

ANC whips up racism amid xenophobic attacks in South Africa

Part 2

G. T. Maqhubela
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The following is the conclusion of a two-part series.

Earlier in May, South Africa's Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) issued a surprise "clarification notice" on Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) scorecards.

Broad-based "empowerment" companies and employee share ownership schemes could no longer be counted as part of a company's black ownership. To widespread indignation from the corporate sector, the DTI said broad-based schemes would now contribute only three points on the scorecard, as opposed to 25 previously.

BEE scorecards are a measure of how "empowered" (or black) a company is. These closely watched grades are vital in the awarding of many public and even private-sector contracts. In the past it was possible for companies to get full points for ownership through a broad-based community or employee share ownership scheme. Now, companies that have at least one "black individual owner," holding 25 percent of their shares, will score far more.

Predictably, top black businessmen warmly welcomed the change, though Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies now appears to be backtracking.

Popo Molefe, a former top member of the ANC and beneficiary of a number of BEE deals, complained, "When a white person becomes a millionaire, no one asks: 'What about the millions of white people that are poor?' But when a black person becomes a millionaire, everyone always asks: 'What about the black people that are poor?'"

These and other reactions from members of the black bourgeoisie expose the class character of BEE. It is not a way of "redressing historic injustices," as has been claimed, by redistributing wealth among the victims of apartheid. BEE is a reactionary policy made possible by the intensified exploitation of poor black workers, the better to pay for the advancement of the politically connected few into the ranks of the capitalist elite.

While established capital and the BEE elite conduct this orgy of self-enrichment, functionaries of the ANC government provide cover for them by targeting foreigners.

In his Freedom Day address, delivered while the police and the army were raiding Mayfair and Hillbrow, Zuma urged other African states to "handle their citizens with care," as they immigrated to South Africa in light of the hardships they faced in their countries of origin.

His remarks came ahead of a visit to Zimbabwe on April 29 for an extraordinary summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), where the xenophobic attacks topped the agenda.

Nigeria recalled its ambassador to Pretoria in the wake of brutal attacks on immigrants, and others including China, Malawi and Zimbabwe have criticised Pretoria for failing to protect foreigners from armed mobs. Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Tanzania are among the countries to which foreigners were repatriated from South Africa in the aftermath.

Accompanying Zuma on his SADC trip was, among others, State Security Minister David Mahlobo. Referring to the recent coldblooded killing of the man known as Emmanuel Sithole or Emmanuel Josias, Mahlobo said the government would not be treating it as a xenophobic incident. "It was just pure robbery that happened to Emmanuel," said the minister. "The fact that a wallet was not removed does not mean it isn't a criminal matter. We know that cigarettes were being stolen, but we will not go to details because [the matter] is before the courts."

The *Sunday Times* carried front-page pictures of the fatal attack on Sithole, a Mozambican national, while he was walking along Second Avenue in Alexandra on a Saturday morning. He was set upon by a group of about six South Africans who beat and stabbed him while he pleaded for his life on his back.

The record of the national bourgeoisie in Africa

South Africa's critics share responsibility for what has happened and are representatives of the same bourgeois layer.

Beginning with Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, the national leaders who rose to power from the 1950s onwards held out the hope that with the formation of ex-colonial African states, a path to economic development would open up. The more left-wing of these leaders even promoted African unity and talked up the prospect of a kind of African socialism based on some nationalisations of industry, national economic regulation and, in some instances, political and economic relations with the Soviet Union.

Yet for all their declarations of independence, the pan-Africanists recognised the division of the continent into more than 50 states, accepting borders drawn up by the ex-colonialists and for the most part maintained capitalist property relations. These borders were completely irrational from any geographical standpoint. Some were even drawn on the reactionary basis of ethnic homogeneity, and all were manipulated to facilitate imperialist intrigues.

It is important to note that George Padmore, the West Indian-born principal theoretician of Nkrumah, was one of the international leaders of the Communist Party and a devoted supporter of Joseph Stalin.

In Moscow in the early 1930s, he served on a special committee investigating the Chinese Communist Party. His tasks were to root out Trotskyists and all those opposed to the Stalinist line. This was after the Stalinist bureaucracy betrayed the 1927 Chinese revolution by ordering the Chinese Communist Party to subordinate itself to the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang, claiming that it represented an anti-colonial force. As a result of this betrayal, thousands of Communists were murdered by the Kuomintang.

Padmore only broke from the Communist Party in the later 1930s when it became clear that Stalin had no genuine interest in African nationalist movements, except as pawns in the deals he was trying to make with imperialism. Nonetheless, Padmore's ideas remained those he learnt under Stalin—that in the colonial countries, there would first be a national democratic revolution and that socialism would only come at some far-off future date.

The representatives of the newly independent African states met in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, in May 1963 to found the Organisation of African Unity. Under the OAU charter, African unity was to be secured by accepting as absolutely inviolable the borders drawn by the previous colonial masters. The OAU was wound up in 2002 and replaced by the African Union (AU). The new organisation professed many of the same pan-Africanist aims of its predecessor, including the “accelerated socio-economic integration of the continent” but bereft of any socialist phraseology and coupled with defence of the “sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States.”

The AU also signed up to the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) economic platform, subordinating the interests of the African masses to the full integration of Africa into the world capitalist economy. Supported by the G8 powers, NEPAD is a convenient lever of the major corporations in their continuous trade war to open up the continent’s markets—a war in which the ANC government and its counterparts are firmly on the side of corporate power.

Under conditions in which world markets and resources are being re-divided between the major world powers, the national bourgeoisie across Africa has shown itself incapable of leading and completing the democratic revolution.

Firstly, it is subordinate to and dependent on the imperialist countries for investment, productive know-how and markets.

Secondly, the historical experience in Africa puts the lie to Stalinist claims that the conflict with imperialism produces some common interest between the classes. According to Stalinists, this

commonality meant that the anti-imperialist struggle would take place in two stages, with the first proceeding as a democratic revolution led by capitalists.

What did this lead to in practice? Beginning in the early 1980s, African leaders such as Jerry Rawlings in Ghana abandoned their socialist rhetoric and accepted International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment programmes. In 1985, Julius Nyerere admitted the failure of his version of African socialism based on nationalised industry and resigned as president of Tanzania. The year after, Tanzania accepted an IMF programme.

In the period from 1983 to 1998, structural adjustment policies became widespread.

Forty African countries had by 1990 accepted rigorous IMF dictates. This included currency devaluations—with an average drop in value of 50 percent—selling off government-owned industries and slashing public spending. Health services and education systems were privatised, while governments competed with each other for Western investment and trade deals.

Throughout Africa, what became known as the “Washington Consensus,” was implemented with dire results for millions of African peasants and workers—including those vainly seeking some way out through migration to South Africa. At the other pole, a local elite has been able to acquire fabulous wealth by acting as the local tools of the banks and corporations.

In 1935, Trotsky wrote to South African supporters in opposition to the conception of the Stalinists who had “transformed the programme of national liberation into an empty abstraction that is elevated above the reality of class relations.”

As for the ANC, Trotsky insisted, “The Bolshevik-Leninists unmask before the native masses the inability of the Congress to achieve the realization of even its own demands, because of its superficial, conciliatory policy. In contradistinction to the Congress, the Bolshevik-Leninists develop a programme of revolutionary class struggle.”

National liberation and democracy would be achieved only as a byproduct of the working class leading the struggle for social revolution.

The only way forward for the toiling African masses today is the building of a workers’ party committed to the seizure of power and productive industry—a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. This must be followed by the reorganisation of African and global society on the basis of socialist internationalism, in concert with the workers of the advanced countries.



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