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ZACF statement on the “racist anarchists” of Potchefstroom

Jonathan Payn

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The Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation (ZACF) of South Africa and Swaziland notes with concern that the removal and defacement of street signs in Potchefstroom has been attributed without proof by Potchefstroom City Council spokesman Kaiser Mohau to “racist anarchists”. We presume that Mohau is simply politically naive in putting about his mistaken attribution of these acts of vandalism. However, his comments have the unfortunate effect of besmirching the good name of the small, but active anarchist movement in southern Africa.

The ZACF wishes to point out that the first trade unions for people of colour” in southern Africa, the Industrial Workers of Africa founded in 1917 and the Indian Workers Industrial Union founded in 1919 were established by anarchist-syndicalists of all colours including Thomas William “Bill” Thibedi (who later became a communist), Bernard Sigamoney, Andrew Dunbar and Johnny Gomas. Anti-racism has always been and remains a fundamental ethic of the anarchist movement. Today, the ZACF, engages in constructive educational work, both within South African townships as well as

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within the pro-democracy movements of Swaziland and Zimbabwe. Other anarchists are similarly involved in progressive projects that make no distinction of gender, colour or creed.

The vandalism of signs in Potchefstroom, in which the names of liberation figures like Nelson Mandela have been replaced by those of Boer generals like Koos de la Rey, has clearly been carried out by racist right-wingers who are opposed to transformation in South Africa, and not by left-wingers among whom we anarchists proudly count ourselves. We trust that journalists in the broadcast and print media will peruse our website (address below) and will then be able to apply a more sound political analysis to the issue than Mr Mohau has.

best regards

Jonathan Payn

ZACF Federation Secretary