDR. "Cargo cults" arose in many underdeveloped parts of the world upon first contact with Western imperialist wealth, but the term gained currency in the Pacific Ocean during World War II when the Allies tried to buy the loyalty of Polynesian and other peoples with material goods dropped from the sky by planes in cargo crates – and the gullible among them took this as a sign of favour and of perpetual replenishment by the gods. A similar fever has taken hold in South African "liberation movement" politics, not least among the ANC Youth League, in which effusive praise for the new sky-god Zuma is expected to benefit from a shower of gifts from above. So via cronyism,

nepotism and outright looting, all of the heartfelt desires of the aspirant *waBenzi* [the Mercedes Benz-driving elite] are realised.

## The Roots of the ANC-COPE Split

In his reappraisal of the fascist phenomenon of the 1920s-1940s, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, Robert O. Paxton writes that in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the two cases where fascist parties, based in part on mass right-populist movements (and back-room deals with the conservative elites), came to power and ruled in their own name (rather than as junior partners in a coalition as in Francoist Spain), the new rulers were faced with a conundrum regarding how to adapt the radicalism of their early mobilisation to the more prosaic realities of rule. Paxton argues convincingly that two paths were open to them. Either as in Italy, the regime stabilised itself by retreating from its early radicalism (although maintaining the *rhetoric* of the Fascist Revolution), becoming in essence a conventional conservative-authoritarian regime. In Germany, the path chosen was that of ever-increasing radicalism, notable in the progressive escalation of measures against the Jews, culminating in the execution of the “Final Solution,” a path that took the regime ever closer to the edge of the precipice, finally destroying itself rather than surrender. Now the ANC is very far from fascist, but what intrigues us is the similarity not between their *politics* and those of the defunct fascist ruling parties, but between the *processes* in play. The ANC came to power based in part on mass mobilisation (and back-room deals with the conservative NP elite) and now rules in its own name. But as even the ANC leadership has often publicly conceded, the party has experienced difficulty in translating its culture of early radicalism into conventional politics, of channelling the energy of the mass mobilisations of the 1980s into the narrow slot of the ballot box, of moving from operating as a “liberation movement” to working as a government. What lies at the base of the ANC-COPE split is this disconnection between the aspirations of much of the Alliance base for a fulfilment of the promises of liberation for radical change in their living circumstances, and the Alliance leadership’s pro-capitalist need to curb those aspirations. On the one hand, the leadership has to continually refer back to the depredations of apartheid and the ANC, SACP and Cosatu’s role in the resistance, in order to keep the base reminded of its aspirations – but on the other hand, they are forced to try to “educate” the masses to relinquish their dreams of full liberation, which is just not possible under the hierarchical capitalist state which the ANC-SACP-Cosatu elite now has a hand in ruling. It’s a delicate balancing act, and the balance was upset by the succession battle between the Mbeki and Zuma factions.

The sheer aggression of the Zuma camp (calls to “kill for Zuma” and Zuma’s own machine-gun song) well before the split seemed to be misdirected at perceived enemies in the media and the judiciary when in fact the target was predictably those within the ANC’s own ranks who stood for the choice of retreating from early radicalism (except in rhetoric), settling the ANC into power as a conventional centrist neoliberal party. This explains why the SACP and Cosatu leadership backed the Zuma camp. Only a fool would presume that Zuma was in any way more worker-friendly or “socialist” than Mbeki, but that was not the point for the Communist and Cosatu leadership. The point was that strategically, they believed that the best way to rein in the aspirations of the working class, peasantry and poor was to try and radicalise their “Revolution” by emotional and often racist appeals to the thwarted aspirations of the masses. Not that they intend satisfying those aspirations as this is impossible under capitalism, but they intend keeping the

people mobilised in their favour by continually raising the spectre of enemies within (the Mbeki faction and quasi-syndicalist tendencies in Cosatu) and without (other political organisations, the media and the “counter-revolutionary” judiciary). It is a strategy for adhering the masses to the elite despite the elite’s clear intentions not to deliver on promises, a bourgeois strategy successfully applied in, for example, China under Mao Zedong’s populist “Cultural Revolution”. Now we don’t expect Zuma’s experiment to go as far as Mao’s but the genie of populism, once released from its bottle, is hard to put back in. And when that populism starts to adopt aspects of Zulu chauvinism, it moves inexorably in the direction of right-wing populism, shifting the ANC as a whole towards the cultural and economic right. One last point: while the ANC under Zuma is a neoliberal party that disguises this fact thanks to the pink tint given to its policies by the SACP and Cosatu leadership, COPE is little better, and in fact appears to be distinguishing itself as an unabashed neoliberal party, thus a false choice between the two is presented to poor and working class voters. We may use the anti-COPE taunt “NOPE! Our Dreams Can’t Fit in Your Ballot Box”, but the ANC, because of its flirtation with populist mobilisation and false radicalisation, because of its self-congratulatory myth-making capacity vested in the state broadcaster, because of its position in charge of the firearms of the security forces, and because of its vast ill-gotten wealth, stripped from the poor, still represents the greatest threat to direct democracy and true liberation in South Africa.

## **Against the NDR: Towards a Fresh Revolution**

So what do we believe in? And how is our revolutionary fervour different to the *kits-konstabel* [“instant constable,” a state-sponsored, ill-trained Zululand policeman of the late 1980s / early 1990s] radicalism of the Zuma camp? After all, in the major revolutions that have decayed into totalitarianism – Mexico, Russia, Ukraine, Spain and Cuba – there were active moves by the anarchists and syndicalists to push the revolution forward in the direction of free communism. As the Russian Revolution slid into state-capitalist dictatorship under the Bolsheviks, for instance, by 1921, the Kronstadt Soviet was dominated as it had been since 1917 by anarchists, Left Social Revolutionaries and Maximalist Social Revolutionaries, with as many as 776 Bolsheviks defecting to these groupings that year. In February 1921, these groupings reacted strongly to a bloody Checkist crack-down on a general strike by workers in nearby Petrograd with the *Petropavlovsk Resolution*, taken at a mass meeting on board the battleship Petropavlovsk. The *Resolution* called for “new elections to the Soviets,” “by secret ballot,” and “preceded by free electoral propaganda” and coupled to “Freedom of speech and of the press for workers and peasants, for the anarchists, and for the Left Socialist parties” (ie: for all progressive forces, but not for the right wing) and the “right of assembly, and freedom for trade union and peasant organisations”. But these direct-democratic demands threatened Bolshevik power and the Kronstadt Soviet was drowned in blood, forced to call for a “third revolution” against Bolshevik power, necessary in Kronstadt’s eyes to complete the liberation struggle which had defeated first the Tsarist regime and then the bourgeois-democratic Kerensky regime. The immediate socialisation of the economy and destruction of state-capitalist (Boshevik) power was necessary in order to complete the revolutionary process. Likewise, as the Spanish Revolution decayed under Spanish Communist Party (PCE) influence – aided and abetted by those “anarchist” leaders who had betrayed the working class and anarchist principles by entering into government – the Friends of Durruti, a grouping of

revolutionary militiamen and militiawomen named after the famed guerrilla fighter Buenaventura Durruti, issued a call, *Towards a Fresh Revolution*, to complete the revolutionary process. It advocated a break with the Popular Front government, the military defence of the remaining collectives against the PCE and other reactionary forces, and argued that the anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labour (CNT) entry into the government showed the lack of a serious plan to extend and defend the revolution.

The Friends of Durruti advocated the formation of a “Revolutionary Junta” or “National Defence Council” that would undertake the management of the war against fascism, the supervision of revolutionary order, international relations and revolutionary propaganda. This Council (junta means council in Spanish) was to be based on the unions and militia, and would include the United Marxist Workers’ Party (POUM), an anti-Stalinist communist party, as well as those anarchist organisations still dedicated to the Social Revolution. The Friends of Durruti advocated the seizure of all arms and financial reserves, increased socialisation of the economy and food distribution, thus completing the process of collectivisation, the equalisation of all pay and the restructuring of the armed forces, armed defence against attacks on the enemies of the people, working class solidarity, including a policy of unity with the socialist General Union of Workers (UGT), and non-collaboration with foreign and local capitalist forces. In *Towards a Fresh Revolution*, the Friends of Durruti’s demands constitute a key document of the anarchist-communist tradition to which the ZACF belongs and which runs from Mikhail Bakunin and his Alliance for Socialist Democracy in which anarchists acted as “invisible pilots in the centre of the popular storm,” through Nestor Makhno and his Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the Ukraine in the 1920s in which anarchists acted as a “leading echelon” of militants within the working class, through Georges Fontenis and his Libertarian Communist Federation in France in the 1950s which anarchist-communists constituted as a “vanishing vanguard” that gradually disappeared as anarchist-communism advanced, and through the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF) of the 1990s in Britain in which the anarchists are the “driving force” of the revolutionary process – albeit only as an integral part of the working class. As the ACF put it, they and we are opposed to “the Leninist concept which springs from the managerial strata and the intelligentsia which seek to dragoon the workers into a new form of oppression: the worker’s state”. So this is the anarchist-communist conception of revolution: socialism from below, created by horizontally federated, directly-democratic *working class* organs, leaving the parasitic classes totally out in the cold. Our revolution is an international socialist revolution by a front of the oppressed classes (of which the anarchist-communists are an integral part), crossing all false colonial borders, and as such it is against a narrow, nationalist pseudo-revolution that subordinates the interests of the poor to those of the rich who live off them.

## **Conclusion: For Revolutionary, Grassroots Communism**

But are we, the ZACF, who admit openly that we are a tiny force on the extra-parliamentary communist left, calling for a fresh revolution against the ANC? We don’t believe either that conditions for a true social revolution are imminent, nor do we believe in the correctness of the strategy of those factions of the communist left who want to adopt a quasi-De Leonist approach of combining valuable street power with useless ballot-box “action,” a strategy we are convinced supplants the former with the latter and herds true working-class strength into the slaughter-

house of bourgeois politics. Yes, we recognise that South Africa's revolutionary potential is great thanks to us living in one of the world's most unequal societies, but as Lenin accurately said, "Without revolutionary theory, there can be no real revolutionary movement." The role of true communists in South Africa on the eve of the 2009 General Election – whether they find themselves in the rank-and-file of the SACP (and we are aware of many good comrades there), or of extra-parliamentary communist outfits such as our own is to educate the people about the false promises offered up by the parasites and wanna-be parasites, whether of the ANC, COPE, DA, IFP, ID, UDM, ID or any other pretender to the throne of ruling our hard-working but bitterly poor productive classes. The revolutionary, grassroots communist line of march is this: to eschew all forms of bourgeois compromise and to move in the direction of a true future social revolution, driven by the wretched of the earth, that goes beyond the fake "National Democratic Revolution" by destroying the power of the capitalist state and socialising and redistributing in equal, directly-democratic fashion all the stolen wealth of this country.

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