



## **WATER IN SOUTH AFRICA - A PRESIDENTIAL TASK TEAM TO THE RESCUE!**

It isn't as if South Africa's governing party the African National Congress (ANC) was not alerted years ago of an impending water crisis! Yet true to form, they ignored the warnings, like they have ignored warnings about other sectors of the South African economy. Their background says it all – history tells us they never developed a civilization because they never planned forward. Those who witnessed them in eighteenth and nineteenth century South Africa tell us of wandering tribes, of wars against each other, of plunder and pillage, with little evidence of the accoutrements of even a basic stability of tenure indicating a process of futuristic human development. Tomorrow was tomorrow, and yesterday was yesterday. There was no indication of progressive or innovative thinking – no written word, no wheel, no vision. Why then are we surprised that this syndrome expresses itself in the way South Africa has been governed by the African National Congress? The bedrock of the first world country they inherited has been allowed to rot. Maintenance is a foreign concept. Use it until it breaks. Don't bother to fix it, just move on!

It is no surprise therefore that, at a national level, SA's non-revenue water (NRW) losses are at 47.4%, with pipe leaks calculated at 40.8%. (Non-revenue water is water that is not paid for - it includes free water as defined in the constitution, leaks, unpaid bills, and theft). The major component of NRW is from physical leaks from broken or damaged pipes and infrastructure. At a provincial level, NRW water losses are at between 46% and 51% in eight provinces. In the Cape, the only province not controlled by the ANC, the figure is 26,9%. Losses at the Zululand and uMkhanyakude municipalities exceed 93% and 85% respectively.

Tragically, Gauteng, South Africa's economic heartland, has almost no local water resources of its own. It is increasingly dependent on "massive water transfers from the Thukela River in KZN and/or the Lesotho Highlands Water Project". (Daily Maverick 12.4.24)

## **VOICES FROM THE PAST**

TLU SA GM Bennie van Zyl personally raised SA's looming water crisis as far back as 2009 in a meeting with former president Jacob Zuma at the start of

his first term in office. Of course, Zuma did nothing, as is evidenced by the current situation. "We are now seeing the price of his party's policy of cadre deployment", said Van Zyl.

In 2008, Dr. Anthony Turton, then a researcher with the Council for Scientific Research (CSIR), was suspended from that organisation. He was due to present a paper warning South Africa that it was heading for a water crisis, which could fan "social instability". Instead of listening to an expert, the politically correct organisers of the conference charged Dr. Turton with "insubordination and bringing the CSIR into disrepute". How blinded they were, these sycophants genuflecting before a government which turned out to be the worst in the world. (How many others were seduced by the Mandela "miracle"? They cast common sense to the wind in their haste to pay obeisance to a government which has almost destroyed South Africa's water security!)

Turton was to have said in his presentation that "South Africa was running out of surplus water, with 98% of it already allocated."

Turton told an interviewer at the time that "no one listens to us anymore". How right he was. They never listened - until now - when most of Johannesburg has been without water for days, even weeks, on end. Turton said in his paper (that was banned by the CSIR) that the targets specified in the government's Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) "are simply unobtainable" He declared that "social instability will grow, and South Africa will slowly slide into anarchy and chaos".

How many "initiatives" and "growth plans" and "sustainability predictions" have we endured from the mouths of ANC bigwigs since then? They are masters of the promise and the platitude, with particular emphasis on our current president. His latest plaster over the suppurating wound that is the country's water situation is the appointment of Paul Shipokosa Mashatile as leader of a "top level ministerial team" tasked with averting an escalation of South Africa's water problems. (Sunday Times 7.4.24)

## THE TASK TEAM

Under one-inch headlines "MASHATILE'S BIG WATER PLAN" (Sunday Times 7.4.24) we are informed that the deputy president "intends roping in farmers and the mostly Afrikaner civic movement Solidarity to help local governments fix hundreds of stricken water treatment plants". Declared Mashatile: "Essentially the president's intention is to make sure we don't get to a crisis as we did with electricity".

The move to reach out to farmers ... is likely to be controversial in the ANC, said the Times article, but Mashatile said the matter should be "depoliticised" to allow those who can contribute "to step forward". Bennie van Zyl of TLUSA

is quoted as saying "It is funny that for many years there was no contribution to the maintenance and development of new infrastructure for water reticulation in our country, and now all the old systems are falling apart. Now he (Mashatile) has realised that it is an election year, and water is a big problem".

We shall see what the Task Team has done to date, given that South Africa's water situation is currently dire. As stated, 47% of all water distributed by municipalities is non-revenue water. 64% of the country's sewage and wastewater treatment works are at a high or critical risk of discharging partially or untreated water into rivers and the environment. Cholera has already broken out in some areas, and deaths have resulted.

Who then is Paul Mashatile, the proposed saviour of South Africa's water shambles? Is this man capable of solving an almost insuperable problem? What are his qualifications to extricate us from these depredations?

Mashatile was named Deputy President of the ANC in December 2022, and deputy president of South Africa on March 6, 2023. He worked underground as a member of the ANC and its military wing umKhonto we Sizwe (MK) during the apartheid years and was general secretary of the United Democratic Front (UDF) which was responsible for years of terror activities in SA's townships during the eighties. He was appointed to the Interim Leadership of the SA Communist Party.

On 12 February 2024, the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) laid charges against Mashatile following severe allegations of corruption levelled against him which span almost two decades. In a detailed 12-page report entitled "Mashatile Unmasked", the media organisation News24 exposes in detail the deputy president's associations with people under investigation for financial irregularities, while some of his other associates have been charged in connection with tender fraud. News24 estimates Mashatile's earnings between 1994 and 2022 to be around R25 million. The deputy president is yet another cadre who "stuck to the African script", a phrase used by author R.W.Johnson in his book "South Africa's Brave New World" (2009) where he describes the ANC's behaviour after coming to power. They were no different than their brothers throughout Africa, says Johnson. On gaining government, they became rich very quickly.

## **PRE-ELECTION STUNT**

It is clear that Mashatile's headline news about fixing the country's water problem is a pre-election trick to show the world that president Ramaphosa is "doing something" about the water crisis. The facts behind the headline belie this assertion. Both Afriforum/Solidarity and TLUSA read about their being "roped in" to help the ANC in the Sunday Times. They were to be asked to sort out the water problem and to fix the hundreds of broken sewage

treatment plants in the country. The water magician Mashatile to this day (25 April) has not asked either of these organisations to do what he roundly pronounces will happen as he “ropes in” these groups to fix the water and sewage catastrophes.

Both organisations have declared they would welcome the opportunity to assist with the water crisis, but it can be assumed there would be strong conditions under which they would help. It would take another bulletin to define these conditions but given the woeful ANC record so far of their stewardship of water and sewage installations in the country, the guarantees against ANC interference in these organisations' efforts to right what is wrong would be stringent.

As for the future of water in South Africa? Mashatile says in theTimes article that some local councillors (ANC) “won't like that (outside help) because they say we're taking away their powers (sic!). The deputy president also stated that any intervention “would have to be carefully managed so as not to affect municipalities' ability to generate revenue from water provision”. It's always about lining one's pocket with the ANC, despite the bankrupt state of so many ANC-controlled local government structures.

So, would these farmer and civic organisations be allowed to step in and make water and sewage provision actually function? It is doubtful, given the ANC's fears of treading on these (voting) councillors' toes. And therein lies the rub! Cadre deployment will not end. The ANC has no intention of curbing it. Job advertisements for municipalities and government departments still carry the caveat of “affirmative action policy” directives, so no whites can apply. So, the slide continues on a downward trajectory, with maintaining power as the ANC's chief objective. Nothing else really matters to them!