



05 April, 2017

For immediate release

NUMSA and the crisis in South Africa today.

What is the class basis of the current crisis in the South African state and in the ANC?

We, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) are not surprised by the recent political events which have dominated our nation. At our 10th National Congress in December last year, we predicted that the crisis in the Black African Capitalist class is bound to worsen. We predicted that the White capitalist class, (Afrikaner and English capitalists), which have always been dominant, would find itself increasingly in conflict with the emerging Black and African capitalist class, as it seeks to grow and consolidate its power. What we are witnessing is a reflection of this fight in the ANC and in the ANC government. The reshuffle is a manifestation of this fight. This is nothing more than a fight amongst greedy capitalists, who are battling each other for control over government and its budget.

What are the origins of this crisis?

The present crisis has its origins in the negotiated settlement which led to the so-called democratic breakthrough in 1994. The essence of the negotiations was to protect white wealth and privileges and the interest of international capital. The negotiated settlement entrenched capitalism, in post 1994 South Africa, by guaranteeing capitalist property rights in the constitution. Furthermore, the negotiated settlement also delivered capitalist socio-economic policies to a post-Apartheid South Africa.

The right wing leadership of the ANC capitulated to both domestic and international capital, and in turn, capital gave the ANC a Black government with which to police African poverty, and create a Black and African Capitalist class. This guaranteed that the Black government would essentially be a Bantustan government, just like the homeland governments of the past, it is a government without economic sovereignty.

White capital retained control of treasury, SARS, and the Reserve bank. Effectively this guaranteed economic sovereignty of the White population and the white capitalist class. It is this white economic sovereignty which feeds white racism. So the ructions we have been seeing are simply a battle by the same capitalist elites, for the control of the key pillars of white domination – which include the treasury.

The ANC and the reshuffles

There is a national mobilization around the dismissals of the finance minister Pravin Gordhan and his deputy Mcebisi Jonas. Zuma and his faction, including the new finance minister, Malusi Gigaba, are digging in their heels. What does this mean for the working class?

Many members of the middle class and the elite have condemned President Jacob Zuma for reshuffling the cabinet and have expressed outrage at the firing, in particular, of Pravin Gordhan. They are mobilizing for Zuma to resign or be removed from the presidency of the country and the ANC.

In this crisis the working class is bound to be confused, misled, and made to support causes which are detrimental to their class interests. The fundamental questions are: *Which of these factions of the capitalist class should the working class side with? And, When Zuma has fallen, who will replace him?*

What is Zuma fighting for?

President Zuma is fighting to take treasury away from white capital and guaranteeing that those who prevent him from controlling treasury, are removed from government. This reshuffle is a purge of Zuma's enemies in the state and in the leadership of the ANC. Zuma has positioned himself as the CEO of a group of the capitalist class dominated by the Guptas and other black and African capitalists in opposition to the entrenched white capitalist class.

What is Pravin fighting for?

During his tenure as finance minister Pravin Gordhan was a consistent defender of discredited neoliberal capitalist policies. He is a slave to ratings agencies which are the global capitalist policemen for the austerity measures, which inflict daily misery on the working class and the poor. The same national treasury which Gordhan was leading, removed exchange controls, allowing trillions of rand, which we desperately need, to leave the country, both illegally and legally, and exposed it to financial speculators. South African companies were allowed to list outside the borders of this country rendering this country poor. Pravin's response to this drain of money from South Africa has been to offer amnesty to the criminals.

The Reserve Bank's mandate under the supervision of the treasury, continues to be the pursuit of disastrous inflation targeting, instead of targeting jobs. Through this policy the reserve bank ensures that it protects the value of white wealth, and in particular, that of finance capital.

This government and treasury have also been an obstacle in addressing the land question. They opposed nationalisation of mines and the commanding heights of the

economy and have not aggressively pushed for beneficiation to take place, so that local jobs can be created. Under their watch, State Owned Enterprises (SOE's) are mired in cronyism and corruption associated with tenders. These parastatals spend millions of their procurement spend placing orders in companies outside of South Africa, and in so doing they destroy the economy.

Zuma and Pravin Gordhan are guilty of anti-worker, anti-poor policies!

We want to set the record straight on the open war between Pravin Gordhan and Jacob Zuma. It is obvious that Zuma and his capitalist group including the Guptas intend to use the SOE's, National Treasury and all available state institutions and structures to advance their own economic interests against the interests of the white capitalist group.

Both of these groups belong to the same class – the capitalist class. They are our class enemies, as the working class. Both do not deserve our support. Both want to loot us, to oppress us, to exploit us. Both are responsible for our suffering! Both these groups are guilty of ignoring the poor and the working class. They did not mobilize or campaign on issues which affected workers for example:

- The killing of mineworkers in Marikana and farm workers in De Doorns.
- They have done nothing to punish the banks for criminal and illicit trading under Apartheid and in the post 1994 South Africa.
- They have allowed construction firms and other monopolies to get away with a slap on the wrist for price fixing.
- They have allowed for private ownership of the South African Reserve Bank
- They are guilty of making South Africa the most unequal society in the world through neo-liberal policies imposed on the working class.
- They are responsible for deepening levels of unemployment, poverty, inequality and corruption.
- They have not demanded that racist Helen Zille must fall for her defence of colonialism.

The so-called Rating Agencies, whose interests do they serve?

Both the Zuma and Pravin capitalist groups worship rating agencies. Using national treasury, over the past 23 years they have bent over backwards to satisfy the rating agencies, and as a result, South Africa has become the most unequal society on earth, over this period.

NUMSA views the ratings agencies and their downgrade of South Africa to junk status, with the utmost contempt this deserves. These agencies are self-serving and politically motivated. They blackmail governments to pursue policies in the interest of domestic and international finance capital. They do not care about the suffering of the poor and the working class. They are cold and insensitive and usurp economic sovereignty of nation states on behalf of the interests of global finance capital. No self-respecting sovereign state should take these agencies seriously.

They have now downgraded South Africa to junk status, the sad irony is that 60% of the population are forced to live on the junk heap of society, eking out an existence

with little or no income, and forced to live with the indignity of life without electricity, basic sanitation or the guarantee of a decent meal a day.

Any working class ratings agency would rate the current South Africa way below junk status, considering the level of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

How are the two factions of the Capitalist class deceiving the working class?

The white capitalist establishment is exploiting its domination of the media to paint Zuma and his group, and deservedly so, as crudely very corrupt. As if *they* are not also corrupt. The implication here is that they represent a clean version of capitalism, an impossible feat as every worker should know. All capitalists are corrupt.

In the past 23 years the White capitalist class has consistently blocked land expropriation without compensation, while it is less than 10% of the population, it owns and controls 95% of South African wealth. The white capitalist class dominates in the economy and in society. Effectively this means South Africa remains a white dominated country, just like it was under Apartheid. It is this which feeds the root of racism in South Africa.

The Black and African capitalist group is conning the working class into believing that they are fighting for 'radical economic transformation'. In reality they are fighting for their own personal radical economic transformation. Zuma wants to ensure that his family and friends benefit for generations to come.

In 2013 at our historical NUMSA Special National Congress we resolved that the tripartite Alliance has been captured and taken over by right-wing forces, which are hell bent on championing neo-liberalism in all its forms. As NUMSA we also noted that the ANC had become a rotten structure, riddled with factionalism and corruption and that it cannot not be saved. It was clear to us that the ANC does not have solutions for the poor and the working class.

The country will continue to descend into authoritarian rule as Zuma and his cronies wrestle with white monopoly capital. Both camps are capable of becoming very desperate to defend their interests and can lead this country into fascism and civil war.

For the last 23 years, on behalf of the entire South African capitalist class - white, black and African - the ANC through national treasury have implemented neo-liberal economic policies which have destroyed jobs, and deepened inequality and poverty in the country. This government, together with the South African Communist Party (SACP) have endorsed right wing economic policies like GEAR and the NDP which have attacked the very existence of the poor and the working class in South Africa.

This government has refused to ban the exportation of scrap metal which has led to seven foundries closing, destroying thousands of jobs. Their legacy in the past two decades is scary. They have shed jobs massively across various sectors of the economy, and they are directly responsible for serious levels of de-industrialisation which the country won't recover from.

The ANC and its government have failed to implement the Freedom Charter, leaving 87% of the land in the hands of a tiny white population. Access to quality education remains the privilege of the few.

There is a state of hopelessness in the country among the black and African majority. This majority does not live a dignified life. At least 40% walk to work because they earn starvation wages because the ANC has failed to uproot the Apartheid structure of wages and income inequalities. This majority is dying every day because it cannot afford decent healthcare. Good quality healthcare is only accessible to the wealthy whilst the majority suffer and die in under resourced, dilapidated hospitals, without health specialists and scary conditions.

The ANC has consistently attacked the poor and working class for over two decades

On behalf of the South African capitalist class – white, black and African - The ANC government has been implementing decisions that constitute a sustained attack on the poor and the working class of South Africa. Instead of banning labour brokers, which is a system which creates uncertainty in the lives of our workers and exposes them to all kinds of labour law abuses, the ANC government has opted to regulate this form of modern slavery. Their latest assault is on the constitutional right of workers to strike by imposing limitations on the right to strike.

NUMSA has been angered by the mindless decision taken by the ANC government to close down five Eskom power stations in Mpumalanga, in the name of radical economic transformation. The closure of these power stations will mean that at least 40 000 jobs will be lost, and that 40 000 families risk being destitute. This will no doubt exacerbate the crisis of unemployment that we face as a country.

NUMSA is not surprised by the ideological bankruptcy and cowardly behaviour of the SACP

We were the first to make the demand that Jacob Zuma should resign in 2013 at our Special National Congress. We called on President Jacob Zuma to resign with immediate effect because of his administration's pursuit of neo-liberal policies such as the NDP, e-tolls, labour brokers, Youth Wage subsidy amongst others.

The SACP, ANC and COSATU leadership responded very angrily to our perfectly moral demand. Because of our correct position, the SACP worked with some in the ANC leadership to destroy us. Meanwhile the yellow bellied COSATU leadership resolved that NUMSA should be dismissed from the federation, and they pulled the trigger which fired more than three hundred thousand workers from a federation they helped to build.

NUMSA notes that three years after dismissing us, the SACP are now convinced that Jacob Zuma must go. What has changed in the last three years? Where is the ideological clarity and the Marxist tools of analysis? For the sin of daring to call for a corrupt and pro capitalist president Jacob Zuma to resign we were vilified to the point where on the eve of our Special National Congress the SACP issued an open letter to NUMSA delegates to remove the leadership!

Without any trace of shame or humiliation, today the leadership of the SACP finally agrees with the industrial proletariat that Jacob Zuma should go. However, typical of the petty bourgeois leadership of the SACP which is parasitic on the ANC, while they at first threatened to resign their Ministerial positions if Pravin Gordhan was removed they have since renegotiated their positions with Zuma! In true fashion of any unprincipled leadership, and like true cowards and opportunists, these yellow communists chickened out and dumped their threat, once their incomes were guaranteed.

What is the campaign to “defend the national treasury” all about?

As a Marxist-Leninist inspired trade union, if we are to embark on any campaign, we need to ask the question, *in whose class interests are we taking up in this campaign? What is the interest of the working class in a campaign that defends today’s national treasury? What are the interest of other class forces who are now coalescing around this campaign?*

Is it to protect the continuation of neo – liberal policies, meaning to protect the current status quo? If that is the case, it is a campaign which we cannot be part of, as it contradicts our Marxist-Leninist principles and the status quo is based on the exploitation of the working class.

It is particularly disturbing that the SACP wants to create the impression that if Pravin Gordhan stays, the plight of the working class will be addressed, without demanding that neo-liberal policies should be dumped and agitating for a revolutionary agenda. Unlike the discredited SACP, we have no desire to end up as the vanguard of white monopoly capital. We are ideologically clear about who we serve.

Just so that we are not accused of failing to see a potential revolutionary moment to defend democracy against a “soft coup” and dictatorship, we want to borrow from Lenin’s correct analysis of DEMOCRACY. Lenin made the following important points about DEMOCRACY;

"We Social-Democrats always stand for democracy, not "in the name of capitalism," but in the name of clearing the path for our movement, which clearing is impossible without the development of Capitalism

"Democracy for an insignificant minority, minority for the rich - that is the democracy of capitalist society"

"Whoever wants to reach Socialism by any other path than that of political democracy will inevitably arrive at conclusions that are absurd and reactionary both in the economic and the political sense."

From this outlook it is crystal clear that democracy plays an important role but from a class perspective Lenin is clear under which conditions we struggle for democracy *but not in the name of capitalism.*

Our demands, our programme!

We demand the abolition of poverty, unemployment and inequalities in South Africa!

As NUMSA we will take the working class to the streets to make the following demands:

- 1. We demand the full and immediate implementation of the Freedom Charter!*
- 2. We demand full employment, with the state as employer of last resort!*
- 3. We demand national living wage!*
- 4. We demand a real national minimum wage, not the Ramaphosa painful joke!*
- 5. We demand the abolition of the apartheid wage structure!*
- 6. We demand a 40 hour working week!*
- 7. We demand fully paid maternity leave!*
- 8. We demand universal medical care and medial cover for everyone!*
- 9. We demand decent and quality housing for all!*
- 10. We demand that the expropriation of land without compensation!*
- 11. We demand that the mines, banks and monopoly industry be placed under democratic worker control!*
- 12. We demand beneficiation of our minerals in South Africa!*
- 13. We demand industrialisation to meet the social and economic needs of South Africans.*
- 14. We want free quality, decolonized education for ourselves and children.*

We want Socialism, now!

We are confident that our fellow capitalist marchers will recoil from us when we pronounce on these demands!

Should the working class participate in the ongoing mobilisation against Zuma?

We hate corruption from anyone. We hate what the capitalists of all colours and from everywhere are doing to the working class and the poor in this country. The workers are free to participate in the marches, stay-aways and protests with their own independent posters and demands, as outlined above.

NUMSA, however, is not part of any of the political parties and organisations that are calling for mass protests against Zuma or for Pravin.

All NUMSA members and any other workers who will participate in the marches and protests and stay-aways must know that they are doing so as individuals, as is their democratic right.

What is to be done?

NUMSA will be preparing for the mother of all strikes over governments decision to shut down 5 Eskom power plants. We have lodged a Section 77 Notice to this effect. We will lodge a further Section 77 Notice to strike for the demands we list above.

NUMSA will bring the economy to its knees to remind government and all the capitalists in this country where the real power lies – with the workers! We will not

allow them to silence us by eroding our right to strike. We will fight them in the streets and in the courts. We will use all the tools legally available to us to protect jobs, protect our families, our communities and to protect our rights.

We are hard at work forging the working class political party, and we are completing preparations for the launch of our new, socialist, democratic, worker controlled and militant federation. We are also revitalising our United Front.

As NUMSA we will continue raising socialist levels of consciousness in the working class and building a genuine revolutionary socialist working Workers Party.

NUMSA is clear that it's time to build a socialist independent federation with no ideological confusion, but to rally workers for the struggle for socialism and pursue a radical fight to end economic exploitation.

The working class needs to be liberated from thinking that emancipation can come from the current liberation alliance which promotes Zuma and neo-liberalists who will continue to massacre and butcher the working class with their regressive economic policies.

NUMSA cannot allow the working class to be used for advancing the interests of its enemy classes once again, to endorse a narrow neo-liberal agenda. The price for South Africa's freedom was the blood, sweat and tears of workers who risked life and limb for the liberation of the people of this country. We dare not fail. We must organise or starve!

Issued by Irvin Jim

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