

South Africa: The Marikana Massacre and the New Wave of Workers' Struggle

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I'm here with Mazibuko Jara. Mazibuko is from the Democratic Left Front of South Africa. He was spokesperson for the South African Communist Party and the deputy secretary for the Young Communist League, back a decade and more ago. He is one of the co-founders of *Amandla* magazine and the Democratic Left Front, and they've been extremely active in the support for the Marikana miners and for South African farmworkers, and elsewhere. We'll talk about this and more in this interview. Today is Sunday, Dec 2, 2012.

Jack Gerson: Mazibuko, can you give us a bit of background on the current events in South Africa and how you personally got involved and became so prominent in the South African movement?

Mazibuko Jara: I became a socialist in 1989, in the last years of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Since then I've been a committed Marxist socialist, so that explains my long-term involvement in the political struggles and movements in South Africa. Right now, I'm part of the Democratic Left Front, which has actively supported the recent wave of mineworker and farmworker strikes in South Africa, starting with platinum workers at the Lonmin Corporation's Marikana mine and spreading to other mines. That Marikana movement of workers' struggles has thrown the DLF into the spotlight in terms of what it can do to support the workers' struggle and also to bring a socialist perspective into those workers' struggles that goes beyond the immediate workplace issues. That is important because there have been some 18 years in South Africa of a post-apartheid political dispensation founded on a democratic constitution and including a democratically elected government, which has been dominated and led by the party of Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress (ANC). The ANC works together with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in the form of a tripartite alliance. Those 18 years have left a number of systemic features from the past quite intact. Firstly, the economic structure of South Africa remains a capitalist economy owned by a small number of capitalists, particularly in the mines and in finance and in agriculture, and a smaller layer in industry, especially manufacturing. Of course now, there's been a rise in the services sector alongside a wave of increased financialization of the economy.

So the post-apartheid administration has not really challenged the ownership/control of the economy by this capitalist class as well as the power of this capitalist class in general. There has not been significant redistribution of wealth through taxation or through land redistribution or other measures. But we've seen high levels of profits — super-profits in some instances — by South African companies. And these high levels of profits have been at the expense of South African workers. Workers have been more productive, which means they produce more profits. But we've seen a decline in the share of national income going to workers. This explains then why there has been a lot of unhappiness among workers, because there are billions of rands in profits, which are being held onto by the bosses instead of being invested in more productive investments or being paid as wages to workers. Of course, beyond workers there are millions more of unemployed people who are structurally out of the economic system. These unemployed people basically depend on the minimal social security program that the state provides with some elements of a social wage (basic amounts of water and electricity, free housing for the poor, etc.) But the social security grants and the elements of a social wage system are immediately undermined by the economic policies of the state, immediately undermined by the huge unemployment crisis. For example, the logic of a social wage is undermined by cost recovery, wherein the unemployed are expected to pay for the costs of

these services. So the restlessness that we see among the unemployed and the workers in South Africa is basically an attempt by ordinary people to say what's the benefit of this constitutional promise if it's not changing our lives?

JG: The massacre of the Marikana miners this past August 16 has received international attention. Can you describe the events that led up to it, because there has been a lot of controversy and confusion surrounding these events? We've heard charges of "anarchism," and "nihilism" leveled at the Marikana miners and / or their leaders. There have been allegations that the Marikana miners have been deceived and led to murder their opponents. There have been accusations of "dual unionism." Can you explain the background to the miners' strike and the August 16 events?

MJ: The strike at the Lonmin mine in Marikana has deep systemic roots in the conditions of workers in that mine. For several years now that mine has increasingly used labor from labor brokers. So they would hire a company to bring workers on a part-time basis to work the mines, particularly underground. That group of workers who were brought in through labor brokers did not have full benefits and were paid very low wages. So that's quite significant, because many of these mine workers need to support two families: one in the mining area, and one in their rural homes in far-flung provinces or in nearby countries. But also, another factor is that the mining system has taken away the subsidy for accommodations that it used to provide to workers. It is true that these accommodations in the mining compounds were horrible. But now, the mining companies charge the workers for these accommodations in the mining compounds. So many of the mine workers have opted to stay in the informal settlements that emerged around the mining areas. That was a further squeeze. Apart from that, there have been very problematic attempts by management to increase salaries for certain parts of the workforce, but not for the entire workforce. And by the union's own calculation, that was meant to reward those more critical in the production process. But you can imagine the kind of unhappiness that this would generate, given that very few workers were getting any kind of fair wage.

But also: the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM), the largest union representing mine workers in South Africa, had increasingly become removed from the conditions, the grievances, and the demands of the lowest rank of the workers, the most exploited — particularly those who drill the rocks. Because those who drill the rocks must be physically strong, since they work the hardest and work the longest, and they were not getting increased wage rates at all. The NUM had increasingly been led by a layer of quite streetwise, English speaking, white-collar workers. Most of them had been working above the ground, as mining clerks or other officers in the system. So this combination of factors meant that there was no outlet, there was no forum, to hear and address the grievances of underground workers. In this combination of circumstances what then emerged was very significant anger, very significant agitation, which led to what is called an unprotected strike from the end of July or the beginning of August at Marikana when workers demanded a way out of their squeeze: they demanded a living wage, a wage that would make it possible for them to meet their expenses and live decently. This strike was basically an initiative of the workers themselves. Of course, the NUM was facing some competition from a smaller breakaway union called AMCU (Association of Mine Workers and Construction Union). However, to view the strike as NUM vs. AMCU is not helpful, because it ignores the real, concrete conditions that workers were unhappy about. NUM vs. AMCU is a dynamic that is part of the strike, but it is not the main dynamic. And anyway, as it turned out, that strike saw workers wanting to negotiate with the management on their own. That logic of workers wanting to feel their own power was also present in other strikes triggered by Marikana.

JG: I'm looking through the current issue of Amandla, the South African journal that you co-founded. Most of the issue is devoted to the uprising in the mines, beginning with an article "Marikana: 38 years." Here's a quote from this article: "South Africa is by all accounts the world's richest country

in terms of the value of its mineral resources. In 2010 these were valued at between \$2.5 trillion and \$4.5 trillion.” The article goes on to quote Jacob Zuma, South Africa’s president, saying, “We plan to develop and integrate rail, road, and water infrastructure centered around two main areas in Limpopo: the Waterburg in the western part of the province, and Steelpoort in the eastern part. These efforts are intended to unlock the enormous mineral belt of coal, platinum, palladium, chrome, and other minerals in order to facilitate increased mining as well as stepped up beneficiation of minerals.” That’s from Zuma’s State of the Nation address made this past February (2012) and the article says that this is part of the South African government endorsing the sentiments of the captains of industry that “we cannot miss out a second time on a commodities supercycle.” So is this an essential part of the background to what happened, that is that the state is pushing hard and intervening at this point because of the cyclical increase of prices of commodities on a world scale, and for that reason trying to maximize profits by extracting more at this time?

MJ: The policy of government is to build significant infrastructure — road, rails, water transport — to ensure the smooth, efficient, and cheap transportation of minerals to the coast, so that they can be taken from there to global markets — China, Europe, North America. That’s the basic logic. But then there’s logic that says “let’s take the minerals out as quickly as possible and maybe we can introduce some ways to do this efficiently,” but the primary logic is to extract as much as possible. Now that is the option that the ANC government is going for. It’s not even including the option of nationalization or any form of state ownership of mines in any significant and transformative way. Basically, that kind of infrastructure, financed by public resources, would make it easier for global capital to get minerals from South Africa more efficiently. Now, what that logic avoids is something that has been raised in huge debates in South Africa by COSATU but also by other left forces that have critiqued the structure of the South African economy as an energy-intensive, minerals and energy complex. Basically, this complex is about the extraction of minerals on the basis of cheap energy and cheap black labor. This complex has been the foundation of capitalist development in South Africa and its post-1994 reinsertion into the global economy even though the process of extraction of these minerals is polluting, even though this process cannot really encourage the development of other forms of industrialization.

So the development of the mineral and energy complex over the past 140 years has really structured the market economy in ways that have limited job-creating industrialization and the development of other sectors in that economy. This infrastructure development policy and program is compromised and limited in so many ways: extractive, thus maintaining the minerals-energy complex and maintaining the skewed structure of the economy. Also, what is not said very much is that this policy is based on financing which will be sourced from the financial markets. There’s not going to be new fiscal allocations, but the funds will come from the financial markets. So this ties South African development even more closely into the global capital markets, because these financial markets will impose conditions which will maintain the structure capital knows to maximize its profits. This will have cost-recovery implications later on as well. It’s a very significant policy arrangement that ties the South African economy further into the systematic exploitative and oppressive features that were imposed on us over the past 140 years and have not gone away but rather have been inherited and, as I have been saying, are indeed today deepening.

JG: Within the past few weeks an ANC government official was quoted in the Financial Times as saying that she thinks that mining, or at least some mines, should be nationalized. And there have been articles in the South African press about some of the older mines being closed down. Does this mean that companies will attempt to divest themselves of the least profitable and most dangerous mines, the old mines where drilling now must go much more deeply? Are these the mines that the ANC government is most likely to nationalize — these less efficient, more dangerous, and less profitable mines — while leaving the more lucrative mining operations in the hands of private

capital? Also, will the threat of mine closures and consequent unemployment be used to try to batter workers into giving up their struggle and lowering their demands? What are the different groups doing about that? (ANC; SACP; COSATU; NUM; etc.)

MJ: There has already been an earlier round of mining capital getting rid of marginal mines. This was done to entire shafts and even entire mines — entire companies, to aspiring black capitalists, under a program called Black Economic Empowerment. That program was used by mining capital and by government to say that this was the beginning of a change in the South African mining sector. Of course, that was limited, and anyway, it does not change the fundamental problem. So this current round of divesting away from marginal mines will build on that. But as you're saying, it's also something that will affect the workers' demand for a living wage from mining capital. But there have been a few reports that suggest that together with getting rid of marginal mines there is also the threat of more capital intensiveness with consequent reduction of labor in mining. So this is clearly part of a bigger logic: to maintain profits by reducing labor costs. This is a huge struggle that the mineworkers are going to face.

We of the Democratic Left Front are working with workers' committees in the platinum belt to convene a workers' assembly to work out a working class response from below to this threat. It will be a real test for the workers' committees. COSATU, the main workers' federation, which is aligned to the ANC government, is unlikely to lead a principled and sustained fight to resist and win against such threats. The ANC government itself is not about to go around nationalizing the mines — not even marginal mines. In its "State Intervention in the Mineral Sector" (SIMS) document, the ANC basically calls for the state to create a mining company which will buy shares, but otherwise will seek to explore new ventures when the state issues new mining rights. Already there is a state company called Alexkor, which is beset with problems, and anyway is not a major player. So, the creation of a new state company is not going to change the features of mining at all. It is different from nationalization because the state company is just one player amongst many other players in the mining sector. But also, it's likely to follow similar logic as any other private capitalist company.

The other thing they're talking about is then to increase taxes and royalties. Now, that would be quite significant. But still, it would not change the overall structure of mining or even the overall weight of the mineral-energy complex in the economy. This relates to changes in an important law called the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act. That act did something very interesting. According to this law, all mining rights are owned by the state, and then the state issues them in the form of licenses to companies on long-term leases. Now that's quite significant. It's still not the same as nationalization, since only the mining rights were "nationalized" and not the actual mining operations themselves. Now, other provisions of this law had called for effective consultation with communities when granting mining rights would affect the land rights of these communities. This law also had required that some of the revenue from mining investment should be disbursed in the form of social plans. But the state has been very weak about enforcing this. In fact, we've seen the state evict some mining communities, and we've also seen the state limit the land rights of other mining communities. Now, the debate taking place is how to strengthen the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act so that it also meets real needs, including true beneficiation, (i.e. doing more of the mineral processing within South Africa). That is seen as value-adding, which could possibly create jobs. But again, there's a big question: Does that really change the structure of capitalist mining? Does that change the weight of the mineral-energy complex in the South African economy?

There's a bigger debate, a debate about which industrialization path South Africa should follow. Now of course, what we of the Democratic Left Front advocate is a link to a low-carbon path of economic development that's socially owned. Now, the kind of debates that the DLF has taken to the workers' committees and to the workers' strikes — what we are saying to them is that yes, the

immediate struggles are crucial, but actually the immediate struggles are explained by bigger forces at play that will in the future be shaped by much larger and more confident fighting workers' forces.

JG: Doesn't the history of the past give some evidence that it's not going to be possible to proceed to a society with economic justice unless there is social ownership of many of the key industries in the economy? Isn't it the case that another path has been followed in post-apartheid South Africa, one where some prominent black anti-apartheid leaders — like Cyril Ramaphosa, who for many years was president of the National Union of Mine Workers, now are themselves wealthy capitalists, and that although they are a relatively small number, their affluence is pointed to as supposed evidence of fundamental change, while in fact the multinational corporations continue to profit, continue to have their way, while the masses continue to suffer exploitation and oppression, as you have so clearly explained? And is anything being offered now — any path other than social ownership? Is what the ANC government is now exploring really just saying, "We will continue down the old path of private ownership? But some of that is failing — some enterprises are unprofitable. We will take over the unprofitable ones and continue to leave the profitable ones in private hands."

MJ: That's the heart of the systemic crisis of the South African economy. Because that economy has been about the production of cheap labor as the base for accumulation. Cheap labor under the conditions of private ownership of the means of production — those two factors combined form the basis for accumulation. Now the Marikana movement shows that the majority of the people do not accept that. Now, can the ANC offer something as an alternative? The ANC is not about to break with the fundamental logic it has followed. It may foster some changes here and there, but the key contradictions remain the same, remain unaltered. This is a crucial issue, because any path to a more just economic system will require significant changes in who owns, who controls the means of production. What's needed is not just public ownership by the state, but under workers' control. That's crucial. But also important is the actual process of the extraction of surplus. Therefore labor conditions and how to organize workers are also crucial issues. Related to that is also the control of the distribution of the surplus. Right now, the measures the ANC government proposes say nothing about the extraction and the distribution of that surplus. Again, this goes back to the kind of systematic change that's required: workers' control goes beyond the logic of the capitalist system.

Even though to me those solutions seem logical from an objective perspective, to actually achieve them is another matter altogether. Because to do this requires a confident working class that fights it out and wins it. We're still some distance away from that. So what we're likely to see are still changes within what we have. We're likely to see the ANC government try to protect capitalist profitability, capitalist ownership whilst maybe introducing some reforms here and there, as I've mentioned earlier. That may offset the crisis for a few years, but it's not going to displace or destroy the crisis.

JG: Speaking of the crisis: Can you talk about what appears to be a major uprising among farmworkers in the Western Cape, and possibly relate their actions to the miners' strikes and demands?

MJ: Farmworkers in South Africa have not ever gone out in the thousands into strike action on a collective basis until what we saw at the beginning of October in a small town in the Karoo Desert called De Doorns. De Doorns, by the way, had broken out in violence in 2008 and in 2011, tensions between workers from Lesotho and Zimbabwe on the one side and South African workers on the other, because the workers from the other countries were being paid less than the South African workers. Now the interesting thing is that in this current strike, we've seen the unity of all the workers. By the way, the same farmers also exploited the differences between African workers and so-called "Colored" (mulatto) workers. So now what we've seen in this strike is working class unity across these divisions.

Now, in terms of systematic explanations, what explains the farmworkers strike? The agricultural sector in the Western Cape emerges from a history of slave ownership and slave-master relationships going back to the 16th and 17th centuries. So that logic pertains to this day. That explains why we have such low levels of organization. Even though the new post-apartheid government introduced minimum wage and some minimal conditions for farmworkers, those did not really mean anything because they were so far away from a living wage. The deregulation and liberalization of agriculture was much more systematic. When the new government deregulated and liberalized agriculture in 1996, it took away a floor of support that was built up by the apartheid regime, a floor of support that was publicly financed and publicly owned and also made a difference in protecting, for example, income of farmers but also in ensuring low prices of food for consumers. This is part of the bigger picture of the post-apartheid government sending signals to global capital that South Africa will play in the new liberal game. Now, deregulation and liberalization exposed South African farmers to competition from well-subsidized farmers in the North. As a result, there have been significant shifts in labor — shifts to seasonal and casual work, thereby undercutting the impact of the new labor relations regime that was supposed to protect farmworkers. So there were two opposing shifts taking place at the same time: one introducing farm worker rights under labor law, but on the other hand seeing systemic shifts in the labor regime under deregulation, liberalization, and globalization of agriculture.

So the heart of the problem goes back to agricultural policy. Yes, the farmworkers demand to double their wages from something like 69 rands (which would be about 8 dollars) a day; now farmworkers are demanding about \$15 or \$16 a day. That is still not anything close to what is required for a living wage, but it is a significant step forward. The government now promises that it will institute public hearings and will solicit inputs, suggestions, and questions from the public. Of course, the public includes very reactionary farmers, who have now armed themselves to the teeth in preparation for a second wave of farm worker strikes. So without a change in agricultural policy, we are not going to see a change in the agricultural sector. This also raises the question of land redistribution, because the farmworkers should be the owners, the controllers, along democratic lines, of these farms. Of course the workers have not put the demand in that way. But many of these workers have been evicted from farms because they had owned a few head of cattle or had planted a few hectares for their own consumption. In addition to the question of the minimum wage there is the question of land redistribution. For the first time this demand is really out there, and it would mean that there would never, ever be a return to the slave-master relationship. That relationship has been broken now by the farmworkers coming out in the way that they have. The strikes may be temporarily defeated, or may not achieve all of their demands, because of factors that for now favor the current system on the land, such as the mobilization and power of the farm owners and the lack of political will on the part of government. The challenge facing us now is how do we build on this militancy of the farmworkers, who have broken out now from a structure of isolation and oppression.

JG: You mentioned that the Democratic Left Front has been active in the workers' committees at Marikana and also among other miners, and that the DLF is calling a conference for early next year. Has the DLF also been involved in support activities for the farmworkers?

MJ: The Democratic Left Front is an active part of the struggle of farmworkers. We have two affiliates who are very crucial in these farmworkers strikes. The first affiliate is a trade union called the Commercial Stevedoring, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU), which has some 8,000 to 10,000 members in the farming districts. The second affiliate is called Mawubuye Land Rights Forum. *Mawubuye* means "let the land return" to its owners. This affiliate organizes farm dwellers and people who have been evicted, landless people in the farming districts. Those two groups have been crucial in driving the farmworkers strikes. Yesterday — or rather, today South

African time — there was a rally of 1,200 farmworkers that was organized by these two groups, with the support of the DLF. Last year [i.e., 2011 — JG] both organizations, together with the DLF, organized a speak-out campaign, the “listen to the people” campaign that reached about 5,000 farmworkers. Farmworkers would come out to speak about their conditions. There were many such local meetings. Out of this campaign and these meetings came the decision on the part of CSAAWU, Mawubuye Land Rights Forum, the DLF, and a few other organizations to establish what is called the Legal Center for the Defense of the Rural Poor. It’s not going to be a legal group that replaces the workers organization, but it is going to use the law to defend workers and farm dwellers. That’s crucial because there’s an axis of social relations in the farming districts that includes the magistrates, the police, and the farmers and other officials in the state system. This axis acts to keep the workers repressed and tied down. The biggest difficulty is still the social conditions in the farming districts, because the farmers have inordinate power and also because of the vast size of the agricultural regions and the lack of money, resources, and organizers to cover such vast distances.

JG: So it seems as though there’s not just enormous unrest, but that there are indeed enormous tasks facing the South African working class and facing organizations like the Democratic Left Front who are attempting to support and help organize and give coherence to these struggles. You’ve already spoken about the DLF’s work with the miners and with the farmworkers. Can you discuss the DLF’s overall approach, and how it hopes to be able to rise to the pressing needs of the overall struggle — in terms of its organizing, its publications, etc.? It seems like there are enormous tasks and with them enormous opportunities.

MJ: The tasks are huge. Our strategy towards the overall situation, and towards the tasks arising from this situation, is to attempt to foster a broad front of fighting forces of workers and unemployed in order to consolidate their anti-capitalist instincts into a consciously anti-capitalist set of organizations and struggles. This front would also then put forward programmatic perspectives on immediate reforms, immediate demands, alongside what we have called an eco-socialist program. To say this in different words: the Democratic Left Front’s strategy is to then build a united front of struggle on an anti-capitalist basis and also to advance alongside it an eco-socialist program, and this includes taking up immediate struggles around immediate demands for immediate reforms. That’s a huge task, given how vast the country is and how vast the working class is, and how powerful the capitalist class is. And of course, there is the institutional dominance of the ANC and the South African Communist Party and COSATU. The still fairly modest work on our part since early last year has begun to give confidence to sections of the working class that have previously been marginalized or misrepresented by the dominant institutions in that society. Now the key challenge that we face is how to quickly step up what we want to do, in order to meet the rising tempo of workers’ struggles that have taken place since the massacre at Marikana. Without a doubt, we can expect to see hundreds more struggles — strikes and other forms of protest — particularly because the trade union leaders of COSATU are still willing to compromise and not push struggle as far as they should.

So there are many questions that the workers are asking through their actions. But of course also what we have seen is a denialist response on the part of government. This adds to the tasks confronting us, because communities and workers must be defended legally and in other ways when the state now calls for direct physical attack. So these tasks are huge. We have a limited activist base, but we have learned quite a lot in a short space of time. But we still have so much more work to do to consolidate the lessons learned and the gains. This will not be easy. The DLF will have a conference in April to discuss how to deepen what we have been doing up until now. We do not want to fool ourselves into thinking that now that we have arrived on the scene, we can rest on our laurels. In fact, the fact that there is now recognition by the conscious and fighting elements of the working class of a left perspective throws even bigger challenges, because this struggle is still in its

very early stages. Now, if we are to sustain and enlarge that confidence that they are developing in a left perspective, then that left formation must be much more sophisticated, much more advanced than we are at this stage.

JG: Do you see the DLF as being the nucleus of a future mass workers party in South Africa? Do you see the need for such a party?

MJ: Without a doubt, there is a need for a mass party, founded on the basis of a socialist program that would be based among workers and the unemployed. However, such a party is not going to come from on high as a result of a declaration from the left. It can only be an outcome of a combination of left work on the ground and also working class struggles of the kind that we are beginning to see, working class struggles that open the door to education, to debates, to consciousness of the need for such a party. Yesterday at the farmworkers' rally some of the speakers called for a party of this kind, and there was a huge response from the crowd of 1,200. But that response alone is not enough to say that we can go ahead and start such a party now. There are debates in the DLF about that. Some of the affiliates of the DLF, for example, the Mpumalanga Party, which is a breakaway from the SACP in Mpumalanga province, as well as a few other groups argue for forming a workers' party now. For me, the debate needs to be approached very much along the lines of what I have said. And also, we must avoid an electoral focus for such a party. The notion of a party in South Africa tends to focus narrowly on the questions of elections of a president and parliament and those kinds of institutions. For me, such a party will be a powerful influence only if it remains rooted in working class struggles. And it must ensure that working class movements remain organized, remain conscious, and are oriented towards an anti-capitalist perspective. That is going to be crucial. I see the DLF indeed as a major component of such a party. Basically speaking, the DLF is the largest left initiative in South Africa since the end of apartheid in 1994, representing a wide range of left and working class forces and groups in struggle.

JG: You've talked about the potential and the possibility in the future of building a mass workers' party. On the other side, do you see a development to the right of the ANC, or inside the ANC (perhaps Julius Malema) that could pose a threat to move to an even more explicitly repressive, right-wing populist approach than the ANC government's current policies? You described how the post-apartheid ANC government moved to deregulation in the farming area, and perhaps a bit later you can also talk about education where they also seem to be following neoliberal policies. Although they are following neoliberal policies, given what's happened at Marikana and more generally throughout the mining sector, and given the intense conflict in the Western Cape's agricultural region, is it going to be necessary to move to a more openly repressive strategy that would retain the veneer of the ANC's image while moving to a more openly repressive, right-populist strategy, such as organizing gangs and probably inciting inter-tribal violence?

MJ: Some of the phrasing used in the Democratic Left Front has referred to the securocratic logic of the ANC (i.e., the increased influence of the repressive state security apparatus in overall state policy) and the state as being authoritarian populist. Zuma, the current president, has consolidated the security cluster — that is the police, the army, and the intelligence organizations. He has now interfered politically in the criminal justice system — in the courts — in ways that attack movements and attack struggles. In addition to that, consistent with Italian populism, the Zuma government has also attacked access to information, the right to know, the right to protest. The Marikana massacre was part of the use of the security cluster to suppress dissent. So the ANC doesn't need a split for that to happen. It's already doing it. It's quite capable of doing it. What's going to reinforce that logic is the fact that there's a huge social crisis that the ANC is not capable of resolving, because of the global crisis, because of the continued capitalist ownership, which continues to produce and reproduce this huge reserve army of labor, and also these underemployed workers. What we have seen elsewhere in post-colonial southern Africa has been this kind of shift to securocratic responses

to the failures of the post-colonial government to address systemic issues that it should have addressed. My prediction going forward is that there will be a continuation of those policies, but that they will be combined with some form of additional social programs — whether it will be social security grants or some other programs. And that will be used as an example of the ANC being able to meet needs and demands. There are not enough dynamics within the ANC to lead to a split. A split would be possible if the Communist Party and COSATU were to the left of the ANC and pushing on key demands. That's not happening, and it's not going to happen.

JG: Maybe we can talk for a few minutes about education. I'm particularly interested in this as an education activist and retired public school teacher. What are conditions like in education, in the schools, in South Africa?

MJ: The main achievement of the post-apartheid education system has been to deracialize education formally and then to equalize the amount of expenditure. Under apartheid, the white child got about 36 times more money from the state for education than did the black child. The post-apartheid government equalized those expenditures. Also, a significant part of the country's GDP is spent on education. However, that has not improved the quality and outcomes of the education system. That is because the education system has been structured on a neoliberal basis. So there has been downsizing introduced, forcing experienced teachers out of the system. And senior managers have been put in charge of the system who have no idea how to develop human resources, on how to educate. For example, in the Eastern Cape, in the 18 years since the end of apartheid, there have been at least 14 heads of the education department. So on average, each head of the education department there has lasted little more than one year. That is indicative of the kind of crisis of leadership that exists in education in South Africa: no meaningful changes develop, because as you know it takes time to introduce meaningful changes in education. Also, the post-apartheid government still has not addressed the working conditions of teachers and the wages of teachers. Teachers' wages are still very low. And then thousands of schools across the country still lack labs, lack libraries, lack basic facilities and infrastructure. The minister of education had to concede this in court last month [November 2012 — JG], where she agreed to put in place a school infrastructure program. So, although South Africa has put money into education, its schools, teachers, and students remain the victims of neoliberal policies that imposed downsizing, large class size, low teacher wages, inadequate resources and facilities, and an overall lack of understanding of the nature of education on the part of senior education management. The other problem is that the teacher unions and the main student organizations have been politicized very narrowly along ANC lines, and to be uncritical supporters of the ANC. They have not been politicized in a class sense. So they do not primarily take up as issues the real educational needs of the working class, especially the need to overall improve the quality of education for children of working class families. This does not happen at all.

JG: Do you think that since the state has been managing and running education as you have described, is this an argument against nationalizing the mines?

MJ: Liberals and the capitalist press have made this argument. What it forgets is that to build a state that works takes time. And particularly if workers' control is introduced, then certainly we are looking at a very different dynamic.

JG: Mazibuko, we've now been speaking for over an hour. I think that this has been very valuable, very informative. Is there anything you would like to add?

MJ: I think two things. One: those in the United States progressive movement need to understand that Mandela's ANC has failed the project it mobilized the world for: to defeat apartheid and bring justice to South Africa. There's no doubt about that. Whatever loyalty people may have to the ANC

and to Mandela should not blind them to that reality. Then that leads me to the second conclusion: that as the result of the failure of Mandela's ANC, very active fighting by the South African working class against these conditions is not going to stop, not even in the face of increased repression. So this throws a huge challenge to people in the United States, who must decide on which side of the struggle they stand. Will they heed Mandela's own call, made at the COSATU September 1994 Congress? Mandela said then, "If the ANC government does to workers what apartheid did to them, then workers must do to the ANC government what they did to apartheid."

JG: Thank you, Mazibuko. Thank you very much.

Footnotes