

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

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Over 100 000 mourn the death of Raditsela



Union comrades carry Andries Raditsela to his final resting place

SONGS about worker power filled the air at Tsakane, as more than 30 000 mourners bade farewell to Andries Raditsela — FOSATU regional vice-president who died of head injuries shortly after being released from police detention.

And in factories around the country, over 100 000 workers stopped work and held memorial services.

Police tried to stop people attending the funeral. They told bus companies not to take people to Tsakane. And the trains stopped at Dunswart — more than 20 kilometres away.

In spite of this, people streamed in to Tsakane like a flood. Some came by cars,

taxis, buses, but most came on foot.

The Tsakane Methodist church was filled until it could hold no more. People perched on windowsills, stood on benches — every little space was taken up.

Before the service, groups of workers carrying colourful union banners marched up and down the road singing FOSATU songs.

Placards said 'Kill Apartheid Not Detainees' and 'Army and Police Out of Townships'.

Overhead two police helicopters circled the church. Every now and then a couple of Caspirs laden with police in riot gear drove past. The funeral crowd

watched them warily.

Inside, a small group of workers wearing union T-shirts encircled the coffin and held up their fists in a salute to Andries Raditsela.

Next to the Chemical Workers Industrial Union banner, another banner proclaimed 'Andries Raditsela 1954-1985 He lived, worked and died for the people. His blood has watered the tree of our struggle.'

Throughout the three-hour service workers sang and chanted 'Raditsela is ours! Power is ours! United we will win!' Loudspeakers relayed the service to all outside.

In his speech FOSATU president, Chris Dlamini told mourners, 'the govern-

ment is in crisis. They have to bring the police and the army into the townships.'

He attacked employers for staying silent over the death of Andries Raditsela.

'The workers work hard to produce profit for the bosses, yet none of them has condemned the death of Andries.'

'They claim that they do not want to get involved in political issues. They go overseas and say that they give us good jobs.'

'But, it seems that the profits produced by workers are being used by the government to buy guns to kill us,' he added.

'Today's situation needs us to unite.'

'The distribution of

wealth is not fair. The majority get very little while a few get more.'

'I'm convinced that until we unite and mobilise all sectors of our people we will not be free,' Chris Dlamini concluded.

A single church bell tolled as union pall bearers carried the coffin out of the church between rows of workers who silently held their fists in the air. Behind the coffin a FOSATU banner waved gently in the wind.

The dust filled the air as 30 000 people walked the three kilometres to the graveyard. The singing started up again and some

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of the crowd broke into a chanting jog.

Lining the road were buckets, plastic containers and tins filled with water, put out just in case the police decide to use teargas.

Police presence

Police kept a low profile, for the moment. One Caspir with a 'sneeze machine' was parked in a side road close to the graveyard and on an overlooking hill nearby were five or six more Caspirs.

The huge crowd which filled the graveyard sang 'Nkosi Sikelela' as the coffin was slowly lowered into the grave. They then peacefully walked back up the hill towards the church.

Meanwhile, in factories in the Western and Eastern Cape, Natal and in some Transvaal factories, at least 100 000 workers heeded the FOSATU call to stop work and hold a short memorial service.

The stoppages varied from 15 minutes to two hours.

FOSATU called on Transvaal employers to grant workers 'paid bereavement leave' so that they could attend the funeral.



Banners held high, the mass procession walks slowly down Ndabezitha Street to the graveyard

Thousands march at funeral

Scores of factories, particularly on the East Rand, were forced to close when their entire workforce stayed away to attend the funeral.

At others just the shop stewards were sent while workers held memorial stoppages at their factories. Even shop stewards from as

far as the Sasol factory at Secunda attended.

But, radio, TV and the commercial press deliberately attempted to underplay this huge demonstration of worker protest.

On the day of the funeral TV and radio carried reports saying only 5 000 people

attended.

The next day, the commercial press carried huge headlines saying 'Workers reject stayaway plea', 'Unions ignored on day of Raditsela funeral' and 'Stayaway is a failure' in spite of the fact that FOSATU had not called for a stayaway.

The nationwide stoppage, which was bigger than the Neil Aggett protest three years ago, received little coverage in any of the newspapers.

It is clear from this that the commercial press, radio and TV can never be trusted to represent workers' interests.

Detained by police — dead 3 days later

ON May 4, a Saturday morning, while sitting in a hired car chatting to a friend in Tsakane township Andries Raditsela was confronted by police — a few hours later he was lying unconscious on the stoep of the Administration Board offices — three days later he died in Baragwanath hospital.

What happened? From eyewitness accounts FOSATU Worker News has pieced together this story.

At about 9 am, a police hippo stopped and demanded to know from Andries why he was driving a car with a Natal registration. They accused him of stealing it. He explained to them that it was a car hired by

FOSATU.

Another hippo pulled up. The eyewitnesses claim that a policeman came up to Andries and started slapping him.

People started screaming and one young man asked the policeman what he was doing. Both he and Andries were then thrown into one of the hippos.

Andries' mother on hearing that he had been taken by the police sent his younger brother to search for him.

At about noon they found him at the Tsakane Administration Board offices which are at present being used as a police station.

His mother found him lying

twisted on the stoep. He was unconscious, his face was swollen and he was bleeding.

She shook Andries several times and after a while he regained consciousness. But when his mother and brother tried to pick him up, he could not balance himself.

Andries' mother tried to find out from the police what had happened. They just told her to go.

At 4 pm the police came and told Mrs Raditsela that her son was critically ill and that she must go to Baragwanath hospital immediately.

But when the family went to Baragwanath they could not find Andries — his name was

not in the hospital records. They tried the Far East Rand hospital but he was not in their records either.

It was only at 1 pm on Monday that Andries was found in a ward at Baragwanath hospital. He was in a coma and his breathing was being assisted by a machine.

At 2.15 pm Andries died.

Until shortly before his death, Andries was being held under section 50 of the Internal Security Act which allows for 48-hour detention in order to 'combat state of unrest'.

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union later found out that Andries was only admitted to the Far East Rand Hospital

at 6.45 pm on Saturday night — nearly seven hours after he was seen lying unconscious at the Administration Board Offices. He was then transferred to Baragwanath Hospital.

A post mortem held at Diepkloof mortuary established that he died of a brain haemorrhage.

Calls for a public inquiry into Andries' death were turned down by the government, instead the police held their own secret internal inquiry.

According to the Minister for Law and Order, Mr Louis Le Grange, the results of the police inquiry have been handed to the Attorney General.

Lite-master workers win R800 000 in biggest claim awarded by court

IN the biggest backpay claim ever awarded by the industrial court, Wadeville company Lite-master Electrical has been ordered to pay 65 Metal and Allied Workers Union members close on R800 000.

The company has also been told to take back the 65 workers who it dismissed in July 1983 — nearly two years ago.

However, Lite-master has informed the union that it intends to ask the Supreme Court to review the industrial court's decision.

Thc move has been attacked by MAWU as a 'delaying tactic which will only result in increased hardship for workers'.

The workers were sacked when they protested against the company's refusal to negotiate retrenchments with MAWU.

Lite-master had insisted that retrenchment was a management prerogative and refused to listen to the workers' proposal that jobs be shared.

For the past two years, the workers have remained united in spite of tremendous hardships caused by unemployment, influx control and the lack of legal accommodation.

Meanwhile, Rossburgh company, S A Fabrics, has paid out R6 500 to a dismissed union shop steward in an out-of-court settlement with the National Union of Textile Workers.

The union argued that Dominique Ninela had been dismissed for 'a relatively minor offence' and that the company had not followed the accepted practice of having a senior shop steward present at all dismissals.

Rolling strike wins motor workers interim increase

A ROLLING strike by Eastern Cape motor workers has won them an interim wage increase in the face of an industrial council deadlock.

The first to go out were 4 000 Volkswagen workers. They returned to work twelve days later on April 30 when the company offered a 14c to 24c increase backdated from February 1.

Meanwhile, General Motors' workers at a meeting on April 18 sent a letter to management demanding a response to their demands for a wage increase by 10 am on April 25.

On April 24, General Motors informed the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union that it would be prepared to meet them that same day. GM's first offer of a 12c to 22c increase on May 1 was re-

jected by the union and when no settlement had been reached by 10 am the following day the whole factory, consisting of some 3 000 workers, downed tools.

Negotiations between the company and NAAWU continued late into the evening and GM eventually agreed to a 14c to 24c increase backdated from February 1.

The following day the General Motors' workers accepted this increase and returned to work.

Negotiations with the only other major manufacturer in the area, Ford, began on April 26.

Ford offered a 14c to 24c increase but only from August 1. When shop stewards reported this to the Neave plant, about 2 000 workers stopped work

and left the factory.

Ford workers returned to work after the company agreed to pay the increase from May 1.

Since November last year, the unions and the motor bosses have been negotiating a new agreement to cover the Eastern Cape's giant motor plants.

However, the employers have failed to come up with a wage offer which will satisfy NAAWU members.

A new attempt to break the deadlock began on May 10 when the industrial council met to discuss the plant-level wage increases.

NAAWU's Les Kettle said new wage proposals had been submitted to the employers and 'in a week or two there will be another industrial council meeting to hear their response'.