

South Africa is the second richest of all countries in mineral resources. Plus our huge near-surface coal deposits can provide us with the cheapest energy in the world. Adequate water and great agricultural potential, climate and people can combine to make this the fabled land of lore.

And then there is the ANC.

♦ To be fair, by all accounts the ANC may be trying to reinvent itself. Every second utterance is about dealing with past failures concerning corruption, crime, inequality, transformation, education, job creation, harmful labour regulations, decaying infrastructure, harmful youth leaders, corruption ... ♦ There is talk of a country on the brink, etc. Skilled people are emigrating in droves.

But it is not all doom and gloom. The example of Brazil shows what can happen in a country similarly blessed. After years of disastrous inflation with daily price hikes the 'Real Plan' (Plano Real) was introduced in 1994, which bore real fruit in the last 9 years under Presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, leaders of the Workers' Party. Lula departed after the statutory two terms of office with an 83% approval rating ♦ - based on perceptions of high personal integrity, a booming economy, a proven record in reducing the inequality gap, and a proven record in reducing the previously endemic corruption. Of course there are still many problems, but there is also a new overwhelming positive vibe in Brazilians who believe strongly in their future, even when Ronaldinho is left out of the national soccer team.

The real problem with the ANC is that after No-Contest Wonderful Madiba they elected first Thabo Chip-on-the-Shoulder ♦ and then Jacob I-will-not-have-my-day-in-Court to the state presidency. The first allowed corruption, AIDS and non-performance, the second corruption, non-performance and corruption. ♦ It shows where the true heart of the kingmakers lies.

Whether we will have to wait for the natural disintegration of the ANC as it becomes an opportunists' free-for-all, or whether some more ethical elements can hijack the party, or whether a new dominant party (probably not COPE, but maybe a revamped DA) can surface like the Workers' Party in Brazil, there is every chance that sooner or later we will have a leadership good for South Africa. The first step to a bright future is to be realistic about the current ANC's performance and prospects and to act accordingly.

Letter in The Star, 3rd Oct 2011