

Life of the rich and infamous...

Com dot Com returns with a decidedly internationalist flavour but still manages to chew a few old reputations!

Dear Com

Glad to see that Cosatu ignored the advice of Mugabe's immigration service and took the trip anyway to see how comrades from the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) are managing. Hopefully this time Cosatu comrades will speak their own minds and not be sidetracked into a blind alley as they were during the elections in 2000. Saying the elections were 'legitimate' left a bad taste in many peoples mouths. Hope they have listened carefully to the plight of the ZCTU, who built the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), risked life and limb to give it organisational support, and have been unceremoniously and systematically marginalised by the men in suits who paid the

bills, got into parliament, and who have taken control of the party apparatus. (And would you believe more than a few of the farms that have been 'redistributed'.) There's a sour joke doing the rounds in the union branches in Bulawayo... Question, what does MDC stand for now? Answer, Morgan Doesn't Count. To misquote US presidential candidate Ralph Nader, seems there is no such thing as a free party. Time for a rethink Comrade Morgan? Time to draw a few lessons Comrade Blade?

Dear Com

Business as usual? So what's with the recent tour of the Deputy Prime Minister of Israel accompanied by a posse of business people? Hearing Comrade Pahad say that we can

influence the peace process in the Middle East by doing business with Israel gave me the shakes. It was a helluva lot like hearing Lady Thatcher saying that trade not sanctions was the way to persuade the South African government to abandon apartheid! Shame on you Aziz! Almost as convincing as Mark Thatcher's claim that the money he chipped in for the planned coup in oil rich Equatorial Guinea was intended to buy an air ambulance! What he should have said was that the money was to open up business opportunities so that civil rights issues could have been raised. That seems to clear the way for daylight robbery and murder in Gaza Com! I remember the words of Cabral 'Watch out for the mercenaries in suits!'



Members of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) delegation visiting Harare did not receive the welcome they expected. At the close of the mission's first meeting, with the ZCTU, police invaded their offices and marched the Cosatu mission members back to their hotel. There they announced that the government had banned the mission and ordered its members to leave the country immediately. They refused to leave voluntarily and remained in the hotel until forcibly loaded on to a bus to the airport.

Cosatu said that the Zimbabwean government's action was a massive attack on the basic human rights of trade unionists to travel to meet their fellow workers and discuss issues of common concern. 'This mission was totally peaceful and orderly. It sought only to meet and talk to the representatives of the people of Zimbabwe, so that workers could be well-informed and not have to rely only on media reports on the situation there. Although very short, the mission exposed some of the harsh realities of Zimbabwe. The government's attempt firstly to ban the mission, then to impose restrictions on whom it could meet and then to throw its members out of the country all point to a serious lack of democracy and respect for human rights, Cosatu said.

Dear Com

Good to see the miners still prepared to have a go at the bosses despite the virtual blackout in the media, and the fuss about the slump in gold prices. Can't keep the old class down for long Com! But honestly when you look at the wealth that is created by our miners, and the risks they take on a daily basis to earn a meagre living, and compare it to the lifestyles of those who own the mines, including the luxurious Tokyo (Sexwale), star of life-style magazines, doesn't it make you want to choke. At least Cyril (Ramaphosa) still looks like a slightly overweight accountant. I hear that Tokyo might be asked to do a little explaining on the tragic deaths of miners two months ago in one of his mines. Let's hope he sets a good example and puts the responsibility in the right place. Let's have none of that 'it was a tragic accident' nonsense that used to be the stock answer of the 'old' owners... Let's wait and see. Unlike the poor souls who lost their lives, I won't hold my breath forever.

Dear Com

What about that troublesome little guy Comrade Adams Oshichmole, the president of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) hitting the headlines again. He leads a general strike against the removal of oil subsidies that will further impoverish the poor, challenges the government's crude attempt to introduce draconian anti-union laws that will scuttle the NLC, and still finds time to have tea with the security police who arrest him the day before the strike starts. Somebody ought to have a quiet word with the head of security in Nigeria. If you want to alert the entire world trade union movement, the world's press and satellite TV, and most of all, every

single worker in Nigeria, of a general strike that they must support, go ahead and illegally arrest the strike leader the day before! As a result, the masses of every major city stayed home. Millions more than even the membership of the NLC. The notorious 'go-slows' (traffic jams) of Lagos were reduced to a trickle! Pictures of President Adams appeared on the front page of every newspaper, the story led every radio and television news broadcast, and by the time he was sprung from jail, the other president, a certain Mr Obasanjo was on the defensive, and dashing off to the African Union to talk about (yes you guessed it!) Peace, Democracy and the Rule of Law! Way to go Adams! Way to go! Drove past the Cosatu picket outside the Nigeria High Commission protesting the situation and was delighted to see a healthy crowd led by Zwelli. I would have stopped but thought I recognised the cop providing the megaphone as the one whom 'relieved' me of a fine recently in Rosebank. All utta Continua Comrade!

Dear Com

Can't let this batch of postcards go without a reference to the trial in Durbs. I want to hear what comes out of the cross-examinations before fully making up my mind, but it doesn't look good for our struggle heroes at this point in time. Mind you, I could do with a financial advisor that gets you out of financial trouble by simply paying all your bills! Sounds cool! I need a new house, bingo, get some advice. I need a new 4x4, tata ma chance, get some more advice, I need a news suit, ooh la la, and get some really good advice. Hey this thing could catch on! Anyone out there want to be my very own personal financial advisor? The fee? Well I could introduce you to Com dot Com! More next issue!

A tribute to the memory of the 20 Cosatu members of parliament who perished in the struggle against temptation and greed

1994

20 good men and women
tried and tested
forged in fire
standard bearers of the people's needs
and dreams
veterans of dispute and strike
mobilizers/organizers/negotiators
with
simple tastes –
fish 'n chips, bread 'n coke
simple dress –
jeans, t-shirts, ragged jackets
simple offices –
hard chairs, small desks,
posters on the wall
simple cars –
dented jalopies

but with complex minds put to the
service
of the Common Good
whose uncommon powers
analytical/critical
made a difference
working from dawn till dusk
in the cut and thrust
of struggle

pansi poverty
pansi inequality
pansi racism
pansi sexism

then the workers special congress
grants a mandate:

leave us, go into the people's parliament
join with the comrades who fought
beyond the borders
and on those soft seats
put your hardened hands
and speak out the resolutions we take
the demands we make
of others and ourselves

2004

ah, twenty good men and women
how hungry you were
how hungry we still are

By Allan Kalski Horvitz