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Revolutionary Joburg

Zabalaza

August 2002

Welcome to Joburg, the heartland of the revolutionary industrialised working class in South Africa! Following the discovery of gold here more than 110 years ago, Joburg has developed as the lynchpin of SA's smokestack economy – and as one of the most unsustainable cities in Africa, with water for industry and the rich having to be piped in from Lesotho, hundreds of kilometres away, while the poor are simply cut off from this basic resource.

But Joburg has a long radical fighting tradition: it was here that “Pickhandle” Mary Fitzgerald lead militant strikers in street-fighting against the police who were defending the bosses' interests during the 1913 strikes; it was here that aircraft were used for the first time in “peace-time” to bomb civilians, during the 1922 Rand Revolt; it was here that in 1946, thousands of black miners downed tools and rose up against their oppressors; it was here that in 1976, school-children risked death and started an uprising against apartheid capital that echoed around the world; and it was here in 1985, that the final, successful struggle against the racist regime was begun by unions, civics, community militia and popular committees.

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Importantly, it was here in 1917, the year of the Russian Revolution, that the racially-divided workforces of the then-British dominion were united by anarchists like Thomas “TW” Thibedi and Reuben Kaplan of the International Socialist League (ISL) founded the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA). Based on the anarchist-influenced revolutionary syndicalism of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the IWA was probably the first trade union for black workers in British colonial Africa and it established branches in Joburg and Cape Town. Other IWA anarchists like RK Moodley and Bernard Sigamoney founded the Indian Workers’ Industrial Union (IWIU) in Durban along similar lines in the same year, while two years later, “coloured” IWA militants set up two unions in the diamond-mining centre of Kimberley.

Today, the anarchist direct-action tradition of poor communities, exploited workers and the dispossessed peasantry united against the murderous plans of the ANC mandarins is continuing the fight. Job losses since racist capital transformed itself into bourgeois capital have reached 1-million (with some 40% unemployed), 3,5-million have been cut off from water and electricity and 1,5-million evicted from their homes. Almost 57% of all South Africans are living in poverty, 75% have inadequate food security, and 21,6% of all young children are stunted by malnutrition. Those responsible, our enemies, include Trevor Manuel, the smug Minister of Finance, who also happens to be chairman of the World Bank – and so-called “communist” Ministers Jeff Radebe (state businesses), Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi (civil service) and Charles Nqakula (police), who all act as key Trojan horses in the ANC’s war on the poor. Then there’s fat-cat Joburg Metro Mayor Amos Masondo whose house we fucked up after his hired goon fired shots at our desperate, hungry and broke demonstrators – while he was schmoozing in Hawaii, planning the W\$\$D talk shop on how to sugar-coat global misery.

The message is simple:

**WE WILL MAKE THIS COUNTRY UNGOVERNABLE BY
THE PARASITES!**

**WE KICKED OUT THE RACISTS – AND WE’LL KICK YOU
OUT TOO!**