

# Movement without a soul?



South Africa is fast becoming a country known for its reality television and high drama soap opera politics from the Mac and Mo show (where Mac Maharaj and Mo Shaik accused former NPA head Bulelani Ngcuka of being an apartheid spy) to the Shabby Shaik trial. We are now heading for the next round - step aside West Wing here comes the Left Wing!

It is hoped that as the Left Wing unfolds the plot will become clearer to all. In the meantime, we are left guessing as the convergence of circumstances and interests makes the reading of the current Zuma saga a difficult one. One thing is undisputed is that the recent tensions around the former deputy president Jacob Zuma has created the most serious divisions within the ANC since the Codesa negotiations. So who forms part of the pro-Zuma camp?

- There are those who see their future (earnings or otherwise) tied to a Zuma presidency.
- The so-called left within the SA Communist Party (SACP) who include some senior office bearers of Cosatu affiliates who might be aggrieved with their gradual loss of influence within the ANC as the organization has shifted to the right. This grouping are using the Zuma issue to mount a campaign to challenge the dominant right wing and are benefiting from the mass support that Zuma enjoys. Within this grouping there are those who are not as interested in pushing a left project but contesting power for their own agenda. This grouping see the hand of the right wing in setting the stage for succession, which will continue to forge a bourgeois project.
- Mass support that Zuma enjoys seems to

have created the most important leverage for both groups. The mass based support is not restricted to KwaZulu Natal - where Zuma is seen as the man to have brought peace to the province. Zuma has support in other communities, as he is perceived to be closer to the interests of the working class. As a result the opportunists are not manufacturing the potential of a 'mass revolt' because mass support exists.



Given the diversity of the groupings forming the pro-Zuma camp, it is difficult to claim that it is about the preservation of a pro-poor and left agenda. Whether this is a principled campaign or not is irrelevant at this point. What is relevant and critical is that the Zuma saga is an ANC problem with current tensions existing within the ANC. Hence, proper leadership of the ANC is required. The pro-Mbeki camp - who might have believed they had control of the ANC - should be slightly shaken up by recent developments and the possibility for chaos. What is coming home to roost is that the existing ANC leadership is falling short of managing to lead a popular mass movement. ANC leaders have become too reliant on exercising their power through the state instead of relying on mass based support outside of elections. The Zuma affair reveals

that the old style of operating by subterfuge is not sustainable and instead leads to claims of political conspiracies, as articulated by Cosatu and the SACP.

The Zuma affair provides some important lessons for organisations such as Cosatu. As one observer says, 'no authority can ever go unchallenged where masses sense a disregard for their interests.' That is relevant not only to political parties such as the ANC but for Cosatu which just emerged from its

recent central committee meeting with a range of resolutions dealing with organizational issues. A Cosatu official argues that Zuma (and politics) is not the federations' core business. Whilst this might be true for some, politics is certainly sexier than having to deal with real on the ground problems. The test to that will be whether the same amount of energy will be given to continuing the current jobs and poverty campaign as has been devoted to the Zuma campaign.

Somewhere along the line some balance needs to be achieved between ensuring that there is not growing neglect of the basic functions of a union movement and being vigilant in protecting our democracy by ensuring, for example, that state apparatus is not used to squash political opposition. It would be an act of betrayal by Cosatu if it were seen by its members to devote all its energies to one without the other. Those attending the Western Cape launch on 22 August of the coalition against unemployment and poverty where not interested in hearing about Zuma (as attempted by Cosatu's Western Cape deputy chair) but about jobs.

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