

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8567>



South Africa

Down with the Government of National Unity; Unite and Defend Workers and the Poor

- IV Online magazine - 2024 - IV593 - June 2024 -

Publication date: Friday 21 June 2024

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

The elections of May 29 and the inauguration of the Government of National Unity (GNU) mark a critical shift in the country's political landscape. The results of the elections highlighted a number of important political processes that have been unfolding for some time: the unravelling of the ANC's dominance, the alienation of large sections of the population from formal politics, the growth of conservative politics in the form of ethno-nationalism, racism and xenophobia, and the weakness of the broad left.

The GNU represents the political consummation of the convergence of neoliberal forces that have since the late 1990s driven pro-market policies. While it is possible that this dream outcome for capital may result in short-term gains, including some capital investment and a more efficient government, these will not alter the fundamental trajectory of the new government: austerity on steroids within a stagnant and deindustrialising economy.

Public services are likely to be subjected to an onslaught of austerity and privatisation, with the generation and distribution of electricity and freight transport being primary targets. The much-vaunted and necessary NHI will probably be stalled and withered down to protect the private health sector. Already plans are emerging of extending the GNU to municipal level, leaving no part of the state safe from the tentacles of capital.

At this critical juncture, the progressive movements are weak and fragmented. Waiting in the wings to opportunistically carry the mantle of the left are the Radical Economic Transformation (RET) forces, now in the form of the uMkhonto Party (MKP), which have demonstrated repeatedly that their only interests are political power and self-enrichment.

The EFF-led progressive caucus represents a potpourri of disgruntled parties with very little progressive, never mind left, politics. A convergence between MKP and EFF would establish a formidable political bloc, albeit riddled with contradictions, and would further complicate a process of uniting the socialist left. The GNU also represents an existential crisis for the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) project, especially for the SACP and COSATU. They will have to decide whether to remain in the ANC-led alliance and continue to provide a left fig-leaf for the government's neoliberal programme or finally to break away and work with others to reconstitute the left.

Amidst these political convulsions, the forces of the left – trade unions, popular movements and various socialists – remain weak. The Working Class Summit has the possibility of becoming a national movement to mobilise grassroots struggles and to rebuild the forces of the left. However, the ultra-left sects are a stumbling block in the path of left renewal. Their insistence immediately to launch a mass workers' party is delusional and adventurist. Operating in their own ideological echo chambers, they are unable to analyse the conjuncture, not least the state of movements.

There is much work to do and difficulties to navigate. The capitalist forces will be emboldened by the GNU and will

Down with the Government of National Unity; Unite and Defend Workers and the Poor

accelerate their attacks on the poor majority. The MKP-RET-EFF will attempt to position themselves as the authentic representatives of the black majority and will probably find fertile ground for their rhetoric. There is therefore an urgent need to act decisively but to avoid the pitfalls of sectarianism. More than ever, we need to muster our forces, stand with the workers and the poor to resist austerity and privatisation.

We must fight for a meaningful Basic Income Grant to cushion the unemployed and the poor from the rising cost of living. We must stand in solidarity with workers and their unions to fight retrenchments and stand shoulder to shoulder with the women, LGBTI+ people and foreign nationals who bear the brunt of violence, misogyny, homophobia and xenophobia.

We must continue engaging politically, clarify our analyses of the conjuncture and develop a shared vision of political conscientisation, mass mobilisation and organisation.

An Injury to one is an injury to all!

*Issued by the ZASO Secretariat
17 June 2024*

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.