

What the Marikana Massacre tells us

By Shawn Hattingh

The sight of policemen brutally gunning down striking mineworkers at Marikana was truly galling. At the very least 300 rounds of live ammunition were fired at workers (and not only those seen on TV) by the police using automatic assault rifles in a military style operationⁱ: the infamous consequences being 34 workers killed and perhaps as many as 87 injuredⁱⁱ, with some workers still unaccounted forⁱⁱⁱ. Many of the workers were also reportedly shot in the back^{iv} and some executed^v. To add insult to injury, and with what was clearly some relish, the police arrested 260 workers in the aftermath^{vi}. This often even involved policemen literally sticking the boot into injured workers. Allegations have also subsequently emerged that 190 of these arrested workers were tortured, some for up to 3 days, whilst being held in surrounding police stations^{vii}. One worker also claims that he was taken to a room on Lonmin's property, who owns the mine at Marikana, and handcuffed to a chair and beaten with a rubber pipe by police in a bid to extract information about the 'leaders' of the wildcat strike^{viii}. Not to be outdone in callousness, Lonmin issued an ultimatum that unless the rest of the striking workers returned to work by 7am on the 21st of August disciplinary actions would be taken against them^{ix}. The strikers though have ignored Lonmin's threats, and at the time of writing, most remained out on strike^x.

While any human being with any sense of justice should be appalled by what happened at Marikana it would, however, be a mistake to view it as an isolated incident that emerged out of the blue. Rather, Marikana is the latest episode, even if an extremely violent one, in a long running battle between ruthless mining companies and the state on the one hand; and workers in South Africa's platinum belt on the other. In fact, Marikana, and the events surrounding it, not only cast light on the ongoing class warfare in the platinum industry, but it brings the cruel exploitation of workers in general in South Africa into the spotlight, it exposes the true face of class rule in the country, it lays bare the role of the state in society, and it yet again reveals that the black working class not only experiences exploitation but ongoing national oppression – and accompanying racism – in South Africa. This article explores these issues, including the context in which the Marikana massacre took place, from an anarchist-communist perspective. Whilst much of the article looks at the repugnant practices in the platinum sector, and the equally repugnant nature of the ruling class and its state, an argument will also, however, be made that out of the fires of Marikana, and other ongoing struggles in the platinum sector, there is hope: they offer a possible way forward in terms of building a working class counter-power and furthering the fight for genuine freedom and equality in South Africa.

Life and Death in the Platinum Belt

The reality is that for platinum mineworkers, life is hard and often oppressive – and it is in this context that the struggles of Marikana must be seen. Working conditions for platinum mine workers are riddled with dangers. Most workers are forced to work hundreds of meters below ground, in very cramped conditions and in constant heat^{xi}. The pneumatic drills used, each weighing 25 kilograms, make a constant and piercing noise - along with rock breaking, sorting, and milling equipment – and the result is that workers' hearing is permanently damaged within a few years (even if they are wearing protective gear). The drills in many of the mines are also cooled using industrial water, sometimes from reduction works. As a consequence many mineworkers suffer from skin ailments from the spray. The water is also used to catch the rock dust generated from drilling, and while it helps somewhat, dust is also

a constant problem: inhaled in sufficient quantities it leads to silicosis. In fact, many mine workers end up dying, and forgotten, in the rural areas of southern Africa from silicosis. Along the tunnels in the platinum mines, rock fissures also occur regularly signifying the real potential for rock falls. Coupled to this, rock blasting occurs daily escalating the danger of cave-ins, but also increasing the prospect of dangerous gases being released into the tunnels where workers have to work^{xii}. Accidents, therefore, are a constant possibility, with drillers – the category of workers that went on strike at Marikana – being especially prone.

The dangers for mineworkers are of such an order that on average 2 miners a month died in accidents at AngloPlatinum alone throughout 2005^{xiii}. Unfortunately, AngloPlatinum was not the exception: deaths on the mines of Impala Platinum, Lonmin, African Rainbow Minerals (ARM) and all the other players in the sector have occurred frequently. For example, at Impala Platinum in 2011, 9 workers died due to causes ranging from ground falls, being overcome by methane gas, and accidents involving explosives^{xiv}. These deaths show no sign of abating as fatal accidents on the platinum mines were reported in June 2012 to have increased by 29% when compared to the previous year^{xv}. In the drive to maximise profits, extracted via surplus value from workers, human life for the mining companies means little.

Along with facing hazardous conditions, mineworkers are also routinely subjected to domination and oppression at the hands of foreman, supervisors, security guards and managers. They are ordered about, commanded and reprimanded for any infraction. On surfacing and exiting the mines, workers are subjected to humiliation as a result of routine body searches by security guards in order to reduce theft. As a matter of fact, security on the mines is tight with barbed wire and electric fences cordoning off sections of the mines; and heavily armed security guards keeping an almost constant watch over the movements and actions of workers. The latest technology is also used, with many mines monitoring some of their workers via CCTV. Even in order to gain access into the mines, workers have to pass through various security checks, some even subjecting workers to iris and figure print scans^{xvi}. Companies like G4S, who are often outsourced to undertake security by the platinum mining houses, boast about offering trained armed guards and dog units for riot control or labour ‘unrest’, intelligence gathering operatives, and the ability to undertake screenings of any employee^{xvii}. Certainly, the anarchist Bakunin pointed out that workplaces under capitalism are oppressive as once someone enters into work under the current system an “employer will watch over him either directly or by means of an overseers; every day during working hours and under controlled conditions, the employer will be the owner of his actions and movements...when he is told: ‘Do this’, the worker is obliged to do it; or when he is told ‘Go there’, he must go”^{xviii}.

On the platinum mines, however, workers not only face such oppression based on their class, but those who are black also face routine racism and paternalism at the hands of management. Such attitudes are so pervasive that it is still quite common for managers to refer to black mine workers as ‘mine boys’^{xix}. Unfortunately, such discrimination is not even limited to the mainly – but not exclusively – white management; even the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) General Secretary, Frans Baleni, derogatorily referred to the lowest paid black workers at Lonmin as “ignorant”^{xx}. Certainly it is no accident that the vast majority of workers that do the lowest paid, and the most dangerous jobs, tend to be almost exclusively black: it is the legacy of past and current systematic racism in the sector.

There are thousands upon thousands of platinum mineworkers that remain poorly paid in South Africa. The wildcat strike at Marikana began with the demand by 3 000

rock drillers to have their salaries increased to R 12 500 a month. Many were earning a basic salary in the region of R 4 000 a month; despite some of them having worked for decades on the mine (compared to the R 44.6 million earned by the top 3 managers at Lonmin in one year^{xxi}). Some of the workers do receive allowances that push up their salaries beyond R 4 000. For example, as part of pushing workers out of the hostels, many workers live in the surrounding shanty towns and townships, and receive housing allowances. Along with this, many workers take risks to try and get production bonuses to push up their basic salaries, which includes working extremely long hours and unsafely. Production bonuses are a highly important part of workers' incomes, with the average production bonus being in the region of R 1 500 a month^{xxii}. The production bonus system, therefore, is part of the reason why accidents are so prevalent on the mines. The platinum sector is well known for this type of situation. In other companies low wages are also the norm, especially for rock drillers. Production bonuses too force workers into a situation where they take risks. Prior to a massive wildcat strike at Impala Platinum, for instance, rock drillers at that company too were earning a basic salary in the region of R 4 000 a month^{xxiii}. This is not surprising as the massive profits of the mining companies have been, and are, based on the extremely low wages.

In order to keep wage bills low, the platinum mines also make extensive use of outsourcing and labour brokers. Workers employed through labour brokers are usually paid much less than 'permanent' workers and are excluded from receiving benefits such as healthcare and housing. The practice has become extremely widespread, with AngloPlatinum alone employing over 41% of its workforce through labour brokers. The picture at Lonmin's Marikana mine is similar with 30% of workers being employed through labour brokers^{xxiv}. Of course, labour brokers are also used by these mining corporations in a bid to circumvent aspects of the labour law, along with using it as a tactic to divide and rule the workers on the mines. The labour brokers themselves mostly recruit migrant labour from the rural areas of southern Africa; again dividing people not only on race, but on ethnic lines. For example, many of the migrant labourers at Lonmin are from the Eastern Cape and Lesotho^{xxv}^{xxvi}. Some of these labour brokers are extremely large companies in their own right and include the likes of Murray and Roberts.

For communities around the platinum mines, as has been well documented in a number of studies by the Bench Marks Foundation, life is also harsh^{xxvii} ^{xxviii} ^{xxix}. Most of these communities live in tiny houses or shacks, often with no access to clean water or decent sanitation. In Rustenburg alone, one of a number of towns in the platinum belt, an estimated 250 000 people, including most mineworkers, live in shacks. Pushing workers off the hostels and into shacks obviously suits the mining companies; it is cheaper to provide a housing allowance than it is to provide accommodation and food. The Wonderkop informal settlement at Marikana, therefore, is simply one example of these growing informal settlements. The few services that are provided by the state or by mining corporations, through so-called Corporate Social Responsibility Programmes, are mostly of an appalling standard. The water sources surrounding these townships and informal settlements are often heavily polluted from both mining activities but also due to a lack of services. Dust from the tailing dams of these corporations also regularly coats the townships and shacks in a layer of toxic material, resulting in extremely high instances of respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis. Constant blasting by the mines has also taken its toll, with many of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses in the surrounding communities suffering structural damage as a result.

The mining corporations too have been involved in massive land grabs, often colluding with 'traditional' chiefs and the state to do so. While a black elite linked to

the ANC now have shares in, and sit on the boards of, the massive mining companies; impoverished black communities have seen their farming land stolen by the likes of Lonmin, Impala Platinum, and AngloPlatinum. This has been done with the backing of state laws and the compliance of the traditional authorities. The mining companies have gone as far as using barbed wire and armed security patrols to ensure that surrounding communities do not trespass or threaten the lucrative mining operations. Linked to this, the local state in the Rustenburg region has reportedly made it almost impossible for surrounding communities to legally protest against this situation, with planned marches being regularly banned^{xxx}. The migrant labour system used by the mining corporations, including Lonmin, is also directly associated with other ills such as high levels of HIV and AIDS and violence against women in the communities that surround the mines^{xxxi}.

Resistance has been heroic and furious

It would, however, be a complete mistake to view the mineworkers and communities as merely victims with no hope. The struggles by mineworkers against corporations in the sector have been going on for a while – Marikana is simply the latest in a long line – and they have been inspiring, large, heroic and extremely promising. Wildcat strikes and sit-ins on the mines by workers have occurred regularly over the last few years across corporations^{xxxii}. For instance, in 2008 at Aquarius Platinum's Everest mine, 1 300 contract workers embarked on a wildcat strike due to bad working conditions^{xxxiii}. Wildcat strikes by workers have also occurred at Lonmin itself before. In 2011, 9 000 workers at Lonmin's Karee operations went out on a wildcat strike^{xxxiv}.

Along with wildcat strikes, a string of at least 6 underground sit-ins and occupations, collectively involving thousands of mineworkers, occurred between July 2009 and July 2010 in the platinum sector. These included sit-ins at Eastern Platinum's Crocodile River Mine^{xxxv}; Aquarius Platinum's Kroondal Mine^{xxxvi}; Impala Platinum's Rustenburg Mine^{xxxvii}; Anoroaq Resources' Bokoni Mine^{xxxviii xxxix}, and Impala Platinum and ARM's Two Rivers Mine^{xl}. In each case, the workers involved were militant and the sit-ins were preceded by wildcat strikes. Many of the workers that have undertaken these actions have also tended, but certainly not exclusively so, to be contract workers or workers hired through labour brokers. These category of workers now make up a minority of the NUM membership, which is now mostly made up of skilled, white collar workers and technicians. As such, many of these workers have felt that they have not being represented by the NUM properly or effectively covered by the deals struck by the union, and have at times – like during the sit-ins – taken matters into their own hands^{xli}.

The reasons for these sit-ins, and the grievances of the workers involved, were wide-ranging and depended on the mine involved. Nonetheless, some of the reasons and demands of the workers included an end to labour brokering, the hiring of contract workers permanently, the full payment of unpaid wages, the provision of benefits denied to contract workers, the end to racism by management and foreman, the ending of unsafe working conditions, the payment of Unemployment Insurance Funds (UIF), the restatement of fired workers, and increased wages^{xlii}.

In 2012 such struggles continued and in some cases escalated. Early in the year, 17 000 workers at the AngloPlatinum and ARM's Modikwa mine undertook a protected strike over higher wages. However, as part of this the mineworkers also barricaded the roads leading into the mine, in a move that surprised management and evidently NUM officials^{xliii}. This followed on the heels of a 6 week wildcat strike at Impala Platinum where the action began with rock drillers demanding a wage increase from R 4 000 to R 9 500. They were then joined by other workers and eventually 17 000

workers at the company came out. During the strike there were regular battles between mineworkers, and the forces of repression in the form of the police and security guards. As part of the strike tactics, workers also barricaded the road to the nearby informal settlement to stop any scabbing workers from breaking the strike^{xliv}. In the end, the workers won an increase from a basic salary of R 4 000 to a guaranteed salary of R 9 500 a month^{xlv}, demonstrating just how effective mass direct action can be. It is also in this context that the demands of the Marikana workers, for an increase from a basic salary of R 4 000 – excluding housing allowances and production bonuses - to a guaranteed R 12 500 must be seen. As such, the demands of the Marikana workers were not unrealistic, as some on the left have painted them^{xlvi}, but rather quite sound given what occurred at Impala. In early August 2012 there was also action at the Aquarius' Kroondal Mine. There hundreds of mineworkers that had been fired by a sub-contractor for an earlier wildcat strike embarked on a protest to reclaim their jobs. As part of this, they tried to gain access to the mine during the protest, which saw them clashing with the company's armed security. It is, therefore, in this context of ongoing mass mobilisation that the struggle and events of Marikana must be seen – they are part of a longer process that has involved workers mobilising to justly claim what should be theirs across the platinum sector.

What has been important and highly inspiring is that in all of these cases, whether wildcat strikes and/or sit-ins, the workers involved have done them on the basis of self-organisation. Even at Marikana it is evident, for anyone who would wish to see, that the workers themselves organised the action. An Associated Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) official, despite being blamed, acknowledge this^{xlvii}. Certainly, the base of all unions are made up of workers, and consequently union bureaucrats have to, at least to some degree, be responsive to the base. Although unions are a partial space of self-organisation and direct action; this is damped by union bureaucrats, who essentially desire stable relations in the workplaces: their salaries depend on it. As such, a bureaucracy in the type of unions that exist in South Africa – which are not revolutionary but corporatist – have a history, since at least 1994, of trying to ensure struggles don't get out of hand and that they remain within the legal system, and specifically the framework of the labour law. In fact, anyone familiar with wildcat strikes in South Africa knows that they are carried out on the basis of self-organisation – it is simply not in the union officials interests, which lie in formalised collective bargaining and adhering to the law, to organise wildcat strikes and sit-ins. Wildcat strikes and sit-ins require a huge amount of bravery from the workers; not only can you lose your job, but in the case of sit-ins criminal charged are likely to follow. It is the self-organisation of workers in the cases of the sit-ins and wildcat strikes that has been so promising: as will be discussed later the very real potential for the revitalisation of workers' struggles and the possibility of building a counter-power rests on it (including perhaps one day again driving unions in a revolutionary direction).

Over and above the self-organisation involved in the wildcat strikes and sit-ins, elements of, but not full, direct democracy have been seen in some of these struggles. Marikana specifically highlights this, as the workers involved gathered on the now famous hill in what effectively was a mass assembly. The strengths of this were that they had gathered there to discuss and formulate demands. They had also collectively demanded to speak to Lonmin managers about their grievances.^{xlviii} A similar case of using assemblies to organise existed in a number of the other wildcat strikes and sit-ins that have occurred. But there were and are also weaknesses, for instance no clear procedures exist and as such, these meetings could be open to manipulation – as was tried by Julius Malema. To allow for complete direct democracy these assemblies would need appropriate procedures and structures, to

ensure power remains at the base with everyone, and this has not yet appeared at either Marikana or in most of the other wildcat strikes and sit-ins. As such, the mass self-organisation in the assemblies has been important, and the potential for direct democracy to be practiced does exist (but it would need to be taken much further), which make the ongoing battles in the platinum sector potentially so significant.

For the bureaucrats within the NUM, the wildcat strikes and sit-ins represent a challenge. This is because, even if unconsciously, the workers involved are taking their struggles into their own hands, and some are also leaving NUM. Of course, as stated, many of those workers that have undertaken wildcat actions have been poorly represented by NUM: they now form a minority of its membership. Many are also employed through labour brokers, and as a result some fall outside of the deals struck by NUM with the mining companies – as legally their employer is another company. Some within the labour broking companies are not even represented by the NUM as it now mainly focuses on the better paid permanently employed workers. In fact, at Impala Platinum during wage negotiations in 2011, NUM shop stewards (made up mostly of skilled well paid workers) argued against giving rock drillers (the lowest paid workers) a higher increase than the rest of the workforce, effectively sidelining them^{xlix}. The focus on better paid workers by NUM is also part of the reason that in almost every instance, including Marikana, NUM officials have condemned the action of the workers - who tended to be low paid and contract workers - involved in the sit-ins and wildcat strikes; despite some of them being their own members. This has gone as far as calling for the police to arrest those involved, calling on those involved to return to work, and calling on the companies to fire those involved in sit-ins and wildcat strikes^{li}. Thus, the NUM officials' reaction to the Marikana workers, where they called for the police to take strong action against them, is a continuation of the role they have played for a number of years when it comes to self-organised worker struggles or actions by low paid outsourced or contract workers.

NUM officials also negotiate long-term agreements, in a corporatist union manner, with the mining houses, where wages are set for long periods. If workers are unhappy, one of the few avenues they have is wildcat strikes, but this falls outside of the control of the union bureaucrats, which they do not like. In fact, it undermines their authority, hence their negative reaction to wildcat strikes. Many workers themselves often, nevertheless, see wildcat strikes as more effective than protected ones because the companies involved don't have time to make preparations. This, however, means that such actions take place without the consent of the top union officials.

The fact that the NUM does not effectively represent a section of the workers is also the reason why a rival union, AMCU is starting to see an influx of members from the platinum mines. The frustration felt with NUM bureaucrats is growing, especially amongst the contract and labour broker workers. This is why workers heckled top NUM officials when they addressed the gathering at Marikana; and it is why in 2009 the NUM officials, including the President, were pelted with stones by striking workers when they told them to go back to work^{lii}. Many workers are, consequently, looking around for a solution and a way to take their struggles forward; and some are looking to initiatives like AMCU. This search opens up the possibility for a truly self-managed workers' movement to evolve or emerge, but it also opens up potential dangers in that populists – with their own interests – might step into the void. Again, this is a theme that will be returned to.

The corporations and state's reaction to platinum workers' struggles

Corporations have had a history of dealing harshly with wildcat strikes and sit-ins in the platinum sector: they truly fear them and want to wipe them out. As such, the ground had been set for an event like Marikana to occur. In most of the past wildcat strikes and sit-ins, the companies involved have used the strategy of initially dismissing all of the workers undertaking the actions. This has been a way to intimidate the workers involved and to try and stop future actions. There are numerous examples of this: at the Impala Platinum 2012 strike the company dismissed 17 000 workers^{liii}; at the Crocodile River Mine sit-in 560 workers involved were dismissed in 2009^{liv}; at Lonmin's Karee mine 9 000 workers were dismissed for a wildcat strike in 2011^{lv}; at Platmin 500 workers were dismissed for an unprotected strike; and during a massive wildcat strike in 2009 at mines in Rustenburg over 5 000 people involved were sacked^{lvi}. The companies involved, in order not to further disrupt production, also tended to rehire many of the fired workers once the action was over. However, they have re-hired the workers on a selective basis with those who are seen as having been militant, ring-leaders, or 'trouble-makers' excluded. The 2011 wildcat strike at Lonmin highlighted this process clearly: of the 9 000 workers initially fired for being involved, only 6 000 were rehired^{lvii} with the most militant being sidelined.

Bosses have also used underhanded tactics when dealing with workers involved in the sit-ins and wildcat strikes. At the Crocodile River Mine sit-in, for instance, management at the mine, in a bid to obviously end the sit-in and get the workers involved out of the mine, announced that they and NUM officials had reached an agreement to look at the possibility of hiring all contract workers on a permanent basis. As the sit-in had been undertaken around the demand that contract workers be hired on a permanent basis, the workers saw this as a partial victory. On this basis the workers occupying the mine decided to surface. Yet, as soon as they had exited the mine, the management once again reneged on its promises and fired the workers that were involved in the sit-in^{lviii}. Likewise, after a wildcat strike at the Aquarius Mine, most of the workers were fired. Many were then consequently re-hired. Nevertheless, as soon as the workers had returned to work they discovered that the bosses had erased their employment histories and had terminated some of their benefits. This then led to a second wildcat strike. Once again the management fired the workers involved and refused to even issue them with their UIF certificates^{lix}. At Australia Platinum's mine in the Limpopo in 2011 a similar story of deception by management took place. When a number of workers went out on an unprotected strike; the company promised to look into their grievances if they returned to work. The workers agreed to this. Upon doing so, however, disciplinary hearings were subsequently called by management for some of the workers. Upon attending the hearing, the workers involved were promptly arrested upon their appearance, in what was blatant intimidation by management and the police^{lx}. Such tactics, as described above, are clearly used to try and undermine workers' struggles and strike fear into anyone thinking of embarking on a wildcat action.

The labour law in South Africa, as in any other state, is bias against workers. The Labour Relations Act makes it illegal to strike on the premises the employer: any such strike is viewed as unprotected and as trespassing. Naturally in the case of all of the sit-ins and wildcat strikes the state and corporations have colluded, using the law and force, to try and crush the actions and severely punish any workers involved. For example, when the workers surfaced in the aftermath of the Crocodile River Mine occupation, not only were the promises made by management reneged upon, but the workers involved were arrested and charged with trespassing and even kidnapping^{lxi}. At the Bokoni Mine sit-in in 2009 a large and well armed police contingent was sent down the mine with the intention of forcing the workers out. Under the threat of violence, the workers eventually elected to end the sit-in^{lxii}. If workers have tried to

hold out against the threats of the police during sit-ins, this has inevitably led to clashes. For instance, at the Aquarius Kroondal Mine in 2009, over 30 workers had barricaded themselves in and had reportedly set explosive booby-traps to stop the police from violently evicting them. Workers certainly have a right to defend themselves, and they had set the explosive traps up in a context where the police had recently used lethal force against strikers (discussed below). In the end, however, setting explosive booby-traps, in combination with the fact that they were a small minority of workers on the mine, may have been a tactical error by the workers, as the state used it as an excuse to essentially crush them. The police must have been aware of the booby-traps as explosive experts from the Special Task Force were sent down, followed by heavily armed members. Nonetheless, in the eagerness to get to the workers some of the police members set off one of the booby-traps with the result that 3 police were injured. All of the workers involved in the sit-in were consequently forcefully arrested and were charged with offences ranging from malicious damage to property, the illegal position of explosives, attempted murder and trespassing^{lxiii}.

Along with the gung-ho attitude of police storming mines to evict workers involved in sit-ins or to break wildcat strikes, as part of protecting private property, they have used high levels of violence and even lethal force. On numerous occasions police have fired rubber bullets, tear gas and stun grenades at workers involved in wildcat strikes, protected strikes and sit-ins. Along with this, police have also regularly used armoured vehicles and helicopters, reportedly at times filled with armed soldiers, against striking workers. Using such tactics, and violence, has been undertaken to intimidate workers, with the result that many have been injured^{lxiv lxv lxvi}. Communities protesting against pollution, land grabs and a lack of jobs at platinum mines have also not been spared, as police have regularly fired on such protests with rubber bullets^{lxvii lxviii}. As a matter of fact, the use of violence by the South African police across the country is standard practice when it comes to protests that they have deemed to be 'illegal'.

Police and security guards too on a number of occasions have used lethal force against striking workers, sit-ins and community protests in the platinum sector. In 2009 during a widespread strike, police and security guards used a massive amount of force in an attempt to break it. Along with firing rubber bullets, dogs were also set upon striking workers. Live ammunition too was part of the arsenal used. At least 3 strikers were reported as being killed at the hands of the police and security guards, while several went 'missing'^{lxix}. This, however, was not an isolated incident.

In December 2011 a protestor died when people from Bapong protested at Lonmin's operations demanding employment. Police, at the very least, fired rubber bullets at the protestors. On being fired at the crowd retreated. In the wake, however, one of the protestors lay dead at the scene. He had been shot with live ammunition. The police spokesperson said in response to questions about the incident that "it was not immediately clear how he (the protestor) had been killed"^{lxx}.

More recently, on the 1st of August 2012, 3 more workers were killed at the hands of security guards, and 20 more were wounded, at the Aquarius Kroondal Mine. In the build up to this shooting, 200 contract workers, who had been fired by the sub-contractor Murray and Roberts for a wildcat strike, protested against this. They reportedly tried to get onto the mines' property and some allegedly were armed with petrol bombs. Security guards at the mine moved in against them and opened fire with shotguns, in the process killing and wounding the protestors^{lxxi}. It is in this wider context of oppression and police and security guard violence that Marikana must be seen.

Of course, in the days preceding the run up to the massacre at Marikana, 6 workers, 2 security guards, and 2 policemen had died. It has been reported, in an excellent piece in the *Daily Maverick* that the violence began when 3 of the strikers had been gunned down by men wearing NUM T-shirts. Now it is not clear whether these men were in fact NUM members. They certainly may have been (given the competition around recruiting that could exist), but they could also, given history and subsequent events, have been people employed by the mine to break the strike. Whatever the case, management used the incident to promote the idea that all the strike was about was inter-union rivalry and most of the media lapped it up. This was very convenient for the management: it distracted attention from the very real grievances of the workers. For their part, the workers themselves deny that the deaths have been about inter-union rivalry. They have said those on strike included NUM and AMCU members, and some were non-unionised^{lxxii}. It is also in this light of violence directed at the strikers that they, justifiably, armed themselves with knobkerries, spears and pangas (many explicitly said they were armed to defend themselves).

On the 13th of August more violence occurred, again starting out as violence directed at the strikers. On that day a delegation of striking workers was sent by the strikers' assembly to cross over to Lonmin's other operation, the Karee mine. The aim of doing so was to talk to workers there to try to convince them to also come out on strike. In 2011, the workers at Karee had also undertaken a wildcat strike, many had been fired, and discontent was rife. Mine security, however, turned the workers' delegation back. On the way back to Marikana, the workers' delegation was stopped by a group of heavily armed police. They were told to lay down their knobkerries and other weapons. The delegation refused, saying the weapons they had were needed for self-defense as strikers had already been attacked and killed. The police line parted and initially allowed the workers through, on the face of it appearing to have accepted the explanation. Nonetheless, after the workers had got 10 meters, police opened fire and some began chasing the workers. With the support of a helicopter, the police shot dead 2 of the workers, and severely wounded another. The workers for their part, turned on the pursuing police, and in the ensuing clash 2 policemen were killed. A number of the workers were arrested on the scene, and charged with murder, despite having been fired on first^{lxxiii}.

On the 16th of August, the state once again used violence against the strikers. To protect Lonmin and break the strike, the police, as is very well known, shot dead 34 strikers. Reports have arisen that the workers who were captured on TV being shot by the police may also have not been storming the police, but rather fleeing Nyalas that were firing tear gas at them. What-ever the case, and whether this was or was not a premeditated action by the police, the police showed little hesitation in gunning down the workers. The workers who were shot in front of the TV cameras were also, nevertheless, reportedly a minority of those killed. Other workers had fled, in the aftermath of the shooting, and they had headed towards the Marikana settlement. Some reports indicate that a number of them were ridden over by Nyalas. Some workers also tried to flee into a boulder field to hide: the boulder field was 400 metres in the opposite direction to where the TV cameras were. They were then pursued by police task force members into the boulder field, and evidence has emerged that some of these workers were executed there.^{lxxiv} Marikana, of course, took place in the context where the police had openly stated on the day of the massacre that it was "D-day" for the strikers^{lxxv}. The state and the bosses had decided that the strike would end, and the police would do that, all in the name of protecting private property and the economic interests of the owners of the mine. Ending protests and strikes, including using lethal force, it must be stressed is not unusual for the police; it is not a break with their task, but rather part of their role. The scale of the killings was far

larger at Marikana (and the largest since 1994), but it is not new for the police to kill, intimidate and even torture in the name of protecting the interests of the rich and powerful.

The lessons of Marikana and the events in the platinum sector

The outright violence of the state in the platinum sector and at Marikana, therefore, lays bare the true nature of the state; and the role it plays in protecting the ruling class. It is not an unfortunate accident that the state has been protecting the mines of huge corporations, like Lonmin, and that it has been willing to use such violence to do so. It is rather one of the main functions of the state (and hence its police): it is what it is designed for. For capitalism to function, and for class rule to be maintained, a state is vital. It is central to protecting and maintaining the very material basis on which the power of the elite is derived. Without a state, which claims a monopoly on violence within a given territory, an elite could not rule nor could it claim or hold onto the ownership of wealth and the means of production. In fact, the state as an entity is the “defender of the class system and a centralised body that necessarily concentrates power in the hands of the ruling classes; in both respects, it is the means through which a minority rules a majority”^{lxxvi}. Through its executive, legislative, judiciary and policing arms the state always protects the minority ownership of property (whether private or state-owned property), and tries to squash any threat posed to the continuing exploitation and oppression of the working class. As Marikana, and other protests and strikes show, that even includes and goes as far as killing those that pose a threat.

All states, wherever and whenever they have existed, also have always intervened in the economy in favour of a ruling class of some sort. As noted by Kropotkin, under capitalism:

“the state has always interfered in the economic life in favour of the capitalist exploiter. It has always granted protection in robbery, given aid and support for further enrichment. And it could not be otherwise. To do so was one of the functions – the chief mission – of the state.”

This is why the South African state has legalised the land grabs of platinum companies, like Lonmin. It is also why it does little or nothing to stop the massive pollution they are causing – to do so would not economically favour these corporations.

State managers, who comprise a section of the ruling class, based on their control of the means of coercion, administration and sometimes production, also have their own reasons for wanting to protect the minority ownership of property – which includes private and state-owned property – because their own privileged positions rest on exploitation. As such, all states maintain capitalism and minority rule through hierarchies and a chain of command^{lxxvii}. Thus, it is wrong to believe that the South African state was ever going to be a neutral entity in the struggles in the platinum sector and at Marikana. Its role is not that of a protector of the workers’ interests, it is rather that of a protector of corporate interests, and when the need arises, it is quite willing to kill for these interests. Certainly we must raise demands from the state, and mobilise to have these met, but we must realise that the state is part of the problem: it is inherently in opposition to the working class. As such, we must make demands, but we need to fight and mobilise for those outside of and against the state.

The state, nevertheless, can’t simply rule by force alone – force is ultimately the last pillar upon which its power rests – but for its own stability and that of capital, it also tries to rule through consent. To do so, it pretends to be a benefactor of all; while in

reality facilitating, entrenching and perpetrating exploitation and oppression. Certainly, most states today do have laws protecting basic rights, and some provide welfare – including the South African state. Such laws and welfare, however, have been won through massive struggles by the oppressed, and that should not be forgotten; states simply did not hand out these rights. But even where such laws exist, and sometimes they merely exist on paper, the state tries to make propaganda mileage out of them. It is this duplicity that led Malatesta to argue that the state: “cannot maintain itself for long without hiding its true nature behind a pretence of general usefulness; it cannot impose respect for the lives of the privileged people if it does not appear to demand respect for human life, it cannot impose acceptance of the privileges of the few if it does not pretend to be the guardian of the rights of all^{lxxviii}”. It is in this context that the South African state’s announcement that it is setting up a Commission of Inquiry into what happened at Marikana must be seen. Even within this, however, it must be recognised that the Commission of Inquiry will not be neutral. It will, itself, be part of the state, it will be centralised, and its functioning will be based on laws which are against the majority. Consequently, it will be inherently bias towards the state and the company.

What the events at Marikana and on the platinum mines also reveal is the nature and form capitalism has taken in South Africa. Ever since capitalism emerged it has been based on the exploitation of both black and white workers. However, in South Africa, black workers have also been subjected to national oppression; and this has meant that they were systematically turned into a source of extremely cheap labour and subjected to institutionalised racism. The history of very cheap black labour enabled white capitalists – traditionally centred around the mine-owners – to make super profits, and it is on this basis that they became very wealthy^{lxxix}. Without extremely cheap black labour, mining in South Africa would have never been as profitable and the riches of the white capitalists would have been much less.

Today, as seen by the situation on platinum mines, this continues: the wealth of the ruling class still rests mainly on extremely cheap black labour: it is the reason why certain sections of the economy, like platinum mining, are so profitable. Since 1994 the entire working class has fallen deeper into poverty, including sections of the white working class, as inequality has grown between the ruling class and working class as a whole. However, the black working class, due to mostly holding the lowest paid jobs and thus facing continued racism, remains both subject to exploitation and national oppression. Until this is ended, along with the capitalist system on which it is based and which it serves, true freedom and equality for both the black and white working class will not be achieved in South Africa. As was vividly highlighted by Marikana, therefore, central to the struggle to end capitalism has to be the ending of the national oppression, and accompanying racism, that the black working class is subjected to. As anarchists have long pointed out, however, if a just society is to be achieved the means and the ends in struggle have to be as similar as possible. Hence, if we want a future genuinely equal and non-racist society, our struggle to end the national oppression of the black working class, and the accompanying capitalist and state systems in South Africa, must be based firmly on the ideals of non-racialism. This too is highly important to ensure that populists, amongst them Julius Malema, using racist rhetoric to benefit themselves, do not make gains out of struggles such as Marikana.

While it is clear that the black working class remains nationally oppressed, the situation for the small black elite, nevertheless, is very different. Some, through their high positions in the state, and hence having control over the means of coercion and administration, have joined the old white capitalists in the ruling class. They themselves have used their positions in the state to amass wealth and power.

Others, have also joined the ruling class, but through the route of Black Economic Empowerment. This can be seen in the fact that all of the top ANC linked black families – the Mandelas, Thambos, Ramaposas, Zumas, Moosas etc. – have shares in or sit on the boards of the platinum mining companies^{lxxx}. In fact, Ramaphosa not only owns shares in, and is on the board of, Lonmin; but a number of functions at Marikana are outsourced to various companies he has interests in, like Minorex^{lxxxi}. The wealth and power of this black section of the ruling class in South Africa too rests on the exploitation of the working class as a whole, but mostly and specifically on the exploitation and national oppression of the black working class. Hence, this is the reason why the black section of the ruling class has been so willing to take action – whether during platinum strikes, Marikana, other strikes in general, or community protests – against the black working class.

Mikhael Bakunin foresaw the possibility of such a situation arising in cases where national liberation was based upon the strategy of capturing state power. Bakunin said that the “statist path” was “entirely ruinous for the great masses of the people” because it did not abolish class power but simply changed the make-up of the ruling class^{lxxxii}. Due to the centralised nature of states, only a few can rule: a majority of people can never be involved in decision making under a state system. As a result, he stated that if the national liberation struggle was carried out with “ambitious intent to set up a powerful state”, or if “it is carried out without the people and must therefore depend for success on a privileged class” it would become a “retrogressive, disastrous, counter-revolutionary movement”^{lxxxiii}. He also noted that when former liberation heroes enter into the state, because of its top down structure, they become rulers and get used to the privileges their new positions carry, and they come to “no longer represent the people but themselves and their own pretensions to govern the people”^{lxxxiv}. History has proven his insights to be correct; former liberation heroes in South Africa rule in their own interests, they wallow in the privileges of their positions, and they exploit and oppress the vast majority of the people in the country, including at Marikana and in the platinum sector.

What is to be done?

It is vital that a revolutionary working class counter-power emerges in South Africa, based on self-organisation, direct democracy, direct action, appropriate tactics and a vision. If it does not, the exploitation and oppression that defines companies like Lonmin, the economy, and society as a whole will continue. Linked to this, the national oppression of the black working class will continue. Freedom is, therefore, not going to drop from heaven; unless a counter-power emerges the working class will continue to suffer. History has also proven that true freedom won't be given by the current state; but – as will be touched upon later – it will also in all likelihood not be granted by a workers' party, of whatever variety, heading up a state, even if it is called a workers' state. Indeed, if the working class truly seizes power, there would be no need for a state (which as an institution has throughout history protected minority rule). Rather society where the working class genuinely has power, would probably be run via organs such as federated assemblies and councils based on direct democracy. Building a revolutionary counter-power capable of creating and winning a new society based on genuine freedom and equality, via revolution, will not be easy. In all likelihood, as Marikana gives us an insight into, it will also not be peaceful. Rather a working class counter-power is going to have to be built brick by brick by the workers and unemployed; and it is going to have to be built in opposition to capitalism and the state system. The problem, if one is sober and honest, is that at the moment, community movements remain small; the COSATU unions are no longer revolutionary; and the ‘service delivery’ protests promising but not yet galvanising into durable structures or a movement. In fact, COSATU unions are a

shadow of what they were like in the 1980s; they have entwined with the ANC (stifling political independence), they are embedded in social dialogue; and have become wedded to a corporatist type unionism, which not only generates a bureaucracy but entrenches its power.

Marikana and the other struggles in the platinum sector offer a possible catalyst to change this all. The importance of the struggles in the platinum sector, and massive potential, are due to several reasons. The platinum sector is a strategic industry within South Africa, employing a large number of people and it is central to the economy, meaning a well organised militant force in the sector could have a massive impact. As a matter of fact over 180 000 people are employed directly in the sector, platinum is the country's biggest mineral export, and South Africa has the vast majority of the world's platinum reserves^{lxxxv}. Not only could such a militant force cause economic damage to its class enemies, but because of its strategic nature, real gains could be won. Added to this, the confidence amongst the workers to win battles is already there: this can be seen most clearly in the events around the Impala Platinum 2012 wildcat strike. If a movement/union that is militant and strong can galvanise and sustain itself in the platinum sector, it could easily inspire workers in other sectors, where militancy in recent years has been far less, but also activists involved in community struggles elsewhere in the country. In fact, Marikana is one of the few cases since 1994 where communities and workers have joined up in struggle. Most COSATU unions, including the NUM, have unfortunately tended to be weary of the community protests that have erupted in South Africa, partly because they are protests directed largely at its alliance partner in the state. In terms of this, and despite some tensions having existed in the past, it was truly significant that women from the community joined and united with the male strikers at certain times during the on-going protests. It is also significant that the Marikana community cheered the recent march to Lonmin's Karee Mine by the strikers, when it passed by their houses^{lxxxvi}. Added to this, and again despite some tensions, the platinum belt is also one area where the struggles of workers and wider communities overlap: both starkly face the same enemies and as a result working class unity there could be built.

Indeed, out of the wildcat strikes and sit-ins it is very likely a militant force, whether based around unions or other structures, could emerge in the next few years in the platinum belt, but what form and the politics it might take up are unclear^{lxxxvii}. As such, it could end up being progressive and even revolutionary; or it could end up being populist. Out of the struggles in the platinum sector though a real potential lies for building a mass movement controlled by the workers' themselves based around the principles of self-organisation, direct democracy, and direct action. Added to this, the potential also exists for unions, like AMCU and possibly even NUM, to be radicalised. Certainly a foundation does exist, but whether such a mass movement or union rejuvenation will arise is not guaranteed; if it is to do so, a vision is going to be vital along with greater co-ordination and the adoption of appropriate and consistent strategies and tactics.

It is possible that the NUM could also be re-radicalised out of the wildcat strikes, sit-ins and ongoing militant struggles in the platinum sector. This is, however, unlikely for several reasons. As stated, if it is correct that the lowest paid, and the most militant section of the miners that have been at the forefront of wildcat strikes and sit-ins now form a minority in NUM, it is unclear how they would have the power to drive the union in a radical direction. One way could be to set up networks to try and win other NUM members over to their side, and eventually form a block to try and drive the union in a revolutionary direction. This would also have to entail getting the union to also break with the ANC, social dialogue and its corporatist orientation. However, if

workers were to form such a network, expulsion from the union would be a real possibility. At times, NUM officials have worked with bosses in the aftermath of wildcat strikes or sit-ins to have the most militant workers involved sidelined during rehiring processes (and hence also pushed out of the union). Some officials have also subverted democratic processes to prevent selected candidates, including Archie Palane, for standing for office^{lxxxviii}. It seems such tactics of subverting democracy would also be used against any block or network of radical workers who want the union to be militant. The fight for workers to take control over NUM, challenge and remove the bureaucracy, and drive the union in radical direction would, should it happen, be a major battle and nasty. The officials, some of whom earn up to R77 000 a month, will fight tooth and nail to stop this; and if challenged they would, in all likelihood, resort to mass expulsions.

AMCU itself is a split off from the NUM that comes out of a past purge undertaken by leading NUM officials. AMCU was formed when the secretary of the NUM branch at the Douglas Coal Mine, Joesph Mathunjwa, was expelled from NUM in 1999. The background to this was that Mathunjwa was fired from Douglas. In response, 3 000 workers went out on a wildcat strike at the company demanding his re-instatement. The company eventually buckled, but the NUM General Secretary at the time, Gwede Mantashe, brought charges against Mathunjwa. He claimed that as a result of the incident, Mathunjwa had brought the NUM into disrepute. Other officials within NUM, such as Archie Palane, had found that Mathunjwa had not brought the union into disrepute, but Mantashe insisted the charges go ahead (he had clashed with Mathunjwa before over resources, and it looked as if he was out for revenge). Mantashe also insisted that he chair Mathunjwa's hearing. Mathunjwa in response, and in the light of previous history with Mantashe, called for an independent chair. Mantashe refused and promptly had Mathunjwa expelled from NUM. The workers at Douglas resigned from the NUM in solidarity with Mathunjwa, and AMCU was formed with Mathunjwa as the General Secretary. Since then it has gained ground in the platinum sector, including some recruits at Lonmin^{lxxxix}, but it still remains much smaller than NUM.

It is perhaps likely that AMCU will be driven in a more radical direction by the struggles in the platinum sector. A section of the workers that have been involved in wildcat strikes and sit-ins have gone over to AMCU. In fact, AMCU actively recruits labour broker and contract workers. For the moment, however, AMCU itself is not revolutionary. AMCU's structures are still reportedly weak, its President and General Secretary have held the same offices ever since it began more than a decade ago, it is not yet based on direct democracy, and it does not see itself – at least openly – as being linked to a revolutionary vision. Although the AMCU officials appear better than the NUM ones, if a counter-power is to emerge around it, AMCU too would have to be transformed into a bottom-up, directly democratic, and militant union by the members themselves. It would also have to grow. All of this, however, would require workers within it to organise, possibly in networks, to do so and to claim power within the union.

What has been extremely interesting, and potentially very promising way forward for workers struggles, and the possibility of building a revolutionary working class counter-power, has been the mass assemblies that have been self-organised at Marikana and around other wildcat strikes and sit-ins in the platinum sector. The potential of these becoming the basis of a counter-power could possibly be realised, in the future, if the workers involved in them could, at some point, turn them into more durable assemblies, in which workers regularly met. This would also require appropriate procedures and structures to ensure full direct democracy. The struggles in the platinum sector are not going to end anytime soon, more sit-ins and wildcat

strike assemblies will emerge. If some of them could become more permanent in the future, and developed healthy procedures and a culture based on direct democracy, they could be used by the workers involved to systematically entrench militancy and self-organisation across the platinum sector. It also means workers across the different unions, as has happened in the sit-ins and wildcat strikes, could participate in these together. Consequently, they could also be a way of circumventing or challenging the union bureaucracies, and they could be the basis of building solidarity and mutual aid on the ground amongst workers, which will be vital for militant struggles going forward. However, if such assemblies do ever emerge in different workplaces, they would also have to be federated. To co-ordinate joint actions and contact, a system of mandated recallable delegates in federated councils could be established – but power would have to remain in the assemblies themselves if genuine control by the workers is to be maintained. In order to foster working class unity, and link worker and community struggles, community members could also participate in the assemblies. Thus, through extending current initiatives, federated working class organs, controlled directly by the working class could be created, initially in the platinum sector, but by example extended to other sectors and communities. Through this, and a revolutionary practice, culture, and vision, a counter-power could be built. The workers involved too could use these structures as a platform to fight to transform the existing unions into revolutionary organisations. In fact, unions, controlled by workers, will also be vital for fighting for demands, extending the power of workers, and eventually taking over workplaces. These unions would, however, have to be radically different in nature from what currently exists today in South Africa.

For this to happen, the workers involved in future wildcat strikes and sit-in assemblies would have to consciously transform their current experiments with elements of direct democracy, direct action, and mutual aid into a revolutionary vision and a revolutionary practice. It is here that socialists who are truly for working class power, especially anarchists, could play a role. Firstly, anarchists, despite the movement being small, could offer solidarity, and through this share ideas about how worker assemblies and councils, based on direct democracy, have been used in the past in struggles and revolutionary situations. Knowledge about the nature, history and practice of revolutionary unions could also be shared. This would not involve anarchists imposing ideas or looking to lead through force, but rather sharing our knowledge and vision of a genuine working class power. Indeed, the very foundations of anarchism as a revolutionary practice are built around working class power, direct democracy, self-organisation and direct action. Elements of these principles are already, even if unconsciously and not completely, being used in the workers' struggles. As anarchism arose out of the struggles of the working class; it has much to offer to existing struggles in South Africa, including workers struggles in the platinum sector. The real problem for the moment though is that socialist organisations who are for genuine working class power, not least the anarchist ones, are currently very small in South Africa – this also needs to change if a working class revolutionary counter-power is to be built.

The one thing though in trying to build a counter-power in South Africa, if it is to emerge, is that any illusions in a state, of whatever kind, need to be countered by socialists that are for genuine working class power. This will have to also happen in the battle of ideas that will take place if a counter-power is to be built (whether in the unions or an assembly type movement). The reality is that many leftists still believe a state of some type can be used to free the working class. Many too believe the state can be used to make gains for the working class. This can be seen in the fact that many leftists, before and in the aftermath of Marikana, have called for mines to be nationalised by the state^{xc}. Those calling for nationalisation of the mines, even

though they are well-meaning, make the mistake of completely misreading the nature of all states, and by doing so they call on workers to head down a dead-end path. Some people calling for nationalisation of the mines sometimes acknowledge that states exist for one class to rule over another. Nonetheless, it is evident that states are more than this. All states, whether they claim to be capitalist or 'socialist', have existed so that a minority can rule over a majority. As such, state ownership, which nationalisation is, does not equate to ownership by the working class, but rather a state bureaucracy. It is this that led Emma Goldman to argue that when property or a company is nationalised:

"it belongs to the state; this is, the government has control of it and can dispose of it according to its wishes and views...such a condition of affairs is called state capitalism but it would be fantastic to consider it in any sense communistic^{xci}"

Of course, some leftist groups try address some of the problems around nationalisation by stating it must be under workers' control^{xcii}. In fact, many calls have been made in left pamphlets in the aftermath of Marikana for a long-term fight to be waged to get the mines to be nationalised under workers' control^{xciii}. The comrades making these calls do believe it is a genuine solution; but again their analysis is fundamentally flawed. To begin with, it is inconsistent with building a truly working class revolutionary counter-power, as it places faith in a higher institution, the state, and not in the working class itself. This is because in the end the state, even if it ever nationalised the mines (which is questionable today) will still own such mines; not the working class. Added to this, it is illogical to believe an instrument of repression, which has gunned down working class people so ruthlessly, whether at Marikana or elsewhere, would allow workers to run the factories or mines it owned.

In fact, there are ample examples from history that demonstrate that the interests of workers' self-management (genuine workers' control and not simply 'oversight' over managers) and state-ownership, including ownership under a so-called workers' state, are incompatible. States have shown to have almost no interest in allowing workers to run their own affairs or to allow democracy in the workplace. The Soviet Union itself is a prime example of this. It was the Soviet state, under the dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party, which unfortunately crushed worker self-management. This happened shortly after the October Revolution when the interests of the working class began to openly clash with those of the elite within the Bolshevik Party. As such, it was in 1918, before the civil war, that Lenin ended worker self-management within Russia through decreeing the implementation of one-man management^{xciv xcv}. This saw the Soviet state appoint new managers, often from the ranks of the old elite, and forcefully end any pretence of democracy in the workplace. The fact that the Soviet state had nationalised most of the factories, which had originally been seized by workers from the capitalists, contributed to this – it gave the Soviet state immense power which it then wielded against the workers. In fact, the Soviet state accepted no independent initiative from workers and state rule proved itself incompatible with workers' self-management and direct democracy. As workers were not, and could never be the state, state ownership never translated into the socialisation of property and wealth, it never led to an end to capitalism, and it smothered workers' control. As such, nationalisation also never broke the relations of production that defined capitalism; it rather re-instituted it and entrenched it^{xcvi}. As such, nationalisation under workers' control has proved to be a historical oxymoron: a tactical and ideological dead end that undermines true workers' control and self-management.

While being sober, and recognising we are a long way off from any movement being a strong revolutionary counter-power; it is vital our visions, our actions, and our

practices are consistent with extending working class power. To build a counter-power requires working class power to be extended today and in the future. Certainly, reforms must be won, and they are already in the platinum sector, but if workers are to build a counter power they need to be won in a way that extends working class power. Battles have to be fought to win higher wages, to end racism, to win a reduction in pollution by platinum mines, to win safe working conditions, to end outsourcing, to end labour broking, and to get better services like housing not only in the platinum belt, but eventually everywhere. On the platinum mines, as an intermediate step, workers could also fight for gaining control over greater aspects of their work, including rolling back the power of security guards and management, as a way to build up to and prefigure taking over the mines completely. Such gains, however, must be won independently by the working class. That also means identifying who the enemies are and realising that it is not only capitalists that are the enemy, but high ranking state officials too. Indeed, it is illogical to see the state as a lesser evil to capitalists; rather they are part and parcel of the same system.

Our goal as the broader working class, therefore, should not be to fight for nationalisation and state ownership in the future: it is inconsistent with building a working class controlled power both today and in the long run. Thus, a much better and more consistent option for the working class is to fight for reforms, against the state and capitalists, in a way that extends working class power so that we can build up in the long run to a revolution. To be consistent in achieving working class power, we must fight for workers to seize the mines, factories and farms through their own organs in the long run (whether future revolutionary unions and/or councils) and we must build towards that through our struggles in the short and medium term. In other words, the long term goal, if we are consistent, is for workers to fight to take over the mines, factories, farms and run them on the basis of worker self-management in order to meet everyone's needs. This too would allow for the relations within production to be changed into ones based on equality and direct democracy, which is so desperately needed at workplaces, including Lonmin. The economy and wider society, including local, city-wide, regional and international affairs, could be run by the working class, once states are smashed, through federated assemblies and councils, using mandated and recallable delegates where the power remains at the base. Such a vision is far from utopian, in every single revolution, worthy of the name, elements of this have been implemented by the working class itself. Even in South Africa workplaces have been occupied too in the past and, at its best, people's power in the communities was based on elements of direct democracy. To defend a revolution, armed militia – made up of workers and the poor and controlled by them through direct democracy – could be used. In fact, self-defence for the working class is needed, as Marikana casts light on, but it needs to be based on direct democracy (otherwise it will become a power apart from the working class and probably will in the long run try and crush the working class). If we want such a society, based on working class power, we have to start building towards it today and the means and ends have to be as similar as possible – hopefully Marikana and the struggles in the platinum sector can be the catalyst to start the long journey of doing that.

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- ^v <http://dailymaverick.co.za/article/2012-08-30-the-murder-fields-ofmarikana> 30th August 2012
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- ^{vii} <http://www.citypress.co.za/SouthAfrica/News/Cops-torture-miners-20120825> 27th August 2012
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