

# *The Bulletin*

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## EDITORIAL

### TAKING THE NATION TO SCHOOL --- AGAIN

#### THE FAILED EDUCATION SYSTEM (WITH THE FOCUS ON SCHOOLING IN THE EASTERN CAPE)

The education of South Africa's learners is in an ongoing crisis. It was thought that, after 1994, one of the first things that would occur would be the introduction of free, non-racial, non-sexist and compulsory education. Instead we have the continuation of gutter education for the majority of the children in this country. International surveys show that South Africa regularly underperforms. Literacy ratings of Grade 3s and 6s put South Africa way behind countries such as Botswana and Zimbabwe.

The struggle in education has always been linked to the struggle for political and economic emancipation, and democracy. Education was the means of fostering those human values which we hold so dear, and to which the present overpowering, dominant capitalist culture is a serious threat. A look at what is happening in the Eastern Cape will show just how real the threat is.

In a mind-boggling understatement the provincial head of examinations in the Eastern Cape (EC) described the performance of the candidates in the March 2008 supplementary examinations as a "disappointment to the education (EC) department. According to a report in the Herald of 3 July 2008, only 2 151 of the 23 743 candidates who wrote the supplementary examination passed. This includes 67 who wrote to improve their results. The education system is not



only in a crisis, it is in a state of virtual collapse. The EC provincial Education Department spokesperson said, "We must acknowledge that some pupils needed a full year of tuition." They had a full year of tuition in 2007! The 2007 matriculation results were nothing short of calamitous. Roughly 45% of candidates failed, and after a R60 million injection from the national education department, only 9% passed the supplementary examinations. The quality of the results was not given.

Conditions today bear a striking similarity to those that led to the conflagration that became SOWETO '76. The introduction of the language policy of the apartheid government was merely the fuse that lit the powder keg that erupted after 16 June 1976. The conditions in the schools, the squalid conditions in the townships, the housing crisis, the lack of piped water and sanitation, and the general economic conditions in the townships, exacerbated by the fact that bread and paraffin prices had just been increased, were all contributing factors. Soon the whole country was up in flames and for the first time students, parents, workers and revolutionaries united in struggle. THE PREVAILING CONDITIONS ARE NO DIFFERENT TODAY

#### **Outcomes-Based Education (OBE)**

In order for the ANC government to control education they decided to institute a new method of learning and teaching. The reasoning apparently was that any change would be an improvement on apartheid-styled education. Thus, there was the introduction of the disastrous OBE system. The new system carried a few major flaws:

- Teachers were required to draw up their own curricula. They were not equipped to do so, as no teacher had been trained in curriculum crafting.
- Because of the structural adjustment programme, Gear, so eagerly accepted by the ANC, the pupil-teacher ratios became unacceptably high.
- Non-existing resources at schools aggravated the situation. Textbooks and readers became an unimaginable luxury.

The Freedom Charter precept that "the doors of learning shall be open" in reality became "the doors of learning shall be open to all those who can afford to pay". Education, instead of being a right, thus became a commodity. All over South Africa there seem to be serious concerns that pupils are experiencing difficulties in reading. In part, the problem lies with the implementation of OBE, but it is also because the learners are not furnished with any resource material. OBE has failed in most countries. It has also failed in South Africa – as is now admitted by people high up in the National Education Department.

#### **Quintiles**

The quintile system is a means of determining funding for schools which is based on the "Morkel" Education model (a five-point scale) which classified schools

according to the area in which they are situated. This in turn is based on the 2001 census. The poverty levels or affluence of the community is taken into account. The problem with this method is that an amount of money is at first allocated to a province, and then the quintile of a school determined. So it is possible that a school in a township could easily find itself being classified in quintile 5 (and receiving the smallest allocation) alongside a school of the very affluent because it is in an urban area. The monetary allocation of the township school was then no different from that of the ex-Model C schools. (The *Sunday Times* of 3 August 2008 emphasises this point.) This leads to two systems of education operating in the country: one system for the poor in the townships, and another for those who can afford to pay. The township schools are under-resourced, lack laboratories, libraries, sports fields, halls, computers, etc, whilst the ex-Model C schools can employ additional teachers to lower the pupil-teacher ratio as well as purchase equipment not supplied by the education department.

### The Introduction of No-Fee schooling

With the introduction of no-fee schooling, a not too very subtle attempt was made to hoodwink the oppressed into thinking that it was Free Schooling. Depending on the area in which the school is situated, some schools may even be worse off than before the introduction of no-fee schooling. Parents and teachers will then still have to raise funds as the monetary allocation to these schools is inadequate. Imagine a school being allocated R700 (and it is not that at present) per learner per year. It has to purchase text books, stationery and cleaning material, pay rates and electricity and assume responsibility for the maintenance of the school as well as normal running costs for telephones, duplicating, etc. In the Eastern Cape only schools in Quintiles 1 and 2 are classified as no-fee schools.

### Social issues affecting learners

The ability of learners in the learning process is impacted upon by a number of social issues. These 'distraction factors' have a negative impact on the performance of learners. We will deal with only a few of the distraction factors, viz poverty, the high mortality rate of learners, the poor learning environment at schools, and the inadequate infrastructure of schools.

### Poverty and education

Of the ten (10) worst areas in which to be a child (*Sunday Times*, 2 March 2008) nine (9) were found to be in the Eastern Cape. It is thus no coincidence that the EC is amongst the worst performing provinces when end-of-year matric results are announced.

The South African government's Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) policy is a self-imposed Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) meant to appease imperialism. It incorporates neo-liberal "economic fundamentals" that are at the root of the problem. An imperative of SAPs is that only a limited amount of money should be spent on education (as also health and social welfare).

When the districts in the Eastern Cape were ranked using a poverty index comprising factors such as:

- high unemployment,
- a large number of dependants,
- low levels of literacy,
- small proportions of the population with tertiary education, and
- low levels of basic household services (such as electricity and piped water)

The most disadvantaged education districts were Lusikisiki, followed closely by Dutywa and Mbizana. Other districts with high relative deprivation index scores were Mt Fletcher, Libode and Maluti, all of which have high proportions of seven to eighteen-year-olds in relation to their total populations, and hence many dependants. According to the *Sunday Times* of 2 March 2008 the most deprived municipalities are Engcobo, Insika Yethu, Port St. John's Ntabankulu, Mbhashe, Msinga (KZN), Emalahleni, Mbizana, Nyandeni, Qaukeni (all in the former Transkei – now part of EC – except for Msinga). It is significant that all the areas mentioned are in the former homelands. The following statistics emerged as a result of this survey:

- Over 50% live in households where nobody is employed.
- 77% do not have access to proper toilet facilities, electricity and piped water.
- 81% experience income and material deprivation, such as having no access to a fridge.
- 24% are in the wrong grade for their age and 6% are not in school.
- 25% live without both parents or live in child-headed households.

### The Mortality Rate of Learners

In a previous bulletin the crisis in the Health Sector was highlighted. This included the infant mortality rate at hospitals in the EC. Suffice, here, to note the following statistics that impact on education.

Of the learners at school in the EC from 2002 – 2006 a total of 10 137 deaths occurred between 2002 and 2006.

- 2 466 suffered accidental deaths;
- 6 747 died of illness;
- 481 committed suicide and
- 443 died as a result of violence.

### The Learning Environment of Learners

The performance of educators and learners is affected by the conditions obtaining at schools: the classroom provision, the condition of the classrooms, the supply of services such as electricity, water, telephones, computers, etc. An Eastern Cape School and Learner quantitative study revealed the following:

- **Schools without an electricity supply:**



- Mbizana – 107 schools;
- Lusikisiki – 176 schools;
- Mt. Frere – 117 schools;
- Qumbu – 103 schools;
- Mt Fletcher – 86 schools;
- Mzimkhulu – 67 schools. (Only the worst areas are mentioned.)
- **Drinking water supply:**
- 1 013 schools without drinking water.
- **Sanitation:**
- schools without any sanitation at all – 347;
- flush connection to main sewer – 16% of all schools;
- flush to septic tanks – 5% of all schools;
- ventilated pit system – 20% of schools;
- pit latrines – 49%;
- bucket system – 1% of all schools.

#### **School Infrastructure:**

Forty-eight per cent of all schools in the province are in dire need of structural attention. A number of classrooms are not fit for learning and teaching and have been condemned by the department themselves as well as the Health Department and structural engineers. This situation has virtually remained unchanged over a number of years. Yet the Eastern Cape Education Department sent R300 million back to the national treasury in 2008.

#### **Grade 12 performance:**

**Theoretically, in an education system with no repetition, no drop-outs and perfect flow-through, it would take learners 12 years to progress from Grade 1 to Grade 12. Using available data and applying accepted statistical methodology, the following picture emerged of the actual number of years, on average, that it had taken the Eastern Cape learners (in Grade 12 in the years indicated) to progress from Grades 1 to 12:**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Learner yrs	24.9	28.7	29.4	29.7	27.8	27.6	27.4

If all the learners who reached Grade 12 in the perfect average number of years then also passed at the first attempt then it would have taken 12 learner years of effort to produce a matriculation pass. Here are the actual number of years (on average) that the learners of the Eastern Cape took to achieve a matriculation pass in the years indicated: (The details on which the calculations are based are given.)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Gr.12 enrolment	85 895	73 027	70 143	68 107	66 622	75 030	75 041
No. of Passes	37 717	28 939	33 286	37 943	33 553	38 796	41 143
Pass Rate	44%	40%	47%	56%	50%	52%	55%
Learner yrs to produce a matric pass	57	72	62	53	55	53	50

A fleeting examination of the above tells a vivid story of the failure of the education system. THIS CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE. It cannot take 27, 4 learner years to produce a grade 12 learner and a further 23 learner years to produce a matric pass! And then what is the worth of that certificate!

#### **Education still racist**

The Education Department continues with its racist policies. The Educational Management Information System (EMIS) – the annual survey from which the Education Department obtains information for future planning as well as possible intervention – is racist in content. What relevance has colour or “race” discrimination in determining the number of learners doing a specific subject/learning area? How does it benefit learners to be classified according to their “population group” when completing schedules? Are we still operating on the population group classification of the apartheid government? How do teachers determine the population group of Grade 1 learners in any case? What damage does this classification do to the young mind? What damage does it do to the self-esteem of the learner? Are the powers that be saying that “race” classification was in fact correct? Educational Development Officers (EDOs)/Circuit Managers regularly mention the “demographics” of a particular governing council. On several occasions elections for governing councils had to be repeated as the “demographics” of the school population had “not been taken into account”! A favourite tactic is for EDOs to mention informally that a school subscribes to the transformation policies when one or two “black” or “coloured” educators are members of a staff at an ex-model C school. Is this being done to maintain the hegemony of the ANC support base?

#### **What is to be done? Education Rights Action (ERA) Group**

The children of the ruling elite are in most (if not all) cases at Independent/Private or ex-Model C schools. They (the ruling elite) do not care two hoots about the education of the oppressed. They do not care whether the children of the poor have to school in hovels, or in mud structures, or prefabricated buildings without the barest of facilities and without any text books and at times unqualified (or under-qualified) teachers. We certainly cannot be complicit in condemning the children of our country to the gutter education being dished up by the ruling elite.

The New Unity Movement has launched the Education Rights Action (ERA) Campaign which demands a complete transformation of the education system. In the interests of this generation of school children it is imperative that we join forces as in the eighties: the mosques, the churches, civil society, NUPSAW Educator Sector and



other educator unions, non-education trade unions, all organisations of the people and political organisations on the left such as the organisations in the Radical Left Network (RLN). **We must stridently reiterate the demand for free, quality education for all in a non-racial, non-sexist, non-exploitative truly democratic society.**

## THE PLATINUM BELT: LIMPOPO AND NORTH WEST

**The kaleidoscope of events currently unfolding in these provinces concerning platinum mining would qualify to make a horror movie, were it purely a matter of the imagination. Something sinister is happening in this part of the country.**

The following are some of the issues in this frightening story that need to be highlighted:

- The company called Genorah Pty Ltd has not consulted the residents of the Ga-Ratau area on the matter of prospecting for platinum on their land. This company is led by one Sharif Pandor, husband of the Minister of Education, and Maredi Mphahlele. Both these gentlemen come from distinguished families and they should know better what not to do.
- Genorah is clearly attempting to force the issue of making its land grab, banking on the fig leaf that a tribal chief, in the manner that such people have always made themselves guilty of perfidy in the past, has authorised them to seize the land of the people. Nothing in the relevant legislation gives any chief such authority. As in earlier times, chiefs have often been bribed and corrupted to commit dastardly deeds.
- When the people offered resistance to the commission of a series of illegal acts by Genorah, this company went ahead to invade the village of Ga-Ratau with a batch of some 30 uniformed mercenaries from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). If the unhappy history of the Congo has not taught the people of that country anything about the evil ways of mercenary adventurers, it would seem to be different in our country. The tenets expressed in the Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act of 1998 clarify how the South African government wants to express its solidarity with other African lands by outlawing mercenary actions elsewhere on the continent originating from South Africa. Such solidarity is doubly understandable in the context of the African Union. Indeed, although there has been a blind spot in relation to Iraq, the prompt action when mercenaries threatened to invade Equatorial Guinea is a practical application of this position. If these tenets hold good for South Africa, they certainly should bind every other African country in respect of the rights of South African citizens.
- There is yet another even more worrisome prospect in these occurrences. We know already that in such countries as the Philippines and Colombia rich mining enclaves have been militarised by the private companies operating in them. Are we headed down that same path? Will we soon see mercenaries and warlords ruling the roost in the mineral-rich Bushveld? Are we to expect that the sexual harassment, beating and shooting of community members on platinum-rich lands

will become the norm? Are these signs of things to come – that certain police commissioners like Chuene appear to be operating under the command of mercenary bosses, and that police officers from further afield can be kicked, beaten and dismissed at will by mercenaries? What lawlessness! And in support of what greed?

- This is not merely a matter of the husband of a South African Minister and his company having spiralled out of control. It is worse than this. The South African government, in the form of the Department of Minerals and Energy (DME), is complicit in these illegal activities. It would appear that the DME has awarded prospecting rights to the company for the whole farm of Ga-Ratau, including the village, in violation of Section 104 of the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act, which precludes the awarding of licences in this fashion in residential areas. The company is drilling inside the village and, to add insult to injury, the mercenary camp has also been illegally imposed on the village.
- The community wishes to obtain legal remedy in this matter, but the DME is refusing to provide the information required in this regard. The regional manager has promised to furnish confirmation of the prospecting rights, but no documents are forthcoming. There are claims of consultation but the regional manager is unable to make available the report of such consultation.
- In short, the company is prospecting illegally in the village and mercenaries are physically preventing the community from defending itself. The DME is refusing to apply the law and also refusing to provide information, preventing the community from asserting its legal rights. The way is being paved for the next step of forcibly removing the community to make way for the mining of resources identified in the prospecting exercise, as we have been witnessing since 1994 in many other communities in the province. This outrageous, blatantly exploitative and increasingly brutal activity has to stop!

If justice and the democratic rights of the community of Ga-Ratau are to prevail in this matter the only remedy is the following:

- The Congolese mercenaries must be expelled from the territory of the SA Republic forthwith.
- The Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be advised of the menace posed against the democratic rights of our citizens by motley groups of ex-combatants who come from a wicked history in the Congo basin.
- The DME must be made to desist from its blatant and total support of the company at the expense of the community.
- A regime of proper democratic rule guided by consultation, negotiations and the principles of justice and equity must be established in the Bushveld.

At the time of colonial conquest in the 1880s sections of South Africa's people were kicked out of the way by both Boer and Briton on the Gold Reef. Similarly apartheid governments never tired of declaring "White Spots" in any area on the Bushveld where other mineral deposits had been found. Should the present political regime be



allowed to sit in supervision over a similar process on the platinum reef today? The people of Limpopo and the North West are going through an agony the likes of which have always been recorded in any situation where corporate power has not been limited by democratic imperatives. It is time that this kind of practice should be forced to stop before it is too late!

## AFRICA, THE CONTINENT OF THE DAMNED

The unspeakable horror that is Africa today is a matter for the most serious concern. The daily lives of close to a billion people have been made into an unimaginably intense and brutal, tooth-and-nail struggle for survival. And the depths of bitter conflict that have come about are the result of centuries of unscrupulous plunder by the supposedly advanced and civilised nations, the so-called First World countries.

### Looting the continent

Patrick Bond's book *Looting Africa* gives an excellent account of the vast extent to which the continent has been plundered. Africa, he says, has the "legacy of a continent looted: trade by force dating back centuries; slavery that uprooted and dispossessed around 12 million Africans; land grabs; vicious taxation schemes; precious metals spirited away; the appropriation of antiquities to the British Museum and other trophy rooms; the nineteenth-century emergence of racist ideologies to justify colonialism; the 1884-5 carve-up of Africa, in a Berlin negotiating room, into dysfunctional territories; the construction of settler-colonial and extractive-colonial systems; Cold War battlegrounds ... filled with millions of corpses; other wars catalysed by mineral searches..."<sup>1</sup>

Bond is convinced that conditions are not improving. "Today, Africa is still getting progressively poorer, with per capita incomes in many countries below those of the 1950s-60s era of independence."<sup>2</sup>

### Africa the most violent continent

At the European Union-Africa Summit in Lisbon in January a different point of view was expressed. "Africa's political and economic balance sheet continues to move into the black". (Mail & Guardian, December 21 to January 3 2008) What was this view based on? Well, on comparison; on the degree of cruelty having declined a little. "When leaders of the two continents last met in Cairo seven years ago, there were no fewer than 14 conflicts raging on African soil – making up 50% of the violent deaths on the planet. These chilling statistics have more than halved. Nevertheless, Africa remains the most violent continent on Earth."

Economic statistics – the favourite recourse of the professional deceiver – were also quoted as evidence of better conditions arising. The summit heard that "foreign investment soared from \$200-million in the eighties to \$20-billion last year". Also, "the continent's GDP (growth) was less than 1% between 1995 and 2000. In the first

<sup>1</sup> Patrick Bond, *Looting Africa*, p 2

<sup>2</sup> Same

five years of this century it has increased to 5,5% and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates it will reach 6,8% this year".

### Our comment is as follows:

- As regards the apparent decline in the incidence of violence: The number of violent deaths and the number of conflicts on the African continent ebb and flow from year to year but the overall figures remain horrendously, unacceptably high. Peaks of human suffering will inevitably hit the headlines again soon.
- In regard to increasing investment: It is now a fact, borne out by theory and overwhelming factual evidence, that capitalist investment and capitalist growth do not alleviate the level of poverty in the countries of investment. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is not a reliable measure of the well-being of the population at large.
- It is also abundantly recorded and proved that investment in Africa has been about the looting of the human, mineral and agricultural resources of the continent. Investors are not benevolent souls; they are unrelenting self-seeking profit-hunters. The inevitable result of their involvement is precisely what we see today: poverty and misery and conflict. The unbearable stress of adverse living conditions is what made – and continues to make – Africa the most violent continent.
- In regard to the falsely optimistic analysis expressed at the European Union-Africa summit: We fully expect the leaders of the European Union and the collaborationist leaders of Africa to attempt to cover up the horrific reality that their policies continue to impose on the people of Africa.

### The full picture

The violence in Africa – both historical and ongoing – plumbs the worst depths of barbarism. We are justly appalled by the blood-letting that occurred in particularly horrifying periods of history: the holocaust; the Inquisition; the Stalinist purges; etc. But what we must realise is that we are now living through one of the worst of such occurrences. It is happening just beyond our borders. The scale and intensity are among the worst experienced by the human race.<sup>3</sup>

Then, as if it were not cruelty enough, the vicious bloodletting unleashes a multitude of consequential suffering, which further torments additional millions who were fortunate (unfortunate?) to survive. These include social displacement (millions turned into refugees), loss of livelihood, loss of food security, all forms of violent abuse, including rape and assault. Most of these hardships become the lot of women and children.

<sup>3</sup> The atrocities are reminiscent of the atrocities committed against the Chinese by Japanese troops under Chiang Kai Shek in the 1940s, in which 20 million Chinese lost their lives; of the vicious assault on the people of Vietnam in which millions were murdered by American soldiers in the 60s and 70s; of the near extermination of native Americans by the conquistadors in the 15-16<sup>th</sup> centuries.



### Another world

A very insightful examination of the brutal world of African reality is given in the article by Séverine Autesserre "D. R. Congo: Explaining Peace-building Failures, 2003-2006" (*Review of African Political Economy*, no. 113, pp 423-441). We are including insights from this article because it takes one to the heart of the African experience. It centres on the DR Congo, but we are sure that the grim details hold true for most of the countries of Africa.

The writer based his conclusions on "field observations" in Kinshasa and the provinces of Katanga and the Kivus (ie North and South Kivu, areas in the East of the DRC). He also analysed relevant documents and interviewed more than 280 Congolese politicians, military officers and diplomats as well as victims of violence, staff of international organisations and foreign observers – in the Congo, France, Belgium, New York and Washington, DC. He produces a thorough exposition of what it is like to live in the wasteland areas inhabited by the bulk of Africa's people. We use the word "wasteland" very deliberately, because it should be obvious to us all that Africa consists of two worlds. One is the bright, modern, affluent cities inhabited mainly by the ruling elites and the representatives of the neo-liberal corporatocracy. The other is the dangerous, murky, squalid, run-down world of the poor.

### Life in the dark holes of Africa

One of the first things that struck Autesserre was the huge amount of "collateral damage" suffered by the Congolese population. As we read his investigations we become aware of the fact that the details that make up the media reports, grim as they are, are only the tip of the iceberg. He writes:

"A year after the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo officially ended on 30 June 2003, more than one thousand civilians continued to die every day. Most of the deaths were caused by disease and malnutrition and could have been prevented if outbursts of violence had not impeded access to humanitarian aid."

The continuing hostility also led to 30-35 000 people being displaced in the course of the month. And the UN office continued to receive "reports of massacres, cannibalism, rapes, looting, extortion and other serious violations of human rights being committed by various armed groups". We mention the collateral damage in order to point out that the total suffering of the people of Congo (or Sudan, or Chad, or Rwanda, or Sierra Leone, or Kenya, etc) is much greater than the toll of deaths and serious injuries. It is continuous and comprehensive. It infects the daily "lives" of the people in every way. It is just the form and the level of suffering that varies.

### Attempted cover-ups occur all the time

The crime against the people of Africa is so horrific that no compassionate person should be able to ignore it or be at ease while it continues. But what we find instead is that the world's policy-makers and governments and a servile media overlook, excuse, explain away and even defend it. It is our compulsory duty to expose these instances of deliberate deception. Later we'll ask why there is this cover-up.

The attempts to explain away the horror include the following:

### (a) African countries fail because they are not democratic

This is the analysis that is most frequently found in the media. It is almost a "given" that Mugabe will feature as the villain in any article on Zimbabwe. The same applies to Kibaki in Kenya, as applied to Idi Amin in Uganda, Charles Taylor in Liberia; etc. It is as if the countries would be models of prosperity and good human relations if these gentlemen had not intervened.

**We say: It is not about the head of state. It is about the history of exploitation and oppression. We do not apologise for tyrants but they are not the cause, just as they cannot be the solution.**

Eustace Davie's article titled "Colonialism's unspoken, awful legacy" (*Cape Argus*, 25 January 2008) is a typical example of this attempted over-up. Davie (a director of the Free Market Foundation) claims that autocratic governance is the reason for the problem and that this is the real legacy of colonialism that has blighted the continent. You can see where it is heading: a free-marketer is claiming that the past and present impoverishment of Africa is **not the outcome of capitalist exploitation**.

"The pernicious legacy the colonialists left behind was unrestrained centralised power; the kind of power they believed was needed 'to keep the natives in line'. Handing over the dominant role and the guns to a majority – in an unnaturally created patchwork of disparate peoples designated as a country – was bound to have tragic consequences."

If, before withdrawing, the colonial powers in Africa had attempted to restore some semblance of the situation that had existed when they arrived on the continent (traditional African decision-making by consensus), they could have avoided leaving behind a ticking time bomb, destined to lead to the deaths of millions of people."

These theories are so contorted that one can think of them only as the perceptions of a kind of "flat earth society". There is no mention at the entire real legacy of the colonialists: the underdevelopment, the poverty, the suffering of millions. Why not? Is it because, in the opinion of the Free Market Foundation, capitalist investors can do no harm?

### (b) Tribalism is used by dictators to divide and rule

Charlene Smith's article (*Cape Argus*, January 27 2008) begins as follows: "Tribalism is the word that must now be spoken. It is being used across Africa to gain political power, to pillage wealth and ultimately results in genocide. Tribalism in the 21st century is about creating a lever for political advantage. It pays scant respect to historical or cultural fact and propagates myth to divide and subjugate."

Now this analysis is dangerous in that it contains much that is fact but it uses the factual concepts in a subtly different way. Her overall thesis is that the violence in Africa is driven by the greed of chiefs, headmen, warlords, dictators, parliaments and other entities of authority and power. And the instrument of control that they use in order to mobilise support and to split the opposition is tribal affiliations. The problem is that she sees no difference between greed (of the elite, a minority) and the struggle for survival of the vast majority. The reality is different.



Africa is one of the most hostile environments in the world. Job opportunities are extremely scarce. Food supplies are hugely inadequate to feed the populations. Housing, health care, and other basic services are minimal. Surviving in this environment can be achieved only by forming alliances and by resorting to brutal methods.

Sure, the greed of ruling elites plays a role. In looking after their selfish interests they deny their people democracy, access to the scarce resources, any possibility of making progress. But they did not and do not create the human disaster in their countries. Their role is mainly one of making the country and its inhabitants available for exploitation by capitalist corporations. This earns them their pay-off.

### **Colonial, neo-colonial and neo-liberal plunder**

This brings us to an important understanding, which both of the analysts above omitted to mention. It involves the source, the fons et origo, of the catastrophic problems of Africa. This awareness is essential if we are to have any hope of solving those problems.

The legacies of colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa are severe poverty and a massive shortage of basic necessities. And these legacies are currently being intensified by the latest round of impoverishment called neo-liberalism.

Right now, as we read this, scores of neo-liberal militias and armies, led by warlords and generals, are at work in Africa. They are well-dressed and respectable-looking; they are often deeply religious; they are well-educated and cultured. They are mainly economists, financiers, mining and oil engineers, etc. They appear to be innocuous, but their hands drip with the blood of millions.

They belong to the most hostile and predatorial tribe that the history of mankind has thus far witnessed: the capitalist-imperialist. This animal is driven by one single-minded quest: the accumulation of profit and more and more capital. They have no concern for the grim fate of the people of Africa.

These waves of hostile plunderers continue to remove the means for survival that rightly belong to the inhabitants of Africa. In doing so they have imposed on hundreds of millions of people a harsh daily struggle to survive.

### **Food insecurity**

Siphamandla Zondi (*Africa Insight*, Vol. 37 (2) June 2007: The Enduring Food Crisis in Africa and the State of Responses) sums up what has happened to African agriculture: "Colonial rule provided conditions for penetration of pre-colonial agriculture by colonial and capitalist political economy with devastating impact on food production for subsistence and limited trade. There is adequate literature to demonstrate that under colonial rule indigenous and largely rural economies were decimated by the demands of the labour-hungry modern capitalist economy that was largely urban in its outlook.

"In agriculture, the enduring damage will result from the discouragement of a variety of indigenous food crops in favour of a few cash crops for lucrative export trade."

The end result of colonial intervention in agriculture is a bitter fruit.

"The food crisis has been most acute and continues to be so in the Horn of Africa. ... In the reporting year (2007) the crisis has stretched down to eastern Africa. Decades of food shortfalls, malnutrition, morbidity and endemic destitution have left part of the Horn region perpetually in a humanitarian crisis. Millions are facing severe starvation in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti, as well as in parts of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. According to recent estimates, severe food shortage is affecting about 3 million people in Kenya, 1.4 million in Somalia, 1.5 million in Ethiopia and about 70 000 in Djibouti, 1.5 million in war-ravaged Eritrea and in Tanzania 3.7 million people. At least 1, 5 million children in the Horn region are living on one meal a day. The attendant problem of measles, which preys on children's bodies whose immune system is weakened by malnutrition and under-nutrition, is on the rise, putting millions of children at risk of death." (p 263) Suffice it to say that the tragic food situation is endemic to Africa.

### **Another source of conflict**

We have already shown how different aspects of African society impact on others. Here is another example. "Nomadic communities travelling hundreds of kilometres across the region in search of green pastures and water are already triggering internecine violence in areas such as northern Kenya, southern Sudan, and on the eastern border of Ethiopia and Somalia."

In similar vein: "(In West Africa) like in eastern Africa, the drought has obviously increased pressure on land use and ownership and triggered violent conflict." (p 264) And earlier: "The abundance of weapons in this fragile region is a major cause factor in these resource conflicts." (p 263)

How is it that weapons are available in areas where so many millions are living well below the breadline? Simple answer: Weapons are the means of survival. Desperate people will resort to force. Unscrupulous arms dealers prey even on people in these depths of despair.

### **No peace in an abnormal society**

Obviously the "peace" agreements brokered by international agencies have not solved basic problems and that is why they do not last. "Local conflicts over land, political power and ethnic antagonism increasingly became self-sustaining." This statement early in the article (by Autesserre) leads us in the direction of a real understanding of the Congo of the 21st Century. The following quotations provide the fuller picture:

- "Economic motivations also seemed largely to account for Rwanda's interest in the eastern Congo" – and therefore for Congo's need to oppose their presence (our addition). Rwandan companies were obviously enriching themselves with Congolese mineral resources.
- "UN and non-governmental organisations noted the discrepancies between the very limited mining resources of Uganda and Rwanda and their massive exports of cassiterite, coltan, tin and gold."
- "The conditions of impunity and the lack of legitimate state authority in the east facilitated the illegal exploitation of resources. During the transition (ie from



military engagement to civil government in the DRC – our insert), the Congolese armed forces, the Rwandan rebel militias (FDLR), the Congolese local self-defence militias (called Mai-Mai), armed forces of the former rebel movement RCD-G, as well as pro-Ugandan, pro-Rwandan, and criminal groups remained involved in illegal mining. Large quantities of cassiterite, coltan, gold, diamonds and palm nut oil crossed the borders every day and evaded the tax authorities.” (The contest for control of mineral extraction is clearly a major cause of conflict.)

- “The situation generated local violence in three different ways. First, national actors competed among themselves as well as with local and foreign armed gangs for the control of mining sites. This led to frequent fighting. Second, illicit exploitation of resources enabled all armed groups to finance their war efforts. Third, control of mining sites by national or local armed groups caused massive violence against the local population: ‘colossal’ abuses against non-combatants, including ‘killing, rape, torture, arbitrary arrests, intimidation, mutilation, and the destruction or pillage of private property’. These abuses were ‘integrally’ linked to natural resources.” (Livelihood and survival depend on the exploitation of resources.)
- “Officials in Kinshasa embezzled funds earmarked for the army integration and for the soldiers’ pay. As a result the soldiers’ commanders did not have the resources to remunerate their troops adequately or provide them with basic supplies and therefore encouraged them to make a living off the local population. Thus all soldiers (belonging to all components) continued to prey on the local population throughout the transition. This meant extorting the local residents, stealing all kinds of valuables in urban areas (money, mobile phones) and harvests or cattle in rural areas.” (Basic economic essentials drive political developments.)
- “In most cases, political tensions interfaced with economically motivated hostilities. Political power often guarantees access to land and economic resources while access to wealth means, in turn, the availability of resources to buy arms and reward troops and to secure political power.” (The serious inadequacy of the Congo, and the eastern Congo in particular, the inability to support human habitation is clearly the fundamental cause of the problem.)
- “Finally, the need to find the means of survival, and the lack of social opportunities, which had pushed many civilians to enrol in militias during the war (Van Acker & Vlassenroot, 2000), remained salient during the transition. Before the war, most of the Congolese population had to face massive poverty and unemployment. In the east, this situation deteriorated further during the war. Children and teenagers who had grown up during the war had not received proper schooling and thus were not well prepared for pursuing peaceful and productive activities. Land remained scarce, so young people could not easily acquire fields for farming, and the economic infrastructure was non-existent. Outside intervention in the east continued to focus on humanitarian issues and very few development projects were funded in the eastern provinces. In this context, being part of a militia remained the most profitable option.” (Maybe “profitable” is the wrong word, though. Being part of a militia was probably a “survival” option.)

### South Africa in Africa – economic hegemon and neo-colonialist

It is abundantly clear that the continent of Africa is in the throes of a huge humanitarian disaster. What is even more distressing is the extent to which South Africa – corporations and government – is a participant in and beneficiary of that mountain of suffering.

The following passage from *The Scramble for Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Cape Town, 2006, Stephan, Power, Herve and Fonseca, page 300) sums up the destructive nature of South Africa’s economic intervention in Africa:

“On the other hand, South Africa is often accused of economic neo-colonialism. A growing perception that South African companies act in a high-handed manner and prey on weaker domestic industries has resulted in something of a backlash in SADC and the rest of Africa. For example, the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) study also found that South African investments have limited links with local businesses because of their capital-intensive nature and an unwillingness to part with specialised knowledge. Due to high costs, the absence of constant supplies and low volumes, South African firms continue to rely heavily on imports from South Africa, maintaining the significant trade surplus that South Africa enjoys with most African countries. Local procurement by South African firms is marginal, often less than 10 per cent of total sourcing, and the expansion of South African retail groups into the rest of Africa has worsened this problem, with many countries complaining that their markets are being used to dump South African goods. Lastly, South African firms, with rare exceptions, are clearly dominating and crowding out local firms. Although this in itself is no different from the behaviour of other foreign investors, the sheer volume of South African companies moving into the rest of Africa is causing resentment.”

The result of South African foreign direct investment (the magical FDI that the capitalist spin doctors proclaim as the panacea for all poor countries) in the SADC region is clearly visible in the GDP figures for the region. Whereas, in 2004, South Africa had an annual per capita GDP of \$4 733 for its 45 million people, the rest of the region (Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe), a total population of 155 million, had an annual per capita GDP of \$523. (Figures obtained from *The Scramble ...*, p 299)

To understand what these GDP figures mean one must bear in mind how very unequal the distribution of GDP is both in South Africa and the rest of the SADC countries. And if there is so much poverty in SA with a per capita income of \$4 733, how widespread and how intense is the poverty in countries that have a per capita income of \$523!

The South African government itself is just as guilty of complicity in this huge crime against the people of Africa as its corporations. A number of writers have demonstrated clearly the nature of the state’s involvement. Shawn Hattingh (in “South Africa in Africa: Another Scramble for Africa”, an ILRIG (International Labour Resource and Information Group) occasional paper, January 2007) says: In fact, the major winners of the political settlement and transition to democracy in 1994



was South African capital, as the post-apartheid government has served their interests well."

In *Looting Africa* Patrick Bond devotes a chapter ("Militarism and Looming Subimperialism in Africa") to revealing the Washington, London, Pretoria link that serves to make the riches of Africa available for looting by the major powers, as well as South Africa itself. He gives the example of the South African cabinet making a "payment to the World Bank of R83 million for replenishment of its African loan fund, to 'benefit our private sector, which would be eligible to bid for contracts financed from these resources'. Within eighteen months, Mbeki forged what Pretoria claimed was a \$10 billion deal with Kabila for trade and investment, and gained access to \$4 billion worth of World Bank tenders for South African companies." Bond mentions many examples of imperialistic and militaristic initiatives by the South African State.

### What can we do about the problems of Africa?

First-World interventions in Africa, during the periods of slave-hunting invasions, set in motion the distortions that produced the violent continent of today. But under the systems of neo-colonialism and, currently, neo-liberalism, the vicious programme of plunder has continued. It is not an exaggeration to say that almost every First-World country has African blood on its hands. The wealth and supremacy of Europe and North America were built on the heavy exploitation of countries which, as a result, are today in the mess that they are in. Many in the media write superficially about the horror of Africa. Few deal with it honestly. Pro-capitalist writers view the world with deficient vision.

It is, therefore, a small but important task for us to continue to expose the realities. And especially the overarching truth that Africa will not begin its emergence from the morass of poverty and misery until the looting stops.

## A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE FRANK FIFE

### More than just a foot-soldier

When, in some remote future day, the full history of the 20th and 21st Centuries will have been written by humanitarian historians, who value and respect the right of all human beings to dignity and happiness, Frank will surely be counted among those who threw his weight behind the cause of justice. If there is a list of the names of all those who stood up and were counted, when the fate of our world hung precariously in the balance, Frank's will be among them. This is the true nature and the true worth of the humble man, the strong man, to whom we say farewell today.

The story of a man is so often the story of his parents. Frank's case was typical. His mother's family, the Wentzels, was certainly a strong moulding influence on the young boy. The Wentzels, who ran a plumbing business at Number 44, Main Road, Claremont, were a community-minded family. They were active in the African Political Organisation (APO) which, under the presidency of Abdullah Abdurahman, became an important political organisation fighting for education and the franchise.

Although it had not yet developed a fully non-racial philosophy, its mission statement of 1902 nevertheless included the following: (1) To promote unity between the coloured races and (2) To obtain better and higher education for our children. (NB: The word "our" did not mean "coloured" only since the mission statement does not hesitate to use this word in points (3), (4) and (5) where "coloured" preferences are in fact intended.)

The APO had at least two interventions to promote the economic well-being of its communities. The APO Building Society enabled its members to receive very low-rate loans with which to buy or build houses. There was also for a time a groceries cooperative, which supplied low-cost groceries.

The Wentzels and other members of the APO campaigned for a secondary school in the Claremont area and this led to the establishment of Livingstone High School in 1926. The Wentzel ladies were prominent in this campaign. They were energetic, well educated, assertive persons with strong political views. One of them had become Mrs John Fife, Frank's mother, and served on the Livingstone school committee. Under the principalship of EC Roberts, an energetic, fearless and determined man, the school was developed into an institution that produced an international level of education. This was the school that Frank joined in the late 1930s.

By this time progressive political influences had also made their appearance at the school. Frank passed through the classes of teachers like Frank Grammer and Alie Fataar (already top officials of the Teachers' League of South Africa and prominent members of the New Era Fellowship) and Tippiie Davids (of the Trotskyist Fourth International). Outside the school also things were happening. A protest march had been organised by Cissie Gool against provincial council attempts at segregation. Open-air political meetings protesting against the formation of the Coloured Advisory Council (CAC) were held on a little field with towering trees where Vineyard Road joined Protea Road in Claremont, a stone's throw from the Fifes' home in Frederick Road. 500 000 pamphlets were handed out in this campaign, which led later to the formation of the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (anti-CAD) and the Non European Unity Movement (NEUM). Then the treatment of Jewish and Slav peoples in Europe in the run-up to the Second World War brought into sharp perspective the oppressive treatment of people of colour in South Africa. All this and much more was Frank's milieu and he understood thoroughly and absorbed fully.

He left school, did his plumbing apprenticeship and plunged into active, committed involvement in the work of the NEUM, later the New Unity Movement (NUM). Although he was more than competent to occupy official positions in the organisation, it was Frank's choice to be a recruiter and a foot soldier.

Frank was legendary for his physical courage. He needed it when corrupt and reactionary officials of the Furniture Workers' Union engaged members of gangs to try to intimidate NUM members. This was particularly so at a pivotal meeting in the



Woodstock Town Hall when these leaders were exposed and removed from office. Frank could also be relied on when the Unity Movement needed to recruit in new, potentially hostile areas.

When RO Dudley was asked what he thought was the feature that most distinguished Frank's contribution, he said without hesitation: "Wherever there was a development in the organisations of the communities, if it fitted within the framework of progressive political developments that were taking place, you would find him actively assisting people in the development of these things. He was always active in getting people to attend meetings." Spurred on by the work of Frank and others like him the Unity Movement grew rapidly.

But notice Cde Dudley's proviso: "... if it fitted within the framework of progressive political developments ...". This was perhaps the single most significant feature that characterised Frank. He could unerringly detect and reject the false-hearted, the false-headed, and the politically unsound. He was always guided by the basic NUM principles of non-racialism and non-collaboration. But then this was just an extension of his fundamental trait of hating spurious coinage. How often have we heard him say: "Come on!" in response to silliness, or untruth, or insincerity!

And even now, when his voice is silent, those of us who knew and really understood him can still hear his conscience, his ethos, his love for people carrying on the dialogue: "What about the continent of Africa, huh? Oil, diamonds, blood and gore! The 6 million dead in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the past decade! Was that the work of a Mugabe? The wail of the victims; the orphans; the heartbroken mothers: is it OK because they are African? Is this the final glory of our wonderfully advanced age? Come on!"

In conclusion, here is what those future historians might say. "In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the world was perched very precariously between the extremes of triumph and disaster, abundance and destitution, benevolence and barbarism. Scientific and technological development had reached the stage where it had made both extremes possible. But a misguided minority, through their possession of vast hordes of financial and physical capital, which they and their families had accumulated over generations of exploitation, sought to procure the best of all worlds exclusively for themselves while condemning the majority of humanity to the worst of all worlds. In that definitive period, when the future of life on Earth was most at risk and fragile, there were brave and insightful persons who took up the struggle and tilted the scales forever towards the good and the just."

And we in the Unity Movement will proudly claim that one of them was Frank Fife.

## TRIBUTE TO CDE FRANK FIFE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE NEW UNITY MOVEMENT, DR BASIL BROWN

We are saddened by the death of Cde Frank Fife on Sunday 29 June 2008 at the age of 82 years. At the time of his death he was still an active member of our Southern Suburbs branch and was also actively involved in the work of one of our affiliates the Federation of Cape Civic Associations, of which he was the Honorary Life President. Cde Fife was a lifelong, loyal and committed member of the Unity Movement. As such he believed unwaveringly in the policy of Non-Collaboration, the Ten-Point Programme of Minimum Demands and true non-racialism.

He will be remembered as a quiet but steely-willed individual who was quite happy to be in the background but ever willing to fulfil any duties assigned to him by the leadership of the structures in which he worked, even into his early eighties.

He will be sorely missed.

We extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to his wife Doris, his children Ivan, Graham and Jean, his daughter-in-law Christine and his grandchildren.

## ALEXANDER VALENTINUS (ALEC) DANIELS – A tribute

On behalf of the New Unity Movement, all its affiliates and associated organisations, we pay tribute to Alec Daniels, a friendly, soft-spoken yet firm fighter for what he believed to be right. In paying tribute to this gentle man we acknowledge the important role he played in various organisations in the field of education, civic affairs and cultural matters.

Alec became a teacher at a time when the teaching profession was regarded as noble and worthy of respect. Most teachers were held in high esteem because they were leaders in their communities. Alec, like many of his contemporaries, desired to help his pupils to reach their full potential and to become the best they could be. He realised, however, that this dream would not become a reality in a society where socio-economic conditions were such that most of our children were denied their right to a decent education. He joined the Teachers' League of South Africa where he could share his visions and experiences in the ranks of fellow educators who believed in the motto "Let us live for our children!"

Alec and his wife, always together, attended TLISA branch meetings, regional meetings and national conferences. Although he was a quiet member who did not make rousing public speeches, his sincerity and commitment to the cause of true education were beyond doubt. Because he believed in the view that education could not exist in isolation he joined forces with those who were working outside the classroom in organisations striving for full political rights, freedom from oppression and exploitation. He was an active member of the Ward XVI civic association, affiliated to the Federation of Cape Civic Associations (FCCA), which formed part of the New Unity Movement. He regularly attended lectures organised by educational



fellowships or cultural societies, where debates and discussions analysed the nature of society and its organs.

Alec Daniels like many of his comrades stayed true to the principles and policies of the Unity Movement when others succumbed to the lure of status and financial wealth. He was unwavering in his opposition to the schemes of the apartheid regime and after 1994 he remained a fierce opponent of the continued oppression and exploitation. He was a staunch and loyal stalwart, a trustworthy and reliable participant in the struggle for universal, free and compulsory quality education in a society freed from the shackles of poverty and deprivation.

Today we salute a warrior in the army of freedom fighters, whose role and contributions serve as examples to those who proclaim "A luta continua"!

### A LUTA CONTINUA

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