

# Global Issues

## Mall Attacks and the Everyday Crisis of the Working Class in South Africa

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Is it a food riot? Is it a conspiracy? Is it an insurrection? No, it's the working class! In motion, albeit in disorderly fashion. The mass attacks on shopping malls by thousands of people in several cities and towns in South Africa, including the blocking of highways and the burning of trucks, has left many people without a clear answer to Marvin Gaye's basic question: What's going on? (Mosley and Raphelson, 2021).

This was big. Politically bigger than the Marikana massacre if the death toll is the yardstick. On 16 August 2012, mineworkers were shot dead by the police during a wage strike at Lonmin, a British platinum mining company (Sinwell with Mbatha, 2016). The burst of morning gunfire left thirty-four lifeless workers on the ground. The political repercussions of this bloodbath are still felt today in South Africa. It split the trade union movement, midwifed the founding of the second biggest political opposition party, and exposed the class character of the post-apartheid state to the millions (Ashman and Pons-Vignon, 2015). The African National Congress (ANC) government was irrefutably revealed as an agent of big capital (Dixon, 2012).

### Five Days that Shook South Africa

The economic sabotage, looting, arson, unrest and/or uprising which began on 9 July 2021, and ended about a week later, left more than 300 dead (Cottle, 2021). No one is calling it a massacre, but the body count is undoubtedly worthy of one. After the dust and smoke had settled, a picture of what happened is emerging although many questions still need answering, such as how exactly those who died lost their lives. The melee began with inflammatory social media posts that threatened thunder and brimstone if former president Jacob Zuma was not released from prison (Motha, 2021; Nkanjeni, 2021). He had been recently sentenced to a fifteen-month spell in jail for failure to heed a court order instructing him to cooperate with the commission on "state capture", South African nomenclature for corruption involving government contracts and tenders, in which his close associates are alleged to have brazenly engaged.<sup>1</sup> His leading supporters, including his daughter and other family members, called on the masses to engage in disruptive and violent protest; they are accused of having orchestrated specific actions of economic sabotage, arson and looting on at least the first day of the protest.

The first incidents happened around the coastal city of Durban, with protests in Mayville

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<sup>1</sup> See the website of the Zondo Commission – officially the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture. Under the guidance of Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, it is investigating allegations of state capture, corruption and fraud in the public sector including organs of state: <https://www.statecapture.org.za>

informal settlement, Ntuzuma township and Verulam, as well as violent clashes in Phoenix, a residential area historically designated a “group area” for “Indians” (people of Asian descent) by the defunct apartheid regime (Makhatini and Moodley, n.d.). The first shop to be looted was a Boxer Cash and Carry located in KwaMashu, the sprawling working-class township where the late actor, Henry “Black Cat” Cele, famous for his legendary portrayal of King Shaka Zulu, was born (Singh, Wicks and Morais).<sup>2</sup> A key incident occurred at the Mooi River Toll Plaza, located 150 kilometres north of Durban, on the N3 highway to Johannesburg, where trucks ferrying goods between the coast and the industrial inland were used to block traffic; twenty-six trucks were burned to ashes, including a car carrier laden with vehicles (Ncwane, 2021). On the second day, July 10, there was only one reported incident, looting at the Nyala Centre shopping mall in KwaMashu. On the third day, the media reported ten or so incidents of violence, arson and looting in Durban and its outskirts. Ominously, the action spread to Johannesburg, the country’s largest city; as expected, incidents of violence happened near the (apartheid-created) single-sex hostels where Zulu-speaking workers live (Dlomo, 2021; Staff Reporter, News24, 2021b). Many of these workers are migrants from rural homesteads in the province of KwaZulu–Natal and, as such, arguably susceptible to Zulu ethnic mobilisation; this occupies pride of place in Zuma’s political arsenal. During apartheid, as followers of the Zulu king and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, the hostel dwellers were successfully mobilised to violently attack township folk and ANC supporters in a divide-and-rule strategy called “black on black violence” by a besieged apartheid regime, with the implication that the violence could only be quelled by white adjudication and continued rule (Mzala, 1988). From the start, looting incidents were slightly more numerous than those of arson and blocking of roads in the big city.

Day four, July 12, saw a ten-fold increase in looting, disruption and violence that spread beyond Durban and Johannesburg into surrounding towns, albeit confined to the two provinces of KwaZulu–Natal and Gauteng where these cities are located. For every incident of “protest violence”, there were about ten of looting.<sup>3</sup> The smash-and-grab focused on malls located inside working-class townships such as Soweto, in Johannesburg. Soweto is the largest township in South Africa and is well known for spearheading the demise of apartheid. On 16 June 1976, high school students staged an uprising there. Hundreds of them were killed by the police and army as they faced armoured vehicles and bullets with dustbin lids and stones (SAHO, n.d. [b]). The youth made history because, in struggle parlance, their blood watered the tree of liberation. The same can be said of George Floyd whose death galvanised hundreds of thousands against racism and police brutality in the United States and beyond (Douglas, Chrisafis and Mohdin, 2021). The fact that a lot of the looting happened in township shopping malls requires explanation and may help find the answer to Marvin Gaye’s question. Under apartheid there were hardly any shopping malls in black townships. You had to get on a bus or a train to buy stuff in the white city centre. Black business growth was inhibited and restricted to black areas by the white supremacist regime (Kondlo, 2014). With the demise of apartheid, the supermarket chains, hankering after the black rand, started moving into the townships in a big way and, in the process, decimated the black-owned corner shops that had survived apartheid (Oxfam, 2020). The dominant narrative was that the shopping malls owned by white monopoly capital were bringing convenience, jobs and development to the townships. Maybe, but when the looting started, the malls located within walking distance of the

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.pinterest.fr/trueper93/henry-cele-actor-as-shaka-zulu-a-true-story>

<sup>3</sup> Ratio of looting to violent protest based on my analysis of the Unrest Map: Tracking South Africa’s July 2021 Unrest, <https://appengine.policylab.app/UnrestTracker> (accessed 27 September 2021).

homes of angry and hungry mobs were easy targets and were ripped apart and stripped bare of all goods, equipment and fittings (Mokholo, 2021).

The arson and violence continued, albeit completely eclipsed by the orgy of cash-free mass shopping. For some it seemed as if it was the first time that they pushed a trolley full of goods they were taking home. You could sit in front of your TV set the whole day eating popcorn and watching hundreds of people carting goods from shops, liquor stores and warehouses. Transport was arranged in the form of cars, improvised carts, wheelbarrows, trolleys and strong necks balancing stuff on African heads. The chaos continued for a couple of days and started to taper off sharply after the mobilisation of 25 000 soldiers to support the overwhelmed police (Meldrum and Magome, 2021). By July 17 there were only one or two sporadic incidents reported. Condemned by all as useless in the face of the attacks on private and public property, the police claimed that they had to respond with restraint “to avoid another Marikana [massacre]” (Letsie, 2021). Some people wondered aloud whether some of the police were part of the conspiracy to make the country ungovernable in support of Zuma (Democratic Alliance, 2021). Certainly, it was an open secret that the crime intelligence unit of the police had been corrupted under Zuma’s watch as president of the country, with senior officers milking slush funds and putting their friends and relatives on the payroll as undercover police informers who did nothing (Simelane, 2021). These abuses and weaknesses in the country’s security system frightened many people who felt vulnerable and unprotected as they watched the chaos unfold.

Some of the people who died were crushed to death during stampedes in shopping malls (Mlambo, 2021). In the absence of the police, private security guards became an important line of defence against the attacks on property (Payne, 2021). South Africa has proportionately one of the biggest private security industries in the world (Eastwood, 2013). People say it is because the police are so useless. They are slow to respond in emergencies, fail to secure convictions in 90 per cent of their caseload, partly because of poor detective work, and are known to take bribes. Others say it is because, as one recent book title opines, “Apartheid did not die; it was privatised” (Mpfu-Walsh, 2021). In other words, the coincidence of race and class has allowed the replacement of race-based apartheid with class apartheid. Rich whites defend their property, wealth, health and privileges using money, which can be a great enabler and excluder depending on how much of it you have. There is reason to believe that the richer malls in the northern suburbs were immune to attack because they are located far from working-class areas and enjoy heavy private security (Staff Reporter, Sandton Times, 2021).

Some residents, frightened by the arson and looting, started to organise themselves, sometimes coordinating with private security, to defend “their areas” (Singh, 2021). Excess and arbitrariness followed as the mobilisation assumed vigilante form. In Phoenix, racism reared its ugly head as African people were barred from entering the suburb and violently attacked leaving thirty-six dead, mostly by gunshot (Mavuso, 2021). This brought back painful memories of the “Zulu versus Indian riots” that took place on 13–15 January 1949 and which claimed 142 lives (Soske, 2009). Phoenix is one of the oldest Indian settlements, first populated by indentured workers imported from India to work on Durban’s sugar cane plantations. History books suggest that Mahatma Gandhi formally established the settlement in 1904 (SAHO, n.d. [a]). In 1985, at the height of the apartheid struggle, during “riots” in nearby Inanda, a predominantly African working-class area, and during the KwaZulu–Natal political violence, hundreds of Indian families were displaced and found permanent refuge in Phoenix (Hughes, 1987). Normally, there is mostly peaceful co-existence between these communities. During the struggle against apartheid Stephen Biko, the Black Consciousness leader killed by apartheid police in detention on 12 September 1977,

seminally defined “Indians”, “Africans” and “Coloureds” (people of mixed race) as “black”, an intervention that solidified unity in the liberation struggle and contributed significantly to apartheid’s demise (Fatton, 1986: 32). Events in Phoenix suggest the unravelling of the Biko definition of blackness.

There is no accurate accounting of the full extent of damage and injury caused by the five or so days of what is increasingly being called the “unrest” in South Africa. The death toll stands at 354, although in only a third of these cases is the cause of death reliably stated (David, 2021; Staff Reporter, Aljazeera, 2021; Staff Reporter, Bloomberg News, 2021)). Investigative journalists and researchers are following up with reluctant and silent authorities who seem to have something to hide (Amnesty International, 2021; Davis, Nicolson and Simelane, 2021). Perhaps they have, because the main cause seems to be gunshot wounds, including rubber bullets fired at fatally close range (RSA, 2021a, 2021b; Seleka, 2021). Private security and citizens seem to have done a lot of the shooting. The police say that 138 murders were reported, among other cases. They have made 2 051 arrests in KwaZulu–Natal province, which includes suspected killers, looters and “instigators” (BBC, 2021; Staff Reporter, News24, 2021a). This province appears to have borne much more of the unrest than Gauteng. Government reports state that nationally 161 malls, 11 warehouses, 8 factories and 161 liquor stores were ransacked, with some burned down (Staff Reporter, Moneyweb, 2021). A figure bandied about estimates overall lost output at R50 billion (\$3.4 billion) (Cele and Wilson, 2021; Staff Reporter, Business Insider, 2021; Staff Writer, BusinessTech, 2021). Some sources estimate that 50 000 retail shops, and small and informal businesses were affected (Rondganger, 2021). The banks report that they had to close shop on July 12–14 after 1 400 automatic teller machines (ATMs) and about 300 bank branches and post office outlets were vandalised (Daniel, 2021). Employed workers suffered as more than a hundred thousand jobs were threatened or earnings lost because of business closures, especially employees of small businesses that were not insured (Ask Africa, 2021). These losses came on the back of the COVID-19 crisis and its negative consequences for bosses and workers.

## **What’s Going On?**

Despite the call for the army and police to contain and crush the economic saboteurs, arsonists and looters, and of course the conspirators trying to overthrow the government, many voices including of government officials acknowledged that poverty was an important factor in what happened (Chokoe, 2021; Singh, 2021; Staff Reporter, VOA, 2021). In other words, the great gap between the rich and poor in South Africa provided the tinder that led to the conflagration. The grass is green in summer but in winter it gets very dry. Being an old farm boy, Malcolm X would probably quip that if you light a match and the grass burns you can’t blame the grass.<sup>4</sup> Although a lot of ridicule was directed at the looters for stealing appliances and furniture, which suggested to the moralists that these were not poor and hungry people, many of them raided the supermarkets for food. A young black PhD candidate told the nation on radio that he had slept on the floor of his mother’s house because of poverty until he was well beyond being a teenager, and that he understood the sight of people determinedly hauling double beds to their homes (SAfm Radio,

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<sup>4</sup> “Being an old farm boy myself, chickens coming home to roost never did make me sad; they’ve always made me glad”, said Malcolm X in 1963, responding to the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy thus causing a veritable political storm which was to shape his subsequent political career. See Breitman (1970).

2021). Social media had a field day of derision with the picture of a blue corner coach which was too big to fit inside a shack (Abrahams, 2021; LeahWrites, 2021).

But what does it mean to someone who is hungry, who must just walk past a shop that is filled with food because they have no money? What does it mean to someone who is tired, but must pass a bus and walk because they have no money? What does it mean to someone who is sick, and must pass a chemist filled with medicine because they have no money? Where is the crime when people must be hungry when there is food, sick when there is medicine, walk when there is a bus – because they have no money? How can it be that they are the criminals? What are we and who are we if we moralise about them taking what they need, when they are forced every day to go without?<sup>5</sup>

The truth is that millions of working-class people have been forced into desperation and anger. There is every reason for such desperation and anger. For them, life is a perpetual struggle to meet basic needs. They have been denied hope. They do not believe that there can be any solutions, let alone that they can be the solutions. None of this just happened. It was not always like that. It does not always have to be like that. All of this has been forced on them. No one can pretend that the anger and desperation of those who took food, shoes and clothes from the shopping malls is a solution. But we also cannot moralise about the expressions of this anger and desperation. Neither can we claim a new revolutionary vanguard out of the hopeless. We know also that people in their desperation and anger are just being used. What they were doing is not giving a way forward. Those who looted will not end up with enough food and water and sanitation and medicine. They will end up where they have been forced to be – as victims.

Recently, it was reported that South Africa has the highest unemployment rate in the world. There are about ten million unemployed workers that constitute 44.4 per cent of the total labour force (expanded definition) (Naidoo, 2021). Unemployment is an attack on the working class and the poor. It is an attack on employed workers, as it threatens them with unemployment and is used by the bosses to force them to accept low wages and poor working conditions. Under capitalism, the main source of income for workers is the sale of their labour power. Workers must endure intolerable levels of hardship, pain and suffering when a large section of their class cannot find employment. Crime on the street, breakdown of the social fabric in the community. The home becomes unhealthy, unsafe, not adequately serviced and another site for gender-based violence. This is the story of everyday working-class life in which nothing is fine, and everything is a problem. In South Africa, ordinary working-class life is a life of crisis. Everything is a crisis: jobs, housing, services, education, income, food, healthcare, security (Accram, 2021; Spark News, 2021). The attacks on the shopping malls must be analysed against this background of hardship and suffering.

Capitalism has historically reached every depth of brutality and violence. It is a system based on violent conquest, repression, oppression and everyday exploitation. Exploitation is theft. It is using private ownership to force workers to make a profit for a boss. It forces other workers to sit at home and be unemployed. There are people who have been starved to sickness and death from hunger, who are sick and who die because they do not have clean running water, who get sick and die because they do not have proper housing and sanitation. All these things are happening every day. They constitute the story of the lives of millions. It is not what they chose. It is what is forced on them. Violence and stealing did not come suddenly when a few thousand people looted shops

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<sup>5</sup> This rhetorical paragraph and the political programmatic thrust of this paper are based on Socialist Group internal documents. The Socialist Group is a small collective of anti-Stalinist Marxists that is affiliated to the United Front and supports the Working Class Summit regroupment process initiated by the South African Federation of Trade Unions. For more details on this contact [Jonathan.Grossman@uct.ac.za](mailto:Jonathan.Grossman@uct.ac.za) or [trevorngwane@gmail.com](mailto:trevorngwane@gmail.com).

and arcades. But it is as if the violence used by thousands is a sudden crime, while the violence used against millions is not.

Apartheid, colonialism and chattel slavery were constituent of capitalist development (Desmond, 2019). In South Africa, the transition from apartheid to democracy obfuscated the role of capital.<sup>6</sup> It led to the invisibility of capital. Capital's actual role is currently hidden behind its moralising. The bosses are not the creators of jobs, thwarted in their mission of goodwill by rioting and looting. They are not the benevolent providers of food and medicine to the community. They are the beneficiaries of a capitalist system, which means that law and order and food and medicine must serve their drive for profits. They are the beneficiaries of the private ownership of the wealth, which allows them to oppress and exploit – and create unemployment and poverty. And millions must face sickness, hunger, death, exploitation and oppression for that to happen and be sustained (Oxfam, 2020).

### **“My ANC”**

The struggle against apartheid created conditions for the relatively sudden emergence of bourgeois democracy in South Africa. But the economic conditions were not themselves creating the basis for systematic reforms and improvements in ordinary working-class life. The development of a black capitalist layer was largely politically driven. The new bourgeois democracy faced a situation of widespread global economic turmoil and now exists in the context of the rolling capitalist crisis. Bourgeois democracy is exhausted and degenerating globally. It can no longer provide adequately for the material needs of the masses at a time when everyone everywhere demands and expects the basics: water, electricity, housing, education, healthcare, etc. The victorious national liberation movement in South Africa embraced capitalist democracy as a form of state (Terreblanche, 2012). The government of the ANC is there to make sure that the struggle of the working class is controlled and defeated. It is there to help the capitalist class achieve its *raison d'être* – to make profits, to exploit, to oppress, to dominate. Apartheid fell and the bosses continued to make profits, to own the mines, the farms and the banks, protected by an ANC government, and further protected by their own invisibility (Bond, 2000) – the invisibility of their culpability for apartheid yesterday, and of their true role today. And so, the pain and suffering associated with apartheid continues. The new generations who inherit the gains of the past find that with them come the continuities of oppression and exploitation.

The working class in South Africa has been angry for decades. The defeat of apartheid in 1994 was an advance but the material conditions of the working class did not improve significantly. The world that people sacrificed and hoped for did not arrive. Instead, it seems increasingly unobtainable. Over the past twenty years, there has been an uneven but unquestionable deterioration in the conditions and hopes of the working class. In a recent report the World Bank (2021) names South Africa as the most unequal society in the world. In the past two decades South Africa has been at different times declared the world's capital of protest. On July 9, the unrest started with the burning of trucks at the Mooi River Toll Plaza. But the residents of Intabazwe township in Harrismith, located 160 kilometres north of the plaza, have been shutting down the

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<sup>6</sup> Thus: “It is evident that South African business has played a key role in many aspects of South Africa's economic diplomacy, both during apartheid and in the democracy. Business was an important catalyst for political transformation, from as early as the 1960s but particularly towards the end of apartheid rule” (Valsmakis, 2012: 88–89).

N3 highway since 2004. That year they were demanding the provision of basic services from the ANC government, and in that protest seventeen-year-old Tebogo Mkhonza was shot dead by the police. Since the ushering in of democracy, hundreds of communities have been blocking roads, burning tires, pulling down traffic lights, burning schools, clinics and libraries, torching mayors' offices and residences (Von Holdt, 2013; Alexander et al., 2018). There has been and there continues to be a seething working-class anger which is constantly inviting "incitement".

Zuma knows about this anger and has been connecting with it since 2007. He defeated Thabo Mbeki, the previous president of the country, in an ANC party congress on the back of this tiger, supported by the leadership of the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions. He talked of "my ANC" and made promises that the working class needed to hear. He spoke of the suffering of the poor and how he was a simple man who never went to school. He animated the ANC in the streets during his rape trial.<sup>7</sup> When he became state president there followed "nine wasted years" during which he focused on the mission of self-enrichment and the project of creating a black bourgeoisie through channelling state money legally and illegally from the public purse to private pockets.<sup>8</sup> He remembers and requires the masses in his factional battles, when evading going to jail and for his political survival. Standing with the bosses is the current ANC and State President Cyril Ramaphosa. Standing ostensibly on the side of the working class is Zuma, a corrupt leader, but an ANC leader who can speak to the workers' frustration, anger and desire for a different future. Ramaphosa, a billionaire business tycoon who has not entirely shaken off the name "the butcher of Marikana", leads the neo-liberal ANC that allows bosses to exploit and loot within the law and in a democratic way. Zuma projects himself as the last hope of the ANC of struggle, despite his shadiness and thuggery. It is easier for some ordinary ANC supporters to see themselves in Zuma's radical rhetoric and the Radical Economic Transformation (RET) forces than in Ramaphosa's explicit pro-capitalist stance. Thus, sections of the working class can see the jailing of Zuma, a scoundrel, as an attack on that last hope of "my ANC", the ANC of the struggle for national liberation. These workers don't want to be told that "my ANC" no longer exists. They don't want their hopes crushed and their future dashed finally and forever.

The RET forces derived their name from a resolution of the 54<sup>th</sup> ANC National Conference, held in 2017, where Ramaphosa emerged victorious over contender Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. It calls for the ANC to speed up the much-desired transformation of the country's economy in favour of black people. "Comrades, we must urgently attack poverty, unemployment and inequality (PUI)" (ANC, 2017). The RET forces are fingered as the conspirators and instigators behind the economic sabotage, violence and looting. Closer analysis suggests that they were indeed the initiators but were soon overtaken by the size of mass action in some places and by the momentum towards undifferentiated looting. They employed guerrilla tactics, instigating and hiding behind the masses. But ultimately, they do not have control of the streets. The ANC also has no control of the streets. It cannot use its branches because it hardly has control of these, too. Over time, the party branches have lost their political authority in the localities because they became boxing rings and stepping-stones for the comrades' ascension to high office. The working class itself is fragmented and

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<sup>7</sup> In 2007 Zuma was acquitted of rape. He used his court appearances to mobilise ANC supporters in the streets, something Mandela and Mbeki, presidents before him, had not done. On the rape case, see Shireen Hassim (2017).

<sup>8</sup> Jacob Zuma was state president for nine years before he was forced to step down under a cloud of corruption and poor governance. He has arguably become a scapegoat for an ANC top leadership which in many respects is complicit in these crimes. See Stephen Grootes (2019).

divided, even as it engages in protests and strikes. The eruptions and disruptions suggest that the police and the army may also not have full control of the streets. The political situation rules out the use of full-scale state violence against the masses. But this means that the instability, disruptions, uncertainties of existing law and order will just continue. Behind the instability is the global capitalist crisis which the ruling class cannot resolve. There is dwindling authority and exhaustion of bourgeois democracy because it can no longer guarantee the improvements in everyday life which were historically necessary to sustain it.

The blatant disrespect for capitalist law and order and its protection of private property brought exhilaration, defiance, celebration in the moment. But we cannot say there was a richer, deeper, better order of caring and sharing. For those involved, the excitement of the moment overtook the hopelessness of a crisis-ridden, working-class everyday life. But it did not address the roots of the hopelessness. Nor did it remove brutality, desperation and competition. It does not build a vision of hope. It is about the moment. And the moment will pass. Maybe the moment has already passed. But was it a moment that signified that the working class is finally at the point of breaking fully from the ANC? Perhaps, like Marikana, it brought a flashpoint of clarity where workers realise that they are on their own, that instead of looking to leaders and messiahs who come with promises, they must rely on their strength and action. We don't know yet. Meanwhile, the looter of yesterday is struggling to repay debt. To find a way of getting electricity for the new microwave. Worried again about rent. Scared of everyday crime on the street. Wondering how to put food on the table. The looter of yesterday is back at the traffic lights looking for a casual job. And through all of that, the order of yesterday re-establishes itself – the order of control and domination – the imposed, oppressive, exploitative order of who has the wealth and who does not. And those who, for whatever reasons, called for the restoration of law and order will find that this is no solution because it takes us back to the situation of capitalist law and order that created the problem in the first place.

## **What is to be Done?**

The crisis of everyday working-class life is a crisis of confidence. The people who faced the formidable apartheid regime and defeated it were demobilised by their own leaders to prepare the ground for a victory that was favourable to the capitalist class. These people were part of the working-class movement that fought against apartheid capitalism. Their struggle was strongest when they fought behind a vision of alternatives, fighting to create a different world where all forms of oppression and exploitation were eradicated. Their movement, the working-class movement, became the centre of authority in the struggle of the masses. Demobilisation and the politics of class collaboration, the blurring of the class line between the working class and its class enemy, has over time eaten away at the confidence of the working class in its own power, eroded its hope and clouded its vision that there can be an alternative, a working-class alternative, to capitalist rule. Ordinary workers have been forced to the belief that there can never actually be real solutions; they have been stripped of and denied confidence that that can happen. This loss of hope, confidence, trust and vision is the real tragedy of the condition of the working class in the so-called new South Africa. It is what is behind the frustration, desperation and anger that left 354 working-class people dead as shopping malls and warehouses were chaotically attacked, vandalised and looted.

The task in front of us is clear. With patience, respect and understanding of what is forced onto workers every day, it is imperative to strive to restore the confidence of the working class in

its own power. Workers need to know, despite all the obstacles and obfuscations put in their way, that there is this power in their own hands. That it is upon this power that we can share the vision of a real solution, of ordinary working-class people in their millions as the agents – the only possible agents – of that real solution. The different, better future will only come if millions of workers make that better future through their own collective power. They can only do this with organisation, unity, mobilisation and political clarity. These things must be based on confidence and trust in themselves and each other. Is that possible? The solution will have to come from people who know hunger and pain – or it will not come at all. It will only come if they decide also to build solidarity and caring and sharing, and to treat each other with respect. Can there be those people? Is it possible? We say yes. Those people are the workers, young and old, men and women, employed and unemployed. They can do it only if they recognise their own power, the power of the producers. Karl Marx wrote that the working class is the revolutionary subject. It must become not just a class, but a class for itself. Inspired by the spirit of Marikana, the looters must stop being victims and become fighters in a working-class movement in motion behind a vision of a different future: a workers' future.

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