

The ANC's Zuma crisis We need a real alternative!

Build a socialist mass workers party for a government of the working class

The 31 March 2016 Constitutional Court Nkandla corruption scandal judgment has plunged the ANC government into its deepest crisis since 1994. The Concourt's emphatic, and in the words of one commentator, even defiant affirmation of the Constitution's supremacy, has given the tensions within the ruling economic and political elite their sharpest edge so far. The consensus that the survival of the negotiated settlement signed at Codesa depends upon has begun to break down. The establishment, their echoes in the media and upper reaches of society have called upon us to see our "beloved" constitution as a defence against anarchy.

Stripped of all its constitutional plumage, the negotiated settlement was an agreement, in the cutting sarcasm of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's words, between the elite of the oppressor and the elite of the oppressed. Under apartheid, class relations – the exploitation of the black working class by the white capitalist class – was under the political management of the white minority regime. Under the post-apartheid dispensation, this responsibility was transferred to a black majority government and given legitimacy by the "most progressive" constitution in the world.

The post-apartheid dispensation held out different, and in the final analysis mutually exclusive and unrealisable promises for different classes. The aspirant black capitalist class whose interests the ANC represents, expected by now to be at least as wealthy as their white capitalist counterparts. More than two decades after the end of apartheid, despite the spectacular enrichment of a handful of black capitalists, the summits of the economy remain firmly in the iron grip of the predominantly white capitalist class.

This new dispensation was reliant upon the ANC being able simultaneously to fulfil the historical aspirations of the

black capitalist class to be assimilated into and to occupy at the summits of the economy a place corresponding to the racial balance of forces within society – and simultaneously to fulfil the expectations of the black working class for an end to poverty, exploitation and oppression. Neither of these has been realised.

The Zuma faction is but the latest manifestation of the growing impatience and frustration of a section of the black political elite with the slow pace of "transformation". The hostility of this faction towards not only the constitution, but the institutional architecture to enforce it – the public protector, the judiciary etc. – derives from the severe constraints they impose on the realisation of their ambitions. The aspirant black capitalist class has arrived on the scene of history too late to realise its own aspirations let alone those of the black working class. Fearing the working class could not be mobilised to substitute exploitation by white capitalists with black ones, they are unable to dislodge white capital from its commanding position in the economy. All that is left is to loot.

In the final analysis, what is unfolding is not so much a constitutional as a political crisis as Concourt Judge Cameron correctly argues. All the classes are restive. The aspirant black capitalist class is split between constitutional democrats who are prepared to wait-in-line for their turn to rise to the summits of the economy in collaboration with "white monopoly capital" and a Zuma faction impatient that after more than twenty years they are still essentially waiters at its dining table. On the other hand the working class is seething with discontent over their continued enslavement.

The Constitution we are being urged to worship is the foundation of the post-apartheid social order aimed at preserving the capitalist dictatorship. The entire

constitutional order was designed to emasculate universal franchise – to give us the right to vote without the power to change anything fundamental, particularly in the ownership of the commanding heights of the economy.

The conduct of this corrupt and arrogant new ANC elite is demonstrating more and more to the masses the irreconcilable antagonism between their class aspirations and those of the elite to whom they gave political power. The constitutional confrontation is merely an indirect expression of the rising tensions between the classes as the economic crisis accelerates the polarisation between them. A new period of political instability has opened up to add to the social convulsions that the economic crisis has begun to detonate.

Mobilise for a workers government and socialism

For the working class to mobilise to defend the Constitution is therefore to mobilise in defence of capitalism. The constitutional democrats would be unable to eradicate the scourges of poverty, unemployment, inequality or corruption. As the Panama papers confirm, corruption is the life blood of capitalism worldwide (see page 11). The crimes of the Zuma faction are morally indistinguishable from that of the capitalist ruling class in SA whose self righteous denunciation of corruption is soaked in hypocrisy. The amount that Zuma has stolen is small beer compared to the pillaging by big business. The billions smuggled out of the country in illicit capital flows amounted in 2012 to 27% of the country's GDP. The capitalist auditing firm, Price Waterhouse Coopers described the SA economic corporate elite as the most corrupt in the world. The real fear of the ruling class is not so much Zuma's self-enrichment and corruption. It is the fact that his faction's insolence and sense of entitlement to loot the state could goad an enraged working class into rising up not only against

the ANC government but against capitalism.

The orchestrated intervention of the capitalist class, the judiciary, the media and international capital in Zuptagate has as its primary aim the prevention of such a nightmare scenario. The task posed before the working class is therefore not just the removal of Zuma and the ANC government, but the overthrow of capitalism itself.

Bourgeois strategists, in preparation for the ANC failing to retain its electoral majority nationally, are attempting to put together an alternative coalition to defend their interests. The crisis has now reached the point where it is in the capitalists' interest that an orderly split in the ANC should occur sooner rather than later.

This was the reason Agang was formed and a coup engineered in the DA coup to oust Helen Zille and install the black puppet, Musi Maimane. But the Agang venture ended ignominiously and the DA, with "born in apartheid SA stamped indelibly on it forehead", remains nothing more than a black-led party of white privilege.

The strategists of capital have therefore carefully begun to cultivate the EFF to transform it from a reckless threat to the bourgeois political order into a respectable potential ally in its preservation. Its position on nationalisation and foreign investors has been significantly watered down and the bosses given advice on how to avoid strikes. The EFF statement on the Concourt judgment, which Lenin would have called "constitutional cretinism", shows the EFF is also on its knees in front of a capitalist Constitution.

The transformation of the EFF into a conscious tool of the capitalist class is still a work in progress. It will be far easier to seduce Malema, comfortable in the company of the wealthy, than to fool the EFF rank-and-file indefinitely into thinking that after this turn to the right the road still leads to the promised land of economic freedom in their lifetime. The EFF rank-and-file will increasingly find itself having to fight to reclaim the EFF or become pawns in a strategy to save capitalism.

For a mass workers party to lead a workers government

We want Zuma out for entirely different reasons from the capitalists. The balance of power within the ANC at present is such that Zuma will be forced

out of office more by external than internal forces. The factional struggle has produced a paralysis in the top structures as particularly the opposition to Zuma fears that an attempt to oust him now would as secretary general Gwede Mantashe put it, tear the ANC apart. Whatever route he is forced out by, it will deal a shattering blow to this pro-capitalist government.

In campaigning for Zuma to go, however, we must be clear: not a single one of Zuma's potential successors nor any of the factions fighting to control the ANC will make one iota of a difference to the lives of the working class. All of them are equally committed to the preservation of capitalism and the continued enslavement of the working class. The problem is not Zuma or any of the warring factions. It is the ANC itself and the capitalist system it defends.

The working class itself is thus confronted with a huge challenge. For some time now, there has been a vacuum on the Left. The opportunity to fill it the Numsa leadership has so far spurned. The 'Numsa moment', to implement its 2013 Special National Congress resolutions to establish a United Front, a Movement for Socialism and a workers party, may have passed (see page 4-5).

Yet, especially since the Marikana massacre it is clear that the basis for a mass workers party exists. As we embark on rolling mass action to force Zuma and the ANC government out, it will be necessary simultaneously to make renewed attempts to bring such a party into existence.

WASP fully supports the call for a rolling campaign of mass action including general strikes to bring down Zuma and the ANC government. But the question this poses is what will replace it? The only answer is a workers government committed to the eradication of capitalism headed by a mass workers party on a socialist programme.

There is an urgent need for the working class to come together to debate and discuss, but more crucially act, to fill the vacuum of working class political representation. One opportunity to do this is the upcoming May Day Workers Summit planned for the launching of a new trade union federation. WASP calls for the question of the formation of such a party to be placed on the agenda of that gathering. The Summit should develop an anti-capitalist programme, a socialist manifesto and rolling campaign of mass

action in every corner of the country.

Such a party should demonstrate in action its capacity to unite the entire working class by taking up all the struggles such as #FeesMustFall and #OutsourcingMustFall and service delivery in all the main theatres of struggle in the workplace, in education and the townships and informal settlements, uniting them on programmes specific to each, with the workers party acting as the broad umbrella to unite them across all theatres.

Whilst developing a full-blown manifesto, the party should consider adopting the following programme to contest the local government elections:

- Nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy under workers control and management
- Free Quality Education
- Free Quality Healthcare
- The election of all officials subject to the right of recall
- The election of all public representatives on the average wage of a skilled worker

A workers government would be confronted with resistance by big business and the Concourt to who they will appeal to oppose nationalisation. Such an intolerable obstruction to the democratic will of the people – in fact a constitutional coup d'état – would raise the need for a new genuinely democratic constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. The Constitutional Assembly that drew up the current constitution consisted of handpicked delegates from all the capitalist parties, and so-called local and international constitutional and legal experts.

A workers government would have to appeal to the police, soldiers, correctional service, and all public servants to pledge their loyalty to the new democratic socialist order and to defend it against those forces bent on the maintenance of the present capitalist order. It would have to appeal to the working class internationally to oppose any attempt at imperialist sabotage.

