

## South Africa: African National Congress' centenary

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*'My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the fight.'*

Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu – 10/07/1956 – 6/04/1979

The *Amandla!* Editorial Collective joins millions of our compatriots, comrades and friends in South Africa and around the world in congratulating the African National Congress on celebrating its centenary. As the first liberation movement on the African continent, we join in celebrating 100 years of the struggle for liberation. Like the ANC itself, we celebrate the contribution of the thousands of women and men who gave up their lives in the struggle for freedom under the banner of the black, green and gold. There are too many to really single out. However, one comrade stands out for his heroism: Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu. His dying words conjure the Che Guevara-like spirit of sacrifice and love that drove many to fight for freedom. There was no thought of what they could get out of the struggle, what rewards or entitlements. Liberation, a life of dignity and the end of ALL forms of oppression and exploitation is what consumed fighters like Solomon Mahlangu. Imagine the lonely walk to the gallows, found guilty for crimes he did not commit and having the courage and love for the people to say:

*'Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the fight.'*

Leaving aside the fact that apartheid has been overcome, can we imagine such commitment and sacrifice for noble ideals in present-day South Africa?

More and more people join the ANC to swell its ranks for ideals that are completely opposite those of comrades like Solomon Mahlangu. They join in the hunt for enrichment and status. The ANC in power is being turned into a movement that offends its history of struggle.

Under the modern ANC – the ANC in power, the ANC that controls the South African state – the conditions of the majority of our people are appalling. Official unemployment has increased from 13% in 1994 to between 24 and 25% today. When those who have given up looking for work are included, unemployment stands closer to 40%! Having a job is no guarantee of a decent life. More than a third of all workers earn less than R1000 per month. Inequality has widened since the end of apartheid. This is not explained alone by the unfavourable international conditions in which the South African economy is integrated. Most of all, the failure to live up to the dreams for a new South Africa, which were so alive in 1994, is explained by a set of domestic policies that favour one part of society at the expense of the other.

Consider the following: for the whole period from 1995 to 2005 – since which wage statistics based on regular household surveys have disappeared – the real wages for all formally employed workers earning less than R200 000 per year have remained stagnant (see diagram), averaging below R3000 per month. It is a shocking and unacceptable fact that liberation, economically speaking, did not change ordinary South African formal work-life. It is reasonable to assume, given the increase in

unemployment since the 2008 recession and the increased role of labour brokers, that real wages for the mass of ordinary workers has declined!

In terms of how the primary division of the national income between profits and wages has been developing since liberation, we are going backwards, not forwards. Since liberation, the capitalists, to put it bluntly, have controlled an ever-growing share of the growing national income (GDP). In 1994, the wage share to GDP was 55.9%. In 2010 it had fallen to 50.6%. Bear in mind that the wage share includes the remuneration of top management and (in some instances) even employers. This year, goods and services will be produced in South Africa to the value of about R3 000 billion. The 5% point drop in the wage share of the growing national income between 1994 and 2012 corresponds to R150 billion which, this year alone, will not be paid out to ordinary employees.

For millions of people, independent of their consciousness or their will, the struggle continues. They have no alternative. Every day in 'liberated' South Africa workers go on strike, communities protest lack of decent services, women struggle against violence and abuse, youth the lack of jobs and the loss of hope. An ANC of the people must make the radical changes that are demanded and ought to be joining these struggles, helping to inspire the new Solomon Mahlangu who will fight the good fight. That should be the guarantee of 100 more years.

In the current South Africa, Solomon Mahlangu would most likely repeat his words:

*'Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the fight.'*

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