

# Who and what system must replace the chaos of the Zuma era when he falls?

By Karl Cloete

THE uproar in the country (and the world), coming from monopoly capital, religious leaders, trade unions, civil (and not so civil) society, opposition parties, from left to right, has come to dominate the media space and conversations in factories, families and our streets with one common denominator – #ZumaMustFall.

The rallying cry of the #ZumaMustFall campaign is that our society must not allow the looting of state coffers by Zuma and his henchmen.

This campaign claims that what makes the removal of Pravin Gordhan more suspect has been Gordhan's alleged protection of the National Treasury against the Guptas, whose banking solutions have all but run dry, and whose alleged lust for the nuclear deal has generated an appetite for looting.

Other arguments, used to reinforce the theory of the 2017 #ZumaMustFall campaign, lie in the failure of the president to deal with the shambles the SOEs (State Owned Enterprises) find themselves in; the drama caused by the Social Development Ministry regarding payment of grants; as well as the crisis and mismanagement caused within the SABC by the former minister of communication, Faith Muthambi. The reward for Muthambi was a sideways deployment with the Public Service Ministry.

All of this, of course, finds traction, but as we up the ante to have Zuma removed, the critical question to be asked this year, as we did in 2015, is: which class forces stand to gain the most from this important site of struggle?

It is also important to ask the question as to how to turn this crisis into something that will benefit the working class. In as much as we must analyse the class forces at play, we must also use the crisis and popular feelings of ordinary people to concretely benefit the working class.

Who stands to gain? Drawing on historical tactical and strategic questions in raising this pertinent question, we are not for a moment undermining the need for everyone in our society to be against capitalist state capture.

As Numsa we have lodged a complaint with the Public Protector for her office to investigate the Road Accident Fund. Our members have been on strike there

since March 16 because of myriad issues, including bad working conditions, poor wages and gross mismanagement.

Reference to state capitalist capture does not narrowly refer to the Guptas (as some would have it today). But more importantly, it refers to the historical and present role white monopoly capital plays in the mining, energy and finance complex, and it represents the landowners, a tiny white minority, who still own most of the land in this country.

Using Vladimir Lenin as a pathfinder we want to talk about important things that must help us clarify the questions we raise on what, for example, constitutes democracy, and what constitutes tactical class alliances; what the opportunities are and the risks and dangers.

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 is for an insignificant minority, democracy 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 stipulates under which conditions we struggle for democracy – and it’s not in the name of capitalism.

Not staying aloof from inter-class struggles and alliances, the working class should, however, never aid an agenda that replaces one butcher with another.

We know all too well what Cyril Ramaphosa’s role was in Marikana.

The cold reality is that some of those who are calling for Zuma to fall are actively campaigning for Ramaphosa to become the next president.

Ramaphosa has the backing of Cosatu and the SACP, and perhaps even Save South Africa. The other “hero” of the campaign is Pravin Gordhan. It is necessary to mention that the former finance minister is no hero of the working or the middle strata.

Just because Gordhan plays by the “rules” of democracy, doesn’t mean he is good for the majority.

What is at play this year is as it was in 2015 – to partake or not to partake?

We cannot escape the question that if Zuma is removed, who would replace the chief executive of the capitalist state to yet again subject the working class, the rural poor, students and informal sector workers to the misery they have suffered under neo-liberal capitalism since 1994?

Factually this is the state and the crisis of the South African working class:

35.6% of the population of working age is unemployed.

47% of all workers earn below the proposed national minimum wage of R3 500.

The total net wealth of three South African billionaires is the equivalent of the total combined wealth of 50% of the population.

We must ask those who are marching under the banner of #ZumaMustFall, where are they in the struggle of the working class?

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