

Death of a Militant: Andries Raditsela 1956 - 1985

Andries Raditsela died under "mysterious" circumstances at Baragwanath hospital on Monday 6 May 1985. He was detained by police in Tsakane township on Saturday morning, 4 May. He was seen by a family member at 10.30 am. lying unconscious on the concrete floor of the Administration Board offices in Tsakane. He was only admitted to hospital that evening at 5.45. On Monday he died of severe brain injury. Before his detention he was in good health. Those responsible for his death must be brought to justice.

A tribute from union comrades

Andries Raditsela became an active member of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union in 1982. He was instrumental in recruiting workers at the Dunlop factory in Benoni where he worked. In early 1983 he was elected as a shop steward, and from there as the senior shop steward in the plant. He became a member of the CWIU Branch Executive Committee that year and the following year was elected vice-chairman of the Branch and member of the National Executive Committee of the union.

He was a very active senior shop steward and led many battles in Dunlop - battles for higher wages; against the unilateral imposition of an unpopular shift system; battles for women's rights. For example he waged a campaign against sexual harassment in Dunlop and was recently involved in the drawing up of a maternity agreement to be negotiated with management.

In addition to his work in the Benoni Dunlop plant he was elected chairperson of the national CWIU Dunlop Shop Stewards Council, involving the plants in Benoni, Ladysmith and Durban. In the major Dunlop strike of 1984, Andries was involved in the co-ordination of support action in all the plants. He was recently involved in national negotiations for a new Provident Fund to replace the current unsatisfactory pension scheme.

His organisational abilities and commitment to the workers' struggle were recognised by the unions in the Transvaal. He was elected chairperson of the FOSATU Region in 1984. At elec-

- Andries Raditsela -

tions in 1985 he was elected vice-chairperson. He made a very active contribution to regional affairs - finishing work in the factory at 4.45 pm. and from there attending evening and weekend meetings. He was recently very active in conducting the May Day celebrations and was the FOSATU delegate to the May Day Co-ordinating Committee. He was detained before being able to attend the local celebrations of 4 May.

Because of his position in the region he became a delegate to two national FOSATU bodies - the Executive Committee and the Central Committee. Andries worked tirelessly for the union movement. Many of his earlier activities he gave up to devote himself to the struggle - for example he was a good tennis player and also a member of the church choir.

The CWIU and FOSATU mourn the death of our comrade Andries Raditsela, and send condolences to his family.

MESSAGES OF SUPPORT

We join with you in expressing our grief and anger at the death of Comrade Andries Raditsela. Let us build a monument to Comrade Raditsela by building a powerful and united trade union movement able to fight for workers' rights throughout South Africa.

General Workers Union

We learnt with dismay of the mysterious death of our comrade, Andries Raditsela. We pledge total support to you in this struggle.

Fedcrow

Deeply shocked. Strongly protested to President Botha for this wanton murder.

CISL (Italian Trade Union Federation)

Together with all workers and democrats we mourn the death of Andries Raditsela at the hands of agents of the minority Apartheid regime. We appeal to all workers and progressive trade unions to rededicate themselves to the ideal of building strong and united worker organisations capable of protecting fellow-workers against state inspired violence. Victory to the working class! New Unity Movement

A WORD OF ADVICE TO OUR FELLOW BROTHERS
AND SISTERS IN THE STRUGGLE



JOB'S FOR SEX

This is something being done in many factories by personnel officers and training officers to our sisters, girl-friends, and wives. Managements know about it, but they don't do anything about it since it does not affect them as much as it does us workers. We keep on complaining about it, but do nothing ourselves, since our very sisters are not willing to help us out. They are afraid of victimisation and scandals. But we can still do it on our own.

How do women get trapped? Usually women get employed at factories outside working hours, even weekends. During lunch-times you can find the personnel's office locked. But after lunch you will see a lady coming out of the very office which was locked.

At DUNLOP we realised that the training officer sold jobs for sex. From there we planned to catch him in action with workers who could walk around the offices and watch him.

He employed one lady on a Friday, and by Tuesday the following week at about 13 hrs he called the lady to his office. One of our union members rushed to the door a few minutes later to test if the door was locked or not, and found it locked. He phoned another member, who phoned one of the managers.

The training officer was caught, and got fired on the spot. The woman did not get fired.

This was far better than allowing workers to assault him as they wished. We just refused, and promised them that we would solve the problem. And now they are all happy.

(Signed)

SHOP STEWARD AT DUNLOP

Extract from: Working Women, Sached/Ravan, Johannesburg 1985, p64:
the "shop steward at Dunlop" is, of course, Andries Raditsela.

- Andries Raditsela -

Please accept our condolences and rest assured that this latest crime by the Apartheid regime will only serve to strengthen our efforts to support your struggle to bring about free trade unionism in a free South Africa.

Canadian Labour Congress

The student struggle cannot be separated from the workers' struggle. The death of comrade Andries Raditsela was caused by the fascist, rascist, and imperialist regime of South Africa: let it stop its criminals patrolling our locations. We are moving forward to a non-racial democratic South Africa where the people shall enjoy all the demands of the Freedom Charter.

Congress of South African Students Regional Committee (Tvl)

On this tragic occasion the DGB assures you once more of its fraternal solidarity in your fight for trade union freedom and rights in South Africa.

DGB (German Trade Union Federation)

We mourn brother Raditsela as a brave campaigner for freedom and human dignity and offer our sincere condolences to his family and colleagues. We further pledge to redouble our efforts to bring an end to Apartheid and injustice.

Public Services International, France (representing 10 million workers in the public sector)

We are calling on affiliates to associate themselves in the mourning of their courageous brother and to give further impetus to the struggle against apartheid and for trade union and human rights in South Africa so that his death will not have been in vain.

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

On behalf of 725,000 chemical and energy workers of ICEF-JAF we express regret over the death of brother Andries Raditsela and strongest protest against the South African Government.

ICEF-JAF, Tokyo

The International Federation of Chemical and Energy and General Workers Unions representing 6,500,000 workers expresses outrage and horror upon the death of our brother Andries Raditsela - a martyr in the cause of the struggle for free trade unions and against Apartheid. As one of our own we shall not

let him be forgotten.

ICEF, Geneva

This tragedy only reinforces our rejection of a cruel and inhuman system.

CFDT (French Trade Union Federation)

Please extend on our behalf TUCSA's sincere condolences to the family of Mr Andries Raditsela. We extend our deep sympathy at the loss of a young and talented leader, who so obviously had before him many years of service to the union movement and the people of South Africa.

Trade Union Council of South Africa

We are deeply shocked by the death of Andries Raditsela and have made our views clear to the South African authorities.

British Trade Union Congress

We convey our grief and anger at the death of Andries Raditsela. It is a reminder of the violence by which workers in South Africa are ruled. We commit ourselves to carry on the struggle by building a united trade union movement.

Food and Canning Workers Union

He was a leader who was not thrust upon the workers. He rose from the ranks of the workers themselves. He inspired them and helped them build confidence in themselves - and to see the need for the oppressed workers to link hands and struggle together as one. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Cape Town Municipal Workers Union

He was an inspiration to us all. We grieve at the loss of a comrade in the struggle.

National Automobile and Allied Workers Union

Our organisation wishes to express its solidarity and sympathies on the death of comrade Andries Raditsela. Let his death be an inspiration to all of us who are engaged in the struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed people in this country. Forward to an anti-racist Socialist Republic of Azania.

Azanian People's Organisation

We share your anger and demand for justice and sympathise with the family of the deceased.

Bakery Union

- Andries Raditsela -

Our deepest sympathy and outrage at the death of comrade Andries Raditsela. We salute his strength and courage.

National Union of Textile Workers (W Cape)

Shocked at news of tragic death of comrade Raditsela.
Phambiu Womzabalazo Wabasebenzi.

Paper, Wood and Allied Workers Union (W Cape)

We express sympathy and solidarity with your union and the family of Andries Raditsela whose struggle continues.

Detention Action Committee, Cape Town

We shall remember him in the morning and in the sunset we shall praise his deeds for the struggle. Oneness is a reality, suppressed by evil mentality, your heart yearns for love and your mind cries for peace and happiness. For there is enough in the world for everyone's need, but not enough in the world for everyone's greed! So put your shoulders to the wheel. Your comrade in struggle.

Mafete Lucas Mokhawane (dismissed Sasol Worker)

THE FUNERAL

On Tuesday May 14, 30,000 (BBC figures) gathered in the tiny East Rand township of Tsakane to mourn the death of Andries Raditsela. This included an estimated 14,000 organised workers who stayed away to attend the funeral, mostly from the Brakpan/Springs area, but also from as far afield as Brits. Thousands walked from Kwa Thema to attend. Delegations from a wide range of unions attended to pay their respects and register a protest: CWIU, MAWU, NAAWU, SFAWU, NUTW, PWAU, TGWU, FOSATU, CUSA, NUM, SEAWU, SACWU, CIMWA, FCWU, CCAWUSA, BAMCWU, OVGWU, UMMAWSA (from evidence of t-shirts and banners). Also present in large numbers were members of COSAS and the Tsakane Youth Congress. The funeral was a dignified and disciplined occasion. Speakers condemned continued repression and called for unity against the common enemy.

Chris Dlamini, president of FOSATU, proclaimed that, in refusing to clearly condemn Andries' detention and subsequent death, the employers were clearly exposed as part of the system. Indeed, for the capitalist press, the funeral was an occasion to peddle platitudes about reform and then condemn the

trade union movement for taking action. In sections of the press there was a clear attempt to downplay the magnitude of the protest action taken. For the record, over 100,000 workers took some form of protest action (a quarter of the total membership of the emerging unions) - and at two days notice!

The size of the protest

The CWIU provided the following breakdown of actions taken by its members in the Transvaal:

CWIU: full day stoppages to attend the funeral

<u>Company</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>members involved</u>
Ciba-Geigy	Spartan	180
Colgate	Boksburg	300
Dunlop	Benoni	650
Rolfes	Elandsfontein	400
Reef Chem	Boksburg	130
Gillette	Springs	150
Chesebrough	Wadeville	250
Triple P	Edenvale	40
Union Liquid Air	Germiston	20
Reckitt and Colman	Isando	230
Vulco Latex	Johannesburg	230

Partial stoppages

Pilkington	Springs	175
Burmah	Isando	70
MRR	Wadeville	200
Durgenton	Wadeville	120
Recycling Plastics	Elandsfontein	100
Plate Glass	Germiston	350

In addition the following factories sent delegations to attend the funeral: Plate Glass, Durgenton, MRR, Hi-Pack, Sasol II, Sasol III, Sasol Mines, G & W Base, Plastmould, Fedgas, Abecal, S&CI, Revetex, Burmah and Recycling.

Labour Monitoring Group Survey

The LMG estimated that approximately 107,500 workers took some form of commemorative protest action on May 14 - rang-

ing from a stay-away to a stoppage or lunch time meeting. These results are drawn from a survey of unions and firms:

Results:

(i)	Transvaal	55,000*
	Natal	22,500
	E. Cape	17,500
	W. Cape	12,500
	Total	107,500

* 22,000 of these were mineworkers who took action at 24 hours notice.

- (ii) In the Transvaal some 14,000 workers secured the day off to attend the funeral.
- (iii) The total number involved - 107,500 - represents approximately 25% of the membership of the emerging unions.

Comment

- (i) Many factories sent delegations to the funeral, usually shop stewards and then took no further action. This was due in part to local conditions, but also to confusion over the call for actual protest action to have taken place on the 14th.
- (ii) Unlike a stay-away, where it is often alleged that workers are subject to pressures in the townships, a stoppage at work is a relatively open and voluntary form of protest. This makes the action a significant expression of organised anger.
- (iii) Most employers seemed to recognise the significance of this organised power in the factories, and either gave workers time off to attend the funeral or allowed time to stop in protest at work. However, employers failed to publicly condemn the detention that led to Raditsela's death. This reinforces workers' perceptions that employers are part of "the system".
- (iv) The size of the protest was comparable to that in February 1982 over the death in detention of Neil Aggett.
- (v) The scale of the protest would probably have been even larger had there been more time to prepare. During the previous week there had been intense debate over the appropriate action to take. On the 7th, FOSATU Region called for a regional stay-away. This was superseded by a call for a national two-hour stoppage made by a

wider meeting of Johannesburg unions together with the political organisations. The final call, from FOSATU national executive, was for Transvaal workers to attend the funeral; for employers to pay bereavement leave; and for workers unable to attend the funeral to take some form of protest action. This call was made only the weekend before the funeral (Tuesday).

FCWU: Unity is Strength

At the NEC meeting of 30.3.85 of Food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU) and African Food and Canning Workers Union (AFCWU) it was decided that the two unions should amalgamate as FCWU. This decision is in accordance with the 1984 Conference mandate and the policy of the union since its inception, that it should operate as one irrespective of race.

The situation of having two unions was forced on us by the government's policy of not recognising union rights for Africans. When the government finally changed its policy and decided to recognise unions for African workers it did so on terms not acceptable to us. The two unions remained separate in law whilst acting as one in practice.

When forming one registered union the following was taken into account:

- (i) We no longer consider it justified to continue as two unions in name and one in practice
- (ii) In deciding whether to be registered or unregistered, we had to recognise that only slight differences exist between the two and the benefits of being registered are greater than the disadvantages of not being registered, while the benefits of not being registered are less than the disadvantages of being registered.

(FCWU communique, April 1985)