

A case of political hypocrisy: An exchange with the French Communist Party on the South African mine massacre

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The World Socialist Web Site received the following letter on French Communist Party backs killing of South African miners. The letter is followed by a reply by Alex Lantier.

I just read with consternation the article “French Communist Party backs killing of South African miners”. The PCF communiqué expresses its horror and indignation at what happened in Marikana. You cannot exploit our statement and manipulate the true sense of our position as you do, in an irresponsible fashion. What you write in this article is very grave, profoundly shocking, and totally unacceptable. I demand that you publish the full text of our communiqué, and moreover without comment, as well as this reply. Failing this, I reserve the right to bring this matter before the courts.

Jacques Fath

Member of the PCF National Executive Committee
Responsible for International Relations

The WSWs is pleased to post the PCF communiqué on the Marikana mine massacre (available in French on the PCF web site), which gives us the opportunity to further expose the cynical, anti-working class character of French Stalinist propaganda. However, we reject Mr. Fath’s demand that we censor ourselves by posting the PCF statement, an English translation of which appears below, “without comment.”

South Africa: the PCF expresses its indignation and horror at the massacre of striking miners

The massacre of 34 striking miners by police in South Africa stirs deep emotion. The French Communist Party expresses its indignation and horror at violence against workers who live in misery and are struggling

for their wages and working conditions.

South African President Jacob Zuma himself stressed the incomprehension that such repression provokes. “We are shocked and consternated by this senseless violence,” he said, while announcing a commission of inquiry. A deadly tragedy of this nature, the South African people who have known the terror of Apartheid should not live it again.

The PCF reaffirms its solidarity with the totality of political and trade union forces in South Africa in their struggle to reduce inequality, for progress and for social justice under the true rule of law.

French Communist Party

This statement drips with hypocrisy, as the PCF tries simultaneously to criticize the killings and politically endorse the killers and the organizations behind them. There is not a word of outrage against those who perpetrated the crime or the organizations in South Africa that have supported the massacre.

This is no accident, as the list of such organizations includes Zuma’s African National Congress (ANC) government and the PCF’s allies in South Africa—the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which are part of South Africa’s Tripartite Alliance with the ANC.

As was reported in the previous WSWs article:

It is public knowledge that the “political and trade union forces” defended by the PCF ordered and defended the massacre. The African National Congress (ANC) government’s national police commissioner, Riah Phiyega, declared after the massacre that she “gave police the responsibility to execute the task they needed to do.” She opposed any prosecution of those responsible for the miners’ deaths, saying, “This is no

time for finger-pointing.”

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), whose former president Cyril Ramaphosa has gone on to amass a fortune of \$275 million, has opposed the miners’ strike. NUM General Secretary Frans Baleni defended the police, stating, “The police were patient, but these people were armed with dangerous weapons.”

The PCF’s fellow Stalinists in the South African Communist Party (SACP), who historically have supported the ANC, dismissed the police killing of strikers as “worker-to-worker violence.”

The PCF’s attempt to posture as defenders of the working class collides with its defense of the SACP’s alliance with the South African ruling class. The PCF communiqué says not a word on the role of the ANC, NUM, COSATU or the SACP in the Marikana massacre, going so far as to present them as fighters for “social justice” and the “rule of law.”

Instead, the PCF sympathetically quotes Zuma’s cynical remark that the violence was “senseless,” adding its own observation that police killings of strikers provoke “incomprehension.”

In fact, such violence, aimed at crushing opposition in the working class, is neither meaningless nor difficult to understand. The social layer around the leadership of the ANC and COSATU, personified by multimillionaire ex-National Union of Mineworkers President Cyril Ramaphosa, has amassed fortunes. Now they fear that strikes will undermine the social and economic bases of their wealth, which, as they have shown with the Marikana massacre, they are willing to use the most ruthless and bloody methods to defend.

The PCF, for its part, is intervening to provide political cover for the reactionary role of this social layer. It is backing the killers of the Marikana strikers. This is a warning to all class-conscious workers on the reactionary character not only of the SACP, but also the PCF and the entire European petty-bourgeois “left.”

Alex Lantier



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