

## REMEMBERING PHUMELELE GIYOSE

by Roy Chetty

**Mallet Pumelele – “Pumi” – Giyose was born on 20 April 1940 in the Cofimvaba district, Cape Province, four months before Leon Trotsky was brutally assassinated by Stalin’s agent. By that time the All-Africa Convention (AAC) and radical ideas had already taken root in the rural areas of the Cape Province.**

**Inspired by the October 1917 Russian Revolution, once again the communist spectre was haunting the world, this time not only in Europe, but in every continent: in Asia, the Americas, Australia and in Africa. South Africa, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria and countries engaged in the anti-colonial struggles were similarly inspired.**

South Africans belonging to the Workers’ Party and other socialist formations had engaged with Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition in the Russian Communist Party, and were well aware of the systematic Stalinist betrayal of the socialist revolution, and the liquidation of the Bolshevik stalwarts who had made possible the socialist revolution there.

Pumi attended school in the village at Fort Beaufort, at Lovedale, at Healdtown, and later completed his studies though UNISA.

By age 13 Pumi knew of the ANC defiance campaign in Fort Beaufort, and that his maternal uncle, Tsepo Letlaka, an ANC Youth League leader was charged for his participation in it.

Pumi was at Lovedale in 1954, when he joined the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), an affiliate of the AAC. In 1955, at a SOYA meeting at Fort Hare, Pumi was inspired by the revolutionary passion and dynamism of the chairperson, Sefton Vutela, who was to become his life-long best friend and comrade. Later they would



**Roy and Carmel Chetty and children, Pumi, and Ursula Fataar and Hosea Jaffe**

share a house in Soweto before setting off together into exile in 1965, where they lived in the same towns, continuing the struggle from there. Lovedale had a large SOYA branch, and the students pitted their revolutionary ideas against those of the ANC Youth League. Pumi read voraciously, going through all the radical and Marxist literature he could lay his hands on. He thrived on the endless political debates. On some Sundays they would go to one of the villages to meet with the peasants who

briefed them on the so-called Rehabilitation Scheme being enforced by the government.

In 1961 Pumi took up a teaching post in Grahamstown, where he set up a SOYA branch and helped form another in Port Elizabeth. The young activists pamphleteered and engaged in discussions with the workers. Special Branch harassment forced him to relocate to the SOYA branch in Johannesburg, working fulltime to build a mass workers’ party.

As a result of the country-wide state-crackdown and harsh banning orders imposed on them and on other

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Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) revolutionaries, in 1965, Sefton and Pumi set off into exile.

### Exile

Their journey into exile, they told us (me and my wife, Carmel), though full of anxiety, was leisurely. Quite close to the Botswana border friends of theirs had slaughtered a sheep to mark the occasion. They feasted on that before crossing the fence. Twenty-five years later, in 1990, Sefton and Pumi brought to us a goat freshly slaughtered (at the abattoir) to solemnly mark our return home.

They had got into Lobatse, Botswana, shortly after other NEUM members of the APDUSA and Anti-Segregation Council. Pumi reports that "exile was a different kind of place all together .... Some of these were already operating from the African Liberation Centre in Lusaka in the UMSA office. Others were in the APDUSA office in the city. Other units were stationed in Botswana, and it is the latter group that we reinforced . . . Problems of organising inside the country took a quasi-military colouration because of the secrecy that was demanded by the internal evolution of state power in the country.

In the early years of his exile, Pumi worked in the Lobatse merchant-warehouse of an arch-colonialist, Sir Russel England, who employed several bright young men, one of whom much later became general manager of the Botswana Development Corporation. Sir Russel had all the tyrannical idiosyncrasies of a colonial, much like those young ones Pumi would have encountered in the colonial Cape Province. Sir Russel growled, grouched and scolded all day long. Pumi, however, was an employee Russel could rely on. Pumi often mimicked Sir Russel when relating stories of that period.

From Botswana, Pumi left for East Africa, spending some years in Uganda.

The Durban labour strikes of 1973 greatly encouraged Pumi and Sefton. The growing union movement caused them to study and evaluate the labour question afresh. The exile population in Botswana soon increased with the arrival from 1972 onwards of the SASO 'Black Consciousness' students including Abraham Tiro, followed four years later by the students of Soweto. Sefton accommodated the leaders of the 1976 students in his house. We spent an afternoon with Sefton in July 1975, full of optimism, as the Frelimo military tanks rolled towards Maputo from northern Mozambique.

In 1976 Sefton, Pumi and others organised a Revolutionary Consultation in Gaborone which called for a reconstitution and re-gathering of Unity Movement forces in South Africa. Further consultations were held in 1979 and 1980 which included representatives from inside South Africa. These were the first moves constructed towards the re-launch of the Unity Movement in the early 1980s. These meetings were also the forerunner to the building of a formal Gaborone Educational Fellowship (GEF) in 1987. Each Friday Sefton and Pumi would arrive at our house for discussions which

would go on into the early hours of the morning. Pumi would come walking, stumbling in the dark.

We first met Pumi Giyose in February 1977 (48 years ago) on the eve of the funeral of our assassinated comrade Sisa Mvambo, an underground NEUM/APDUSA organiser who had fled into exile after his operations



**Sitting: Hosea Jaffe, Sefton Vutela and Ali Fataar. Standing: Goba, Bruce, Usuf, Carmel, Ursula, Pumi Ada, and their (Roy & Carmel's) children. GABERONE**

were uncovered. Sisa was then a Lobatse resident and headmaster of a community school. Carmel and I had been teachers there. Sisa's brutal murder, having been knifed multiple times in his bed, shocked the Botswana refugee community, as it was the second political killing after the parcel-bombing of Abraham Tiro, three years previously. Sisa, like us, lived on the Lobatse-Zeerust road, five kilometres from the SA border.

Pumi had just returned to his home in Gaborone from a period of work in Uganda/East Africa. Lawrence Notha, who had come from Serowe, lived with us for the duration of the funeral ceremonies, making funeral arrangements, etc, and Pumi joined us there. Pumi was 36 years old then, much younger than Lawrence Notha and Sefton Vutela who were 14 and 11 years older respectively. On meeting Pumi, I was impressed by his confidence and self-assured manner.

Two years later, we discovered that we lived in the same area in Gaborone. Sefton also lived nearby. Sefton had secured a 'housing corporation house' for Pumi's family. On his return from East Africa in 1977, Pumi taught at a school in Gaborone. With the meagre salary earned he supported his young family. Already in Botswana his sight was deteriorating with night-blindness/ retina pigmentosa. His mother had been similarly afflicted. The nuns at the school were very fond of Pumi. Some years later, they retained his job, when he was unjustly gaoled for weeks, awaiting trial on a spurious charge.

Life was tough for refugees in Botswana, with the ever-present threat of deportation. Refugees who went out to

study had to return each year to renew their 'visitors - permits'. After the Zimbabwean liberation, refugees who had no homes (of their own) were trucked north, in military trucks, off to the Dukwe refugee camp bordering the Matabele territory.

All the SOYANs made friends easily with the Tswana community and the scores of refugees, irrespective of political affiliation, who made their way into Botswana. Lawrence Notha, Sefton and Pumi held discussions with the different formations, respecting their political positions. Chris Hani, a former SOYAN, also from Cofimvaba, stayed at Pumi's house whenever he was on a mission in Botswana. Likewise, Operation Vula guerrillas stayed with us. Gaborone was the stomping-ground of the South African Special Branch, spies and informers (even within the ANC). The hotels were always crawling with South African military and secret-agents.

In the 80s Pumi's two sons went off to study in America, and Angelinah, his wife at the time, registered for a degree at the University of Botswana, graduating with a BCom degree at the age of 46. Angelinah began work at Sefalana Wholesalers. The family bought a second-hand car, a Peugeot, which Pumi drove very carefully around town, despite his deteriorating eyesight.

Pumi Giyose has written prolifically these past decades. His visual impairment in the past 25 years did not deter him. In exile, exposed to a whole range of books and publications, very many scholarly works were written by him and Sefton, often in partnership. In 1989, at a time when the ANC was continuing its armed-propaganda as a strategy of working its way to the negotiating table, Pumi delivered a paper to a meeting of the Gaborone Education Fellowship; a 25-page document in fine dot-matrix print, titled "NON-COLLABORATION: A Theory of Social Change". Pumi's thesis was polemical, an update on earlier writings on the subject; a scholarly work drawing on more than 30 years of careful political study of a vast range of books and periodicals, supplemented by countless, often all-night, discussions. In my view, it is his finest theoretical work, his '*opus magnum*' written for the cadres of the New Unity Movement.

### Home

On returning to South Africa, Pumi secured a job with the TCOE (Trust for Community Outreach and Education). Thereafter for the next 20-plus years he was a leading figure in the NGO movement: board member of the TCOE, AIDC and Jubilee South Africa. Pumi had found his political niche: He was valued for his vast political experience, gregarious demeanour, political intellect, eloquence and oratory. "These aspects of struggle (*NGO struggles*)," he said, "do not have a future if they are not linked to the radical social struggles of the working class. The urgent need of the day in this country is the building of a militant impulse uniting all these strands."

His tireless work in the NGO movement and as board

member of several organisations was the unpaid work of a revolutionary volunteer. His blindness did not hold him back, and his vanity would not allow for the use of a white cane. He wanted to "walk like a man", even after once breaking his leg falling down a flight of stairs. Pumi navigated his way around countless bnb's, hotels, airports and bus stations, even, at times, hitch-hiking from East London airport to his house in Port Alfred.

"MP", as he was ironically called in the 'NGO-world' after 1990, had no aspirations of being a parliamentarian in the South African bourgeois parliament. Though, I suspect that, given his larger-than-life personality, his confident eloquence, his immaculate dress sense and 'official'-bearing, airport assistants and others may well have been under that impression.

The death of every SOYAN was hard for him to bear, especially that of Lawrence Notha (in January 1985) and later of Sefton (in November 2004). Pumi was, perhaps, the last of the SOYANs who dared to make a Marxist revolution. He often laughed when recalling that at the funeral of PAC-exile Gordon Kali, a speaker had lamented that "Gordon died without a plan!" Pumi ensured that he would have a plan. Thus in 2012, almost 13 years before his death he drafted his testament indicating in precise terms the Marxist way he wished his funeral to be conducted. Even in death he wanted to raise the **Red Flag**, to the working-class anthem of '**The Internationale**'.

Amazingly, he could identify the person or persons he was speaking to, despite his total blindness. I was with him at the 2007 Nairobi WSF outdoor gathering when many young persons (who had come from NGOs all over South Africa) came over to speak to him. On hearing their voices, and without being introduced, he remembered each person by name. Even in his last days, at Alexandria, he remembered us exclaiming "Oh, my friends!"





## WORKERS' DAY 2025: CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION OR DEEP REFLECTION?

South Africa's unemployment rate continues to be "locked in" at around 30 percent (31.90 percent in the fourth quarter of 2024) without any prospect of significant change anytime soon.

The picture for "youth unemployment" looks even more dismal. This year, South Africa's youth aged 15-24 face an unemployment rate at 59.6 percent. The overall youth unemployment rate, which includes those aged 15-24 and 25-34, is estimated to be 45.5 percent.

The above figures are likely to worsen, following the impacts which will inevitably flow from US president Donald Trump's tariff threats. It is well-known that SA is not one of Trump's favourites, so he will have little or no sympathy for us whether or not he presses his tariffs all the way. In any case, there is a strong likelihood that the US will withdraw our privileges under their AGOA act, which will mean no more favourable status for our exports to America.

The tariffs are adding to an already pessimistic outlook for the global economy, and there is every expectation that they will worsen the looming global recession. (And of course, a recession means reduced economic activity and/or stagnation, making a bad unemployment situation worse.)

When the American economy faces economic stagnation, as it currently does, that is bad news for countries (especially those in the Global South) which rely on exports to the American market.

Turbulence in relations between the imperialist countries (US, EU, UK, etc) and a breakdown in relations between the US and China are causing the leading economies of the world to review their commitment to the neoliberal model which has served them so well since the 1980s. Global value chains are now at risk of disruption. The likely upshot is that countries (not only the imperialist countries) will be seeking for greater security in realignments and/or in greater self-sufficiency (i.e. nationalisation and/or regional trading blocs).

To all the above we need to add the inexorable forward march of labour-saving technology, including particularly robotisation and AI. These technologies are directly aimed at reducing corporate labour costs, adding to the unemployment problem.

Finally, we might also wish to factor in the growing

trend for firms to employ casualised (i.e. more exploited and easily controlled and dispensable) workers – the so-called "precariat."

So, where will our country's unemployment stats end up? Forty percent? Fifty percent?

Strategic responses on the part of governments, including our own, to deal with the above issues could include the following.

### Greater reliance on extractivism

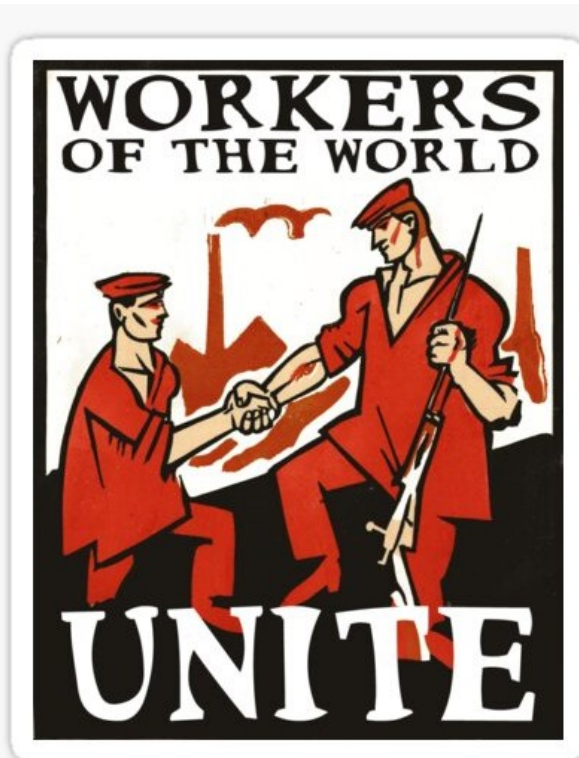
Like many African countries, we have a fair abundance of mineral resources, including those required by modern technologies. We also have abundant reserves of coal, and coal continues to be among the more preferred energy sources used in the industrial centres of the world. So, it would be logical to assume we could build our growth going forward, on exploitation of our mineral wealth.

Along with this, we could also include agriculture as an extractive industry. Here, too, there should be potential for generating economic growth.

However, it could be argued that we are already maximising our exploitation of these industries, yet we nonetheless have the appalling unemployment stats mentioned above. How much more extractivism is needed to make a difference? Besides, extractivism might be good for generating foreign exchange revenue, but is ruinous for rural and peasant communities. It is thus not surprising that the Amadiba Crisis Committee in Xolobeni in the E Cape has been resolutely resisting mining activities there, arguing that they would disrupt the area's fragile ecosystem and impact the livelihoods of the local communities.

### (Re) Industrialisation and Infrastructure investment

It is well-known that our government has targeted infrastructure development as a major priority. South Africa



has a large infrastructure investment plan, with a total investment value exceeding R2.3 trillion. The plan includes over 200 projects across various sectors, including energy, transport, water, and sanitation. The government is keen to link infrastructure development to its “fight” to reduce unemployment. But meaningful results are yet to be seen.

It should not be forgotten that as a capitalist economy, we are dependent on private sector investment, which in turn, is dependent on profitability expectations.

The big “if” is if the government’s infrastructure plan makes it more profitable for local and foreign capitalists to invest in our economy, well, then there might certainly be cause for optimism around our economic growth prospects (although, economic growth does not automatically translate into employment growth). In a “best case scenario” we could expect some marginal increase in employment. Also, if developing our infrastructure sparks a “multiplier effect,” then a period of (sustained?) economic growth could indeed follow.

But a question that arises is where is the money for the GNU’s ambitious infrastructure growth/renewal plans coming from? The IMF? Overseas banks? China? There will be strings attached.

We can’t rely on further deficit spending. Already our gross debt-to-GDP ratio is estimated to be 76 percent this year. So, if we are to keep borrowing for infrastructure development or anything else, such borrowing will become more expensive, which means our interest bill will keep rising.

#### Redistribution

Hypothetically (since it won’t happen in fact) our government can significantly raise taxes on the rich and redistribute income to the rest of society. As economist Aaron Benanav says, “. . . it would bring big benefits, improving consumer demand and strengthening markets both domestically and internationally.”

Raising taxes on the rich is a subject in its own right, and something we need to return to. For the moment, let’s just say it’s not likely to happen soon, and that it will entail hard-fought (class) struggle.

What is to be done?

In addressing this question, there are two points we’d like to make. The first one is neatly captured in the following quotation from a 2006 article by Tanzanian academic, Issa Shivji:

[We should adopt] a pan-Africanist approach . . .

rather than a nationalism based on the colonial division of the continent into “countries and states cutting across ‘natural’ geographic, cultural, ethnic and economic ties which had evolved historically

The artificial drawing of national boundaries reflected the needs, interests, and balance of strength and power of the ruling imperialist states.

This means our slogan should be that workers of Africa should unite, because, as Shivji points out, we are engaged in a common struggle.

The second point is closely related to the first: It is that workers should not see themselves and their struggle as distinct from the communities from which they come. We are all part of the oppressed under capitalism. Therefore, we should be united in struggle.

It is clear that we would be fooling ourselves if we saw Workers’ Day as an opportunity to “celebrate our gains.” Gains there have certainly been over the decades since the 1980s, but these are largely limited to the rescinding of apartheid-based legislation, and to the liberalisation of the workplace, particularly within large corporates. But the minimum wage is still far from adequate; corporations are still the spoilt darlings of our government, and members of the ruling petit bourgeoisie continue to pursue the abundant self-personal-enrichment opportunities which fall their way via tenders and other means.

COSATU’s decision to join the ANC-government in 1994 (an alliance which continues to this day) was ruinous to the working class, as it basically disarmed and demobilised us at the very time that we should have been pushing through what advantages we had in the face of a crumbling apartheid regime. Instead, COSATU’s decision actually made them complicit in the neoliberal upsurge which followed, and which also continues to ravage our country to this day.

Today, COSATU is a shadow of its former self, and organised workers have little power in relation to government and Big Capital. The trade unions today find themselves limited to negotiating peripheral improvements to conditions in the workplace. Where were they when the government scandalously thumbed its nose at the Zama Zamas trapped in shaft 10 at Stilfontein? Where were they when the ANC decided it needed to raise VAT rather than taxing the rich? Where were they when they were needed to throw their weight behind the struggle to free Palestine?

Any breakthrough change in our country’s political and economic conditions will be contingent on a strong workers’ organisation united with grassroots-level communities in class struggle. This will entail the re-politicisation of the workers’ movement.

Workers’ Day should be light on celebrating past victories and heavy on contemplating the way forward towards a genuine peoples’ democracy, run by the producers not the owners of value.

## THE LOOTING OF DRC'S MINERAL WEALTH

Article by Mervin Blaauw

**Not the first, and most likely not the last, truce-agreement was reached between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda-backed rebel group, M23 recently, on April 24.**

**There is a suspicion that this agreement might well have been precipitated by US interests not only in respect of DRC's mineral wealth, but also to thwart Chinese influence in the region.**

The question which comes to mind regarding this sudden ceasefire is this: Has the ceasefire anything to do with the USA and the DRC's deal re the exchange of rare earth metals and security provided to DRC by the Americans? In a letter written to US president Donald Trump by DRC president Felix Tsheshikedi, the latter asked for security from America in exchange for rare earths much in demand by US technology corporates. It is known that the USA envoy to Africa visited both Rwanda and DRC, and stressed that the US wants stable conditions before committing to a deal. The deal offered by Tsheshikedi to Trump is a manner to counter the dominance of China in DRC – China controls 90% of the cobalt in DRC.

Meanwhile, M23 maintains its dominance of mineral-rich eastern DRC.

The question arises: Why is M23 so well equipped in terms of uniforms and weaponry? Why is M23 so hard to stop let alone defeat? Why are they allowed to roam freely in eastern DRC, so that even SADC forces could not halt them or even force them to retreat back to Rwanda? Who is funding them? Part of the answer lies in DRC being a failed state, i.e. a weak state which cannot protect its citizens from the ravages of M23; the DRC army is also totally inept at fighting the M23. In many clashes between M23 and the DRC army, M23 invariably won the battles and the fleeing Congolese soldiers left their weapons behind, enabling M23 to get their hands on more modern weaponry.

When one asks who funds M23, one must take into account that M23 'earns' \$800 000 per month from 'production taxes' placed on the coltan mines and other mines in DRC over which they have gained control. That is where most of their funding comes from and if one includes the illicit trading of minerals exported through Rwanda, it makes sense to realise why M23 is in eastern DRC. They are there to safeguard their income. M23 and Rwanda are fond of stating that the M23 and Rwandan troops are in eastern DRC to protect 'their people' who fled Rwanda during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. But this is a smokescreen to justify their presence in DRC and the looting of the riches of DRC. Interesting is the fact that DRC has calculated that it loses over \$1 billion due to illicit trade in the country's rare earths. Another factor to note is that Rwanda is the biggest exporter of coltan, even though

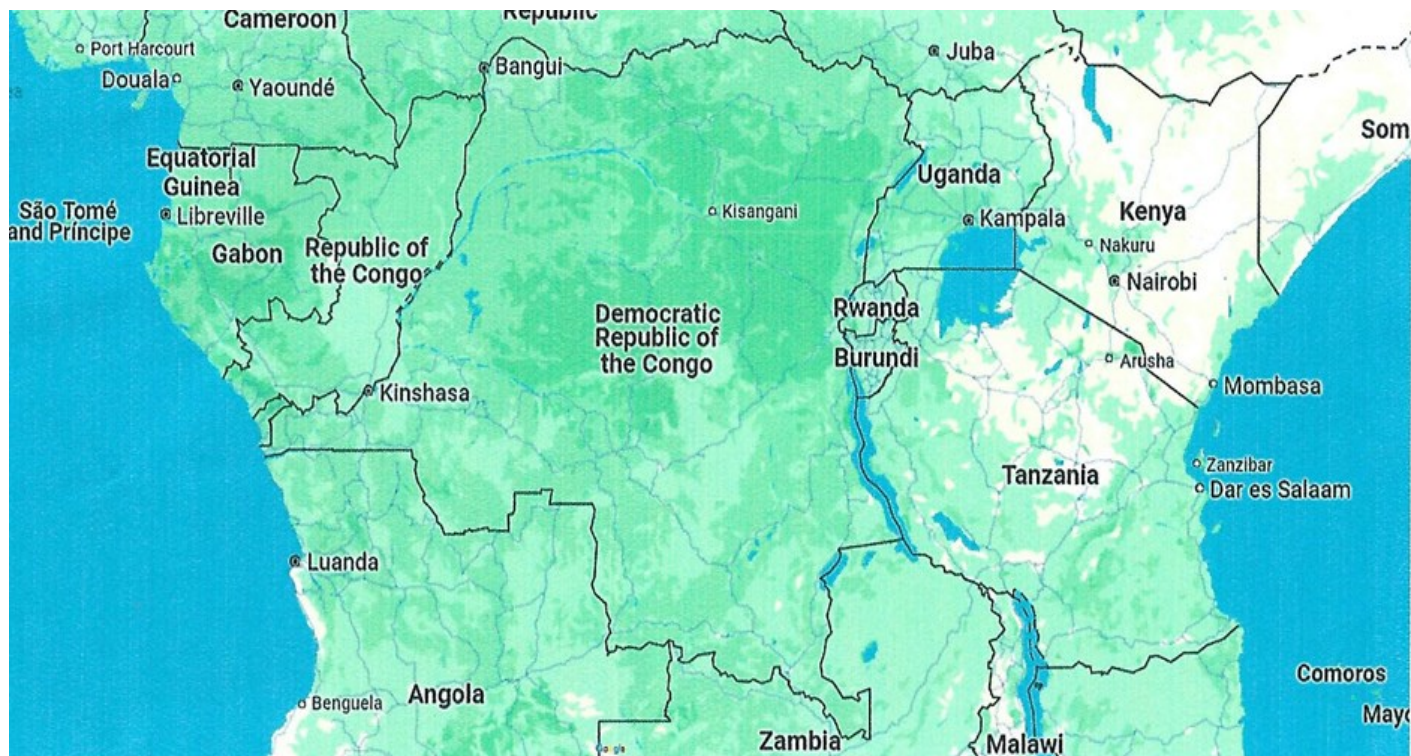
it does not mine any coltan! It is estimated that almost 40 percent of DRC's coltan is illegally exported through Rwanda, a fact that Rwanda does not deny. M23, before January 2025, was only partially in control of most of the coltan mines, but after January 2025, it stamped its authority on the Rubaya coltan mining area and now controls the mines. Other groups are also looting areas rich in minerals, and eastern DRC seems to be a free-for-all region for mineral extraction. Some of the recent fighting between M23 and armed militia groups is directly associated with the fight to control the distribution of rare earths and other minerals.

This is why for 30 years this part of DRC has been mired in conflict – today the term used to describe these rare minerals is not 'blood' minerals but rather 'strategic' minerals. It is not only Rwanda and M23 who have been looting DRC of its mineral riches. China, the UAE, Canada and several European countries have great interests in these minerals and are actively involved in importing these rare earths from Rwanda.

The conflict in DRC has been accompanied by violence, rape, killings, exploitation of child labour, environmental degradation and human rights abuses. This scenario has been playing out since the 2000s and is intensifying more and more. Conveniently, M23, Rwanda and the foreign buyers of the rare earths look past this or wish it away. It does seem strange that only the UN has highlighted this but no individual country has. DRC has asked that sanctions be placed on Rwanda due to its illegal trade in rare earths but their appeal has fallen on deaf ears.

One of the biggest problems facing DRC is that the armed militias in eastern DRC, particularly M23, are acting with total impunity, they do not have to answer to anyone or anybody.

What is happening in the territories where M23 is in charge is that these areas are directly being administered by M23, which intends establishing a banking regulatory system in the 'liberated areas' – this authority will effectively represent the central bank of the DRC in these areas, and will carry out central bank missions in the areas M23 manages. Licences will also be issued so that new banks can be created. It will also allow the activation of operational microfinance institutions, etc. It seems that M23 is planning for a



areas and in addition to the banking regulatory systems, they have set up administrative structures in areas they have taken over: tax offices, census plans, a police force and even new police chiefs, beyond just the DRC. This signifies that they are here – in the conquered areas – to stay, to collect taxes from the mines and to export minerals via Rwanda.

M23 is a threat to regional stability in the Great Lakes District. Attacks in DRC's South Kivu Province are threatening Burundi. In North Kivu Province, Uganda has been drawn in.

One group of analysts believes that there must be some sort of political solution before M23's impunity can be ended. Contrary views to the political solutions have been raised. There have been many political solutions proposed in the past decade and none of them has worked. Instead the violence, killing, displacement of people and other abuses have continued and are even worsening. Political solutions will not bring peace to the eastern DRC unless the perpetrators of the human rights abuses are brought to book. Unless impunity is punished, there will be no peace in DRC. Those who believe that political solutions will not bring peace favour the 'mineral-for-security' deal, as the US can use its vote in the UN Security Council for an international tribunal for human rights abuses, and end this culture of impunity. Unless this happens, the perpetrators will get amnesty and after a few months of any ceasefire, violence will rear its ugly head again.

While an urgent short term solution is needed to staunch the blood-letting being suffered by the people of DRC, particularly among the peasants and rural proletariat, there will be no permanent peace and prosperity for this long-suffering country which is bearing the full brunt of the 'resource curse.' Nothing short of revolutionary change will be needed for this.



## THE VIOLENCE OF PRENATAL MALNUTRITION

**Many observers note that, “after 31 years of ‘democracy’ one cannot blame apartheid for the problems encountered today.” How true is this statement? Have all of the ills suffered by the majority of oppressed as a consequence of apartheid been eliminated?**

The fifth annual Early Childhood Development (ECD) Conference was an important event in the educational advancement of our children. For far too long this aspect of our educational process has been neglected. However, was this merely putting a band-aid on the festering educational sore? For the privileged (“White”) child ECD was started as early as in the 1930’s.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) reveal a failure in the education system of our country. Little or no progress has been shown since these tests started for TIMSS (1995) and PIRLS (2006).

The children at our schools are tested in Grade 5 and Grade 9. For the rest of the world taking these tests, the children are tested in Grade 4 and Grade 8. This already indicates that our children are educationally lagging behind. The literacy rate in SA is of concern as a recent study indicated that 81% of learners in Grade 4 could not understand what they were reading.

Much of the problems in education can be attributed to socioeconomic conditions. Expectant mothers of the disadvantaged are subjected to poverty, poor health, lack of basic knowledge, lack of electricity and sanitation and decrepit housing conditions. As a result, the child suffers an educational disadvantage from birth.

It is a known fact that soft soothing music to the foetus influences the well-being and development of the child’s brain activity. Listening to music with the unborn baby strengthens the bond between mother and the baby. This can have an advantageous effect

on the child’s development. Mothers of the disadvantaged are deprived of such educational environment.

Teenage pregnancies as well as unintended pregnancies are concerning with 365 teenagers giving birth each day. Couple this with gender-based violence, inadequate ac-



cess to contraception and deficiencies in the health system and we are saddled with a massive problem.

Many children thus suffer from stunted growth and other educational drawbacks.

This has been deliberate planning of the grand apartheid masters.

Dr H.F. Verwoerd had this to say about the teachers, particularly those in opposition to the state, *“People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for the Native. When I have control of Native Education, I will reform it so that Natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them.”*

This was part of the foundation on which Bantuised, Colouredised and Indianised schooling was based.

Education for the disadvantaged served the interests



to the same educational opportunities and resources enjoyed by “White” South Africans. Education denigrated the disadvantaged people's history, culture, and identity. It promoted myths and racial stereotypes in its curricula and textbooks.

Poverty affects a child's development in the womb by increasing maternal malnutrition and disease, hindering a baby's chance of survival. Not alone, does it impede the child's chances of survival but it also inhibits the learning and development process.

Poor nutrition and being malnourished affects a child's cognitive abilities as well as their ability to concentrate. This can set them back when it comes to learning new concepts and developing new skills.

23 percent of children in South Africa are classified in that category and are at risk of life-threatening malnutrition and related health complications. Kofi Annan, had this to say, *“Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope ... for everyone, everywhere, literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right.”*

Christine Muhigana, the UNICEF South Africa Representative says, *“Malnutrition in all its forms weakens immune systems and increases children's risk of dying from common childhood diseases. Children's brain development is also impacted in the early years of life, affecting their ability to learn and leading to lifelong development challenges that can perpetuate the cycle of poverty.”*

The triple scourge of poverty, inequality and unemployment in SA are closely intertwined. These, coupled with the climate change have rocketed food prices sky high. This has impacted on the provision of nutritious food for both the mother and the unborn and growing child. This then leads to parents' inability to provide their children with nutritious food.

In SA, the lack of nutritious food is compounded by a

lack of safe drinking water and sanitation as well as the dreadful housing conditions with shantytowns spontaneously serving as temporary housing in place of formal planned housing structures. These shantytowns (informal settlements) are badly lit, with no ventilation and sanitation facilities.

Many children in townships consume unhealthy food-stuff and beverages. Lately, an alarming proportion of children have succumbed to the effects of food bought at the Spaza shops that have been contaminated with rat poison. This has even resulted in the death of a number of these young children.

Until we have a more equitable and just economic system, those living with unemployment, driving inequality and poverty will continue to succumb to adverse educational outcomes.

As a society we stand indicted. We are failing our children. We remain trapped in a structure which perpetuates the privilege of the few alongside the oppression of the many. It is the system that must change – that we as the working class must unite in struggle to change.



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