

# **South Africa: Speaking notes address to NUMSA delegates at KZN Congress, November 23 2013**

Thursday 5 December 2013, by [VAVI Zwelinzima](#) (Date first published: 25 November 2013).

*"People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises. Champions of reforms and improvements will always be fooled by the defenders of the old order until they realise that every old institution, however barbarous and rotten it may appear to be, is kept going by the forces of certain ruling classes. And there is only one way of smashing the resistance of those classes, and that is to find, in the very society which surrounds us, the forces which can-and, owing to their social position, must-constitute the power capable of sweeping away the old and creating the new, and to enlighten and organise those forces for the struggle."*

(Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, "The Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism", 1913)

*"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."*

(The Communist Manifesto, 1848)

*"Nothing demonstrates better the increasing rigor of the colonial system: you begin by occupying the country, then you take the land and exploit the former owners at starvation rates. Then with mechanization, this cheap labour is still too expensive. You finish up taking from the native their very right to work. All that is left for the Natives to do in their own land at a time of great prosperity is to die of starvation."*

(Jean Paul Sartre, 2001)

I am speaking strictly in my personal capacity and not in any way as a representative of anybody.

## **A. Very lazy, shallow and extremely misleading explanations of the bases and causes of the paralysing crisis in COSATU HQ suggest the following:**

- a. That the current general secretary of COSATU, Comrade Zwelinzima Vavi has fallen out with a pro-Zuma leadership faction inside COSATU, and that he is himself supported by an anti-Zuma faction. This is arguably the most publicly punted explanation for the crisis in COSATU by the media.
- b. That both the ANC and SACP national leaders are unhappy with Zwelinzima Vavi and his anti-government corruption crusade, oppositional stance and public criticism of the ANC.
- c. A not so much publicised explanation but which is punted by the leaders of affiliates who have lined up against Zwelinzima Vavi suggest that these leaders of COSATU are unhappy with Vavi's leadership style, his apparent relationship with NUMSA and its leadership, and they have further advanced ideological, political, organisational and administrative issues with Vavi to the point of

defining him as an agent of imperialism – a hoax intelligence report was produced to buttress this.

d. Those on the Left and some in the liberal media advance the argument that it was always going to come a time when the Alliance was going to break, and COSATU is today facing the prospect of either moving out of the Alliance or simply fracturing, as a prelude to the end of the ANC led Alliance.

1. It is, therefore, from these superficial explanations, suggested that if Vavi can either be controlled/shutdown or be removed from COSATU and NUMSA and its leadership somehow “managed” or also removed from NUMSA, COSATU would easily move on and maintain its unity. Otherwise the time has come for the ANC led Alliance to disintegrate.
2. While these simple, lazy and misleading explanations may contain some truth in as far as they may be symptoms of deep underlying class contradictions in the Liberation Movement itself and its formations including COSATU, they all fail to offer us the insights needed to fully understand the bases and causes of the crisis in COSATU and therefore cannot assist us to advance possible correct solutions to the crisis.
3. These simple explanations are not scientific analytical insights into the crisis and challenges in COSATU. Rather, they may merely reflect the symptoms of serious class contradictions inside COSATU and its related political structures and organisations.

## **B. What then are the real bases and causes of the crisis in COSATU?**

1. The real bases of the crisis in COSATU are its complex and contradictory class relationships which it finds itself having to deal with, on a daily basis, in the multiclass and unstructured ANC led Alliance, to which it belongs.
2. The second basis is the failure of the liberation movement as a whole, to resolve the national, gender, and class questions post 1994, and letting the Black and African capitalists in the liberation movement to win the day. This has led to the strengthening and deepening of the colonial capitalist mode of production in South Africa and its social relations, and thus deepening and worsening unemployment, mass poverty and extreme inequalities.
3. The singular failure to address the property question in favour of the popular masses post 1994 in point 2 above, threatens to actually overwhelm and destroy the liberation movement as a whole, and COSATU in particular.
4. The crisis in COSATU is a reflection of the class contradictions and class struggles that are broadly playing themselves out in South Africa and in the liberation movement and its formations between the South African Black and African proletariat and the forces of South African Colonial Capitalism and Imperialism.
5. Therefore all those leaders of COSATU and its affiliates who are fighting to save a socialist, revolutionary, militant, transformative, anti imperialist, democratic, worker controlled, anti-racist, anti-male chauvinist and united federation and the so called anti- Vavi forces must be understood as representing specific class interests and positions, and as proxies of the ongoing class struggles inside South Africa in general and in COSATU itself.
6. The crisis in COSATU must also be understood as reflecting the contradictions between those leaders in COSATU who have been won over to the side of the defenders of a neo- liberalist South African capitalism under the guise of taking responsibility for the National Democratic Revolution and those who are determined to continue to pursue the struggle for socialism as the only holistic

and viable solution to the national, gender and class questions in South Africa.

7. Using the prism of class analysis as advanced by revolutionary Marxism, it is thus easy to understand why the capitalist media and all forces of capitalism, being propelled by individual greed for personal gain, easily reduce the crisis in COSATU to a crisis of relationships between individuals, and blindly refuse to recognise the class struggles taking place all around them. There is indeed a deep seated rupture within COSATU which is ideological and political.

8. The working class has to understand that at play in post 1994 South Africa is the battle to death between forces of capitalist reaction and forces of socialism, as the only solution to the crisis of humanity and development in South Africa and the world.

**C. What are the revolutionary tasks and challenges of the South African revolutionary working class in general, and the more than 2 million workers organised in COSATU affiliated unions in particular?**

1. We think that the following are the urgent revolutionary tasks of the South African working class in general, and members of COSATU unions in particular:

- a. To defend and advance the revolutionary socialist traditions and trajectory of COSATU.
- b. To defend and advance the immediate and radical implementation of the Freedom Charter, in full, as the only viable solution to the mass poverty, unemployment, and extreme inequalities in our country.
- c. To defend and insist on the immediate implementation of the Radical Programme of Action of the COSATU 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of 2012.
- d. Defend and implement the decisions of the post COSATU 11<sup>th</sup> Congress Collective Bargaining Conference on the abolition of the colonial wage and the immediate implementation of a minimum living wage in South Africa.
- e. Defend the revolutionary unity of the working class.
- f. Defend COSATU from being reduced into a toy telephone. g. We must mobilise to fight:
  - i. The neoliberal NDP!
  - ii. E-tolls!
  - iii. Labour brokers!
  - iv. The abominable youth wage subsidy which the bosses and the ANC want to use to divide and weaken the working class, while giving free money to the bosses!
  - v. The South African Colonial wage structure
  - vi. Abolition of the apartheid geography of human settlement and economy
  - vii. For manufacturing and re-industrialisation of our country and quality jobs

2. We must resist all attempts from anywhere to divide the working class into “industrial” and “public sector” workers! We live in a capitalist society, and are governed by a capitalist state.

3. The South African state is unashamedly a capitalist state. Public sector workers are employees of

a capitalist state and not a workers state – they have no business making this state better able to exploit either the public or private sector workers. We are all confronting a savage brutal neo-colonial capitalist system whether in the private or public sectors!

4. There is no substitute to the need to educate ourselves, to organise and mobilise the working class against the massive attack being launched against the working class by both the international and national bosses, against the working class during this time of the most profound and deep seated systemic and structural crisis of capitalism!

#### **D. What is to be done?**

(a) Whether the COSATU National Office Bearers convene the Special National Congress or not, we must liberate COSATU from the deadening paralysis it is in, and reclaim the federation as an independent, militant, revolutionary, socialist oriented, anti-imperialist, worker controlled and democratic organisation.

(b) To achieve our goals, we must unite all workers, the revolutionary youth, student organisations, our progressive faith based organisations, progressive intellectuals and academics, and all democratic South Africans of good faith behind the struggle to reclaim the independent, militant, revolutionary, socialist oriented, anti-imperialist, worker controlled and democratic workers trade union federation.

As already stated above, if we fail to unite the South African working class in general, and especially those organised in COSATU unions to defend their working class independence, militancy, revolutionary character, socialist orientation, anti-imperialist traditions, worker controlled and democratic organisation traditions, the fate of our struggle for a Socialist NDR in South Africa will be dealt a terrible blow! **AMANDLA**

**Zwelinzima Vavi**, posted 25 November 2013

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<http://www.numsa.org.za/article/zwelinzima-vavis-speaking-notes-address-numsa-kzn-congress-november-23-2013/>