

# Tom Carew and Bongani Masuku

Amongst the few voices of sanity and balance is an Irishman of note by the name of Tom Carew. I know him only through friends and internet exchanges, but he strikes me as a man of intelligence, wit, and courage to challenge ideas about religion and politics. Above all, he relishes his lone voice of reason. Every now and again he sends me copies of letters he has written, and one of these exchanges, which he had with a particularly fine example of South African boorishness (yes, the pun was intended), I wish to comment on for two reasons. For one, it illustrates what is wrong with South Africa today, and secondly, it illustrates what is wrong with political correctness.

Here is Tom's opening mail:

Subject: Workers rights and solidarity

To: "Bongani Masuku International Relations Secretary COSATU"  
bongani@cosatu.org.za

Date: Friday, 17 August, 2012, 16:20

Dear Bongani Masuku,

I read your statement yesterday denouncing Israel [as an \*apartheid\* state] – issued by COSATU (the International Relations Secretary of the South African trade union federation, COSATU which is linked to the ruling ANC. JR) on the very day that your own South African Police slaughtered 36 workers at Marikana Mine.

I was a committed member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and all my life I was a very active trade unionist, and I cannot recall anything like that Marikana Massacre since the SHARPEVILLE MASSACRE IN 1960. I also cannot recall either 36 Arab [or Jewish] workers ever being slaughtered like that – by any Israeli police – which includes Sunni Muslim Bedouins from the Arab minority who VOLUNTEER to serve in it. But the whole world knows that the Assad Syrian regime has slaughtered over 20,000 of their own citizens.

Can you kindly send me any COSATU statement denouncing the ongoing Assad massacres? Has COSATU demanded the immediate suspension from duty, arrest and prosecution of the police commanders and killers involved in the Marikana Massacre? I also can find no mention in your statement yesterday of the Hamas destruction of PGFTWU in Gaza – can you please send me any COSATU statement about that?

Yours fraternally,

Tom Carew  
Dublin City, Ireland

Now I would quibble with one point of Tom's email. Sadly, in 1976 six Israeli Arabs were killed by Israeli police in a demonstration against land expropriation. But in general he makes an excellent point. It is open season to attack Israel in the crudest way. South Africa, in particular, has become one of the most anti-Israel non-Muslim states, in terms of public statements by its officials and up-and-coming leaders. During the Apartheid years, Israel consistently voted in the UN against Apartheid. But at the same time, Israeli individuals helped South Africa in various ways including security and arms.

When I visited South Africa in 1986, when Chief Rabbi Casper invited me to come out with a view to succeeding him, I visited banned officials, including those of COSATU, and they did indeed point out how damaging Israelis' involvement in South Africa was and how it would affect future attitudes. And men like Desmond Tutu have been in the vanguard of those condemning Israel as if it, alone, was the source of all evil. Whereas Nelson Mandela, himself, tried to be and was balanced, the South African political scene today is dominated by violently anti-Israel voices which are unabashedly full of hatred and immoderation. It is no surprise that the infamous Durban conferences, purportedly on Human Rights, but which turned into such an anti-Semitic hate fest, took place in South Africa.

Leaders of South African Jewry have tried repeatedly to plead for reason and balance, and sometimes they are placated by the Old Guard. If the Old ANC Guard was aware of Jewish contributions to the battle against Apartheid, the new and younger generation is made of different and highly alloyed stuff. Many of the new generation of South African leaders are themselves so tainted by corruption and so immoderate as to make any kind of dialogue impossible.

South Africa today is governed overwhelmingly (not exclusively) by men and women who suffered under Apartheid and fought a courageous battle for the freedom of blacks and coloreds from white oppression. But like many fighters for freedom, the moment they got it, like starving pigs they raided the troughs, and stuck their snouts in so far to guzzle as much as they could that they all but ignored the millions of the less privileged of their very own. It has been like that wherever you look. Freedom or revolutionary movements rely on the huddled masses for support and votes, but the moment the leadership gets its hands on power it grabs all the goodies it can for itself. So who are these leaders? Self-serving, self-loving bullies. To prove my point here's the response Tom got:

On Mon, 20/8/12, Bongani Masuku wrote:

Subject: RE: Workers rights and solidarity

To: "Tom Carew" Date: Monday, 20 August, 2012, 7:43

Stop colonialism and apartheid and stealing of Palestinian land and stop diverting attention from that. In one month, you massacred 1 400 Gazans to colonise and enforce your apartheid. You are lying that you were in the anti-apartheid movement, with you garbage

ideas, you obviously supported apartheid, you liar.

You see the elegant civilized response, of course. No attempt to answer the questions. No desire to engage in discussion. Just abuse. Crude, brute invective—the mark either of someone intellectually challenged or someone so used to bullying others that he thinks this is civilized discourse.

Alas, he is not alone, and it is not of course confined to South Africa. Political correctness now infects much of the world's media. It obeys whatever political correctness demands and tries to silence any opposition. Watch BBC discussions where the carefully screened audience will boo, barrack, and titter, and use other infantile ways of showing disagreement with anyone who tries to defend another position. Rarely does a speaker actually get the chance to offer an alternative narrative. No argument, just abuse: "You lie", or as Nigel Molesworth used to say, "Tu Quoque Oaf." Similarly, attend anti-Israel demonstrations anywhere and you will hear invective, expletives, and roared hatred, with no room for reasoned discussion. This is now the norm everywhere, even in the USA.

So how is one to respond? The Englishman in me says to walk away, to not honor such primitivism with attention. It is beneath contempt. But there's another voice that says, "No, give as good as you get." If they want to shout lies, you can shout slogans back. The only language a bully understands is standing up to him. And that's what I think this guy deserves. He needs to be told what a disgrace he is to a once-noble idealistic institution. What a stupid, immature idiot he is, whose face is so far up his own backside he thinks the rest of the world smells as badly as he does. Ah, that feels so good. Might not change anything, but I certainly feel better.