

# Mugabe's reign ends

## But his regime remains in power

At the time of writing, the situation in Zimbabwe is fast changing and unstable. It is unclear how much longer Mugabe can cling to power. But the military's intervention, arresting ministers and placing Mugabe, temporarily, under house arrest, represents a turning point in post-independence Zimbabwe.

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The military intervention was precipitated by the dismissal of Mugabe's most loyal henchman, Emmerson Mnangagwa. This was part of the 93-year old Mugabe's manoeuvres in Zanu-PF party structures to ensure his 52-year old wife, Grace, would succeed him as president.

In power through electoral fraud and violence since the 2002 presidential elections, Mugabe had presided over an economy that experienced the highest inflation rate in world history rendering the Zimbabwe Dollar completely worthless. It led to the forced abandonment of the currency and its substitution with the US dollar and the SA Rand. The catastrophic economic collapse, 90% unemployment and widespread starvation led to a mass exodus, mainly to SA, of at least a quarter of Zimbabwe's 12 million population.

However welcome the end of Mugabe's reign may be, the military's intervention is taking place behind the backs of the masses. To pre-empt an independent movement against the entire regime, such as the 2016 Tajamuka protests, the military is drawing the elites, including the opposition parties, into a political arrangement that will attempt to impose a regime on the masses whose primary aim is to maintain the capitalist status quo. But, notwithstanding this, as the thousands of anti-Mugabe demonstrators in Harare on 18 November indicate, Mugabe's removal may be the trigger that re-ignites mass movements.

### **The masses are their own liberators**

Sections of the masses will welcome the military's intervention, seeing in it the lifting of the yoke of the Mugabe dictatorship. But this would be a mistake. Mnangagwa led the operation during the 1980s Gukurahundi operation murdering



*Thousands march in Harare on 18 November*

an estimated 20,000 Ndebele people. The military has been critical in sustaining the Mugabe dictatorship including carrying out systematic terror to enable Mugabe to keep firm control; its role in kidnapping and killing opposition supporters particularly during elections remains unquestionable.

The military intervention is not a change of the Mugabe-Zanu regime's character. Rather it represents its continuation and an attempt at the regeneration of the military's control over it. Its purpose is to guarantee the continuation of autocratic rule, not to usher in a renewed democracy under the control of the Zimbabwe's masses.

### **The Struggle Continues**

In 2016 when there was a massive uprising and widespread grassroots mobilisation in opposition to Mugabe's regime, the military responded to this by standing firm and emphasizing its allegiance to Zanu-PF and Mugabe. Therefore the general position of the *povo* (the masses) is that no alternative is to be found in the Zanu-PF state or the remnants that may remain.

It is foreseeable that for expedient purposes a 'solution' will be brokered by SADC or the AU, regardless of their claimed opposition to military coups, in order to legitimise Mugabe's removal. But the lesson both of last year's mass mobilisation, as well as the whole of Mugabe's tenure is that reliance on external forces such as the SADC (Southern African Development Community) and neighbouring governments is futile.

All the administrations of the South African government – from Mbeki through to Zuma – have propped up the Mugabe

regime. After Mbeki suppressed the report of his own government that found that the 2002 presidential elections were not free and fair, Zuma followed the same policy until forced to release the report by legal action. The South African Communist Party (SACP) followed suit demonstrating its contempt for the Zimbabwean masses by denouncing the mass demonstrations as recently as last year as the work of a "third force" bent on regime change.

The struggle, however, continues. As previously emphasised by WASP, the masses of Zimbabwe can only rely on their own programme, their own power and their own organisation to overthrow the autocratic, capitalistic and parasitic capitalist elite and achieve the socialist transformation of Zimbabwean society.

The masses must, as they have previously, demonstrate their rejection of the uninvited imposition of rule by the military that only seeks to safe-guard its looting and plunder. Rejection of this dispensation must be carried out urgently and consistently by the masses so as to demonstrate the utter greed and blatant self-servicing motivation behind this military coup. The Zimbabwean masses – the workers and youth, including those in the diaspora, must now congregate towards building a mass workers' party. Such a party must learn from the lessons of the failed attempt in the late 1990s to build one, which resulted in the co-opted MDC and its different factions. Such a party must strive to lay the foundations of a government of workers and poor on a socialist programme so as to inflict a decisive defeat of the post-Mugabe dispensation currently mutating.