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South Africa

# **First measures of intimidation against independent trade unionism and the socialist left**

- IV Online magazine - 2014 - IV478 - November 2014 -

Publication date: Saturday 29 November 2014

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**Just days after the expulsion of the metalworkers' union (NUMSA) from the national federation COSATU and the affirmation by the leadership of this union of its project of rebuilding an independent trade union movement in a "socialist" perspective, an amazing unsigned document has begun to circulate in the country, explaining that the leadership of NUMSA is plotting to overthrow the South African regime, obviously with the help of foreigners.**

This nauseating document explains, among other things, that NUMSA and its friends claim that "socialism is the solution to all the challenges the country faces." That they intend to build a party in order to carry out their project of regime change. That they are instigating violence and instability in the various communities. That they are seeking to influence and disturb these communities by using socialist rhetoric and theories.

A more classic kind of defamation comes with the cunning plot originating from abroad (but from where exactly?): "The use of so-called "international experts" to validate and facilitate their plans to overthrow the regime; the establishment of their own intelligence structures (in collaboration with foreign governments and international companies) so as to facilitate their programme of regime change." After which the paper publishes photographs (see the illustration below) of NUMSA leaders, of some politically engaged academics, of Ronnie Kasrils, a former leader of the ANC and the Communist Party, but now clearly opposed to the regime, as well as photographs of some foreign participants who came in August 2014 for a seminar on socialism organized by NUMSA, where nothing very subversive was discussed: the balance sheet of the Brazilian PT, the Bolivian experience, political recomposition in Germany, etc.

This document is obviously only the beginning. Since it is unsigned it is difficult to designate peremptorily its authors. But all the same, a little strain of music in the way it is written reminds us of some Soviet trials of the 1930s. And then there is a question: how and from whom did the authors obtain the photographs of this dozen or so guests of NUMSA? Since it cannot be from NUMSA itself, then from whom?

So this is not a joke. There is a clear beginning of intimidation and threat. In a country proclaiming its democratic character! The more the social and political crisis of the ANC regime and its ally the Communist Party increases, the more this kind of "information" will increase. But in a country where people are dying every day from the ordinary violence of poverty, drugs and gangs, political violence is easy to disguise. That is when the duty of solidarity and of the international defense of the independent trade unions and the South African left begins!