

As SA's political crisis deepens... Build a socialist mass workers party

"Zuma under siege", "Zuma's seven days of hell", "How much longer will the ANC persevere with Zuma at the helm?" are some of the headlines describing the position of the president of both party and country within his first hundred days in office.

December 2012 must seem a long time ago for Zuma. His Mangaung victory appeared unchallengeable as his majority increased to 75% compared to 60% five years earlier. But hardly 100 days into his second term, a series of disastrous setbacks have led to open speculation as to whether he will last till 2019.

Upon the humiliation of being booed by mourners at Mandela's funeral has been heaped the first-ever suspension of parliament in the democratic era with Zuma at the centre as the demand, "pay back the money", rings in his ears and across the country.

As the waves of the Nkandla corruption scandal lash unrelentingly at the foundations of fortress Zuma, the breaches of his defences have become even more menacing. The release of the spy tapes could lead to the reinstatement of corruption charges against him. At both the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and the SABC, his appointees are facing fraud or perjury charges. The NPA national director, Mxolisi Nxasana, who would have to make the decision to charge him, has vowed to resist Zuma's attempts to oust him.

The case the Judicial Service Commission is investigating against Western Cape Judge President John Hlope for attempting to influence Constitutional Court (ConCourt) judges to make findings in Zuma's favour has the potential to create a constitutional crisis.

Succession battle weakens lame duck Zuma

At the very beginning of his second term, the battle for the succession to the lame duck Zuma is already in full swing, directly and indirectly. The Gauteng Provincial Government's e-toll panel is an act of open defiance against the national government. Responding to Transport Minister Dipuo Peters' insistence that a province cannot review a national policy, Premier David Makhura has said defiantly that he has a duty to look after his constituency's concerns. Despite subsequently denying challenging national government, the logic of public hearings where public sentiment against the hated e-tolls has found strident expression, is that the Gauteng ANC is mobilising for the scrapping of e-tolls, at least in their present form. Accordingly, Zuma avoided the Gauteng ANC's October conference for fear of being booed.

City Press reports that e-tolls have now split the ANC's Top



Zuma's headache is becoming a migraine for the ANC. Crisis looms...

Six. Whilst secretary general Gwede Mantashe instructed Sarral and the Transport Department to boycott the e-toll Panel hearings, his deputy, Jesse Duarte, has reportedly said she would rather go to jail than pay e-tolls.

Zuma a diminished figure

Zuma's Mangaung triumph was over a spineless Motlanthe. None of the pre-Mangaung divisions, however, has gone away. On the contrary they have persisted, deepened and become more inflamed.

Preparations for next year's National General Council (the highest decision making body in between conferences) where Zuma's fate could well be sealed, are seriously hampered. The establishment of parallel branches and their failure to quorate forced the postponement of provincial conferences in both a deeply divided Gauteng and Zuma's Kwa Zulu Natal stronghold.

Limpopo is a graphic indicator of the crisis facing the ANC. Despite the national government's drastic takeover of virtually the entire provincial government, the authority of the ousted anti-Zuma politicians is as strong as ever. Two politicians have been shot already as the struggle for control of resources - the real agenda of elections - intensifies.

The conference of the Eastern Cape's OR Tambo Region, the country's second biggest after Ethekekwini, was called off by the Regional Executive Committee after the Elections Officer, declared a dispute! The Anyone But Zuma (ABZ) camp's victory, secured despite the alleged disqualification of hundreds of ABZ delegates was stolen.

Zuma is a diminished figure. This is confirmed by the growing calls from within the ANC that he must pay for the Nkandla upgrades.

ANC's worst victory

Zuma may be in the eye of the storm. But this is not a crisis of the individual. It is one that goes to the very foundations of the post-apartheid political dispensation. At first glance the election results appeared to send a reassuring message, not just to the ANC, but to the main opposition party, the DA.

The ANC's own forecast was less than 55%. But it obtained 62%. Despite failing to capture Gauteng or achieving their 30% national target, the DA vote increased by over one million, 70% of it black. The ANC's triumphalism of previous elections was replaced by the ANC secretary general bemoaning the fact that 62% is regarded worldwide as a landslide, but in SA as a defeat.

Yet the ANC has good reason to feel a chill down its spine rather than a quiver of excitement. This is its worst victory ever. As a percentage of the eligible voting population, the ANC's share of the vote has declined to 35%. It has been reduced to a party of the rural population which accounted for 64% of its votes. Over 14 million did not vote in the biggest stay-away from the polls since registration began. Even worse, it 'lost' Nelson Mandela Bay obtaining 49%. It won wafer-thin majorities in Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane.

The DA, one of the biggest beneficiaries of the swing against the ANC, can draw only cold comfort from its extra million. In the absence of a mass working class socialist alternative, the priority for most voters was to punish the ANC by voting tactically for opposition parties they believed were most capable of hurting the ruling party. The EFF benefited partially from this tactical vote, but also because alongside WASP, it was the first party to oppose the ANC from the left.

The reshaping of the political landscape by the aftershocks of the Marikana earthquake were reflected first in the historic

decisions of NUMSA's Special National Congress (SNC - see pages 8 & 9), and then in the elections. Far from confirming the ANC's strength, the 2014 elections revealed its diminished and diminishing authority. Since the elections, the DA's racial and class cleavages have been exposed yet again by the leadership crisis that broke out post-election. The elections fatally weakened the Minority Front and the Inkatha Freedom Party - the last of the creatures of apartheid.

The 2014 elections have also confirmed that efforts by the bourgeois to create an alternative on the right of the political spectrum to replace and/or combine with parts of an imploding ANC have failed. The Congress of the People has virtually disappeared and Agang has disintegrated. In this sense the 2014 elections has revealed on the political plane, what is already evident on the economic - that the capitalist class and their system offer no way forward for society.

Mass socialist workers party to unite working class

On the left of the political plane, the most significant developments since Marikana have been the emergence of WASP, the more than one million votes for the EFF and the historic resolutions adopted by the NUMSA SNC. The resolutions to bring together the left in a Movement for Socialism, to form a United Front and to explore the setting up of a Workers Party, have tremendous potential to answer

the historical challenge facing the working class: the overthrow of the barbaric capitalist system and creation of a mass party on a socialist programme.

The 2016 local government elections are only two years away. They could provide the first really serious test to the ANC and provide a genuine mass working class and socialist alternative. The ANC is highly unlikely to be able to halt the slide in its fortunes let alone reverse them. Efforts to reassemble the Tripartite Alliance are floundering against the rock of irreconcilable class antagonisms. Cosatu is being torn apart not only along the fault lines of political division but by the disintegration of a number of affiliates through corruption.

The loss of Johannesburg, Tshwane, Ekurhuleni and Nelson Mandela Bay, in addition to Cape Town is a blow the ANC would be unlikely to recover from. It will increase the chances of further splits and deepen the vacuum on the left.

2019 could provide an opportunity for a mass workers party to replace the DA as the official opposition, if not to oust the ANC itself as the ruling party. But the preparations for this will take place far less on the electoral plane than it will through mass action. A mass workers party will require the unification of the struggles of the organised working class through a new socialist trade union federation in or outside Cosatu through claiming its traditions of solidarity, workers democracy and socialism; the unification of service delivery protests under a single socialist civic, and the unification of the struggle of working class students under a socialist banner.

WASP is constructing such a civic. We have also established a youth wing - the Socialist Youth Movement - already contesting Student Representative Council elections on a number of campuses across the country and leading struggles against financial and academic exclusions. We are also proposing the establishment of a Socialist Trade Union Network to unite workers for a new socialist trade union federation. Above all, WASP's 2014 election manifesto provides the material for the socialist programme so indispensable to the establishment of a mass workers party. We call upon all serious activists to join us in

IZWI SAYS:

The Workers and Socialist Party is campaigning for Zuma's resignation. We encourage people to use the WASP petition, getting co-workers, neighbours, friends and family to sign, as one part of building a mass campaign to oust him. But it is crucial to also offer an alternative and encourage people to join WASP and campaign for the creation of a mass workers party on a socialist programme to replace Zuma and all the other mini-Zumas in the ANC who would take his place.