

NATIONAL

With eye on polls, SACP invites Vavi and Jim to its congress

● *Members at the national gathering are in support of the South African Communist Party contesting elections*

Natasha Marrian
Political Editor

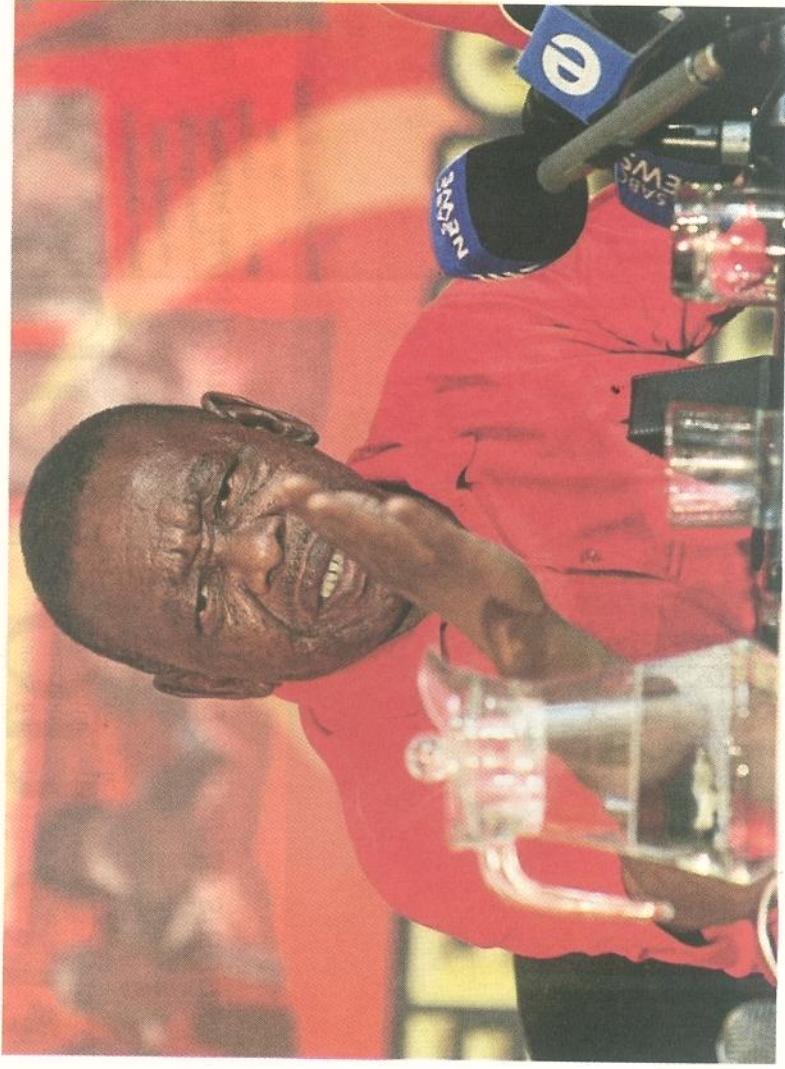
The South African Communist Party (SACP) has extended an olive branch to Zwelinzima Vavi and Irvin Jim, inviting their organisations to the party's 14th national congress.

The SACP was at the fore of the push against Vavi when he was Cosatu general secretary, and Jim, the National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa) general secretary, which led to their expulsion from Cosatu in 2014. Vavi and Jim have formed the South African Federation of Trade Unions, which has nearly 700,000 members.

Numsa is pushing ahead with its formation of a worker party to contest elections.

Much has changed since 2014 and the SACP is moving towards the creation of a broad front to contest elections in 2019. This has wide support among ordinary delegates at the party's gathering, which is under way in Boksburg, should the Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma slate, which is aligned to President Jacob Zuma, emerge on top at the ANC's December elective conference.

The SACP wants to create a broad front that will include



Pointing a finger: SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande told delegates that not only the Guptas were to be blamed for state capture but also ANC members working with them. / **File picture**

progressive sectors of society to contest future polls.

SACP deputy general secretary Jeremy Cronin said this was part of the reason Vavi and Numsa were invited.

On Tuesday, general secretary Blade Nzimande publicly described Zuma's presidency as a "betrayal of trust".

The SACP was instrumental in Zuma's rise to power.

Former president Thabo Mbeki was expected to make an appearance at the gathering in Boksburg, although he had not done so by the end of proceedings on Tuesday.

Vavi confirmed to Business Day that he and Numsa had been invited to the congress but said he would not be attending.

However, ANC stalwarts Kgalama Motlanthe, who did not attend the ANC's policy conference, and Ronnie Kasrils, a former SACP leader, were present.

Kasrils, who has not been active in the SACP, has been working with Numsa to create the United Front.

Nzimande expressed disappointment at the manner in which the post-Polokwane "marriage of convenience" had broken down. "Our trust has been broken," he said.

So much so that the SACP wants the state to terminate all dealings with the Gupta family.

Delivering his political report to the congress, Nzimande urged delegates to formalise the decision for ties to be cut with the Guptas. His comments were met with loud applause.

The SACP also called for a judicial commission of inquiry into state capture, as recommended by former public prosecutor Thuli Madonsela.

Nzimande painted a dismal picture of the state of the ANC, the alliance and the government during Zuma's second term.

Nzimande said that after

2014 the rent-seeking, parasitic group, which included the Guptas, rose with "great boldness and recklessness".

He described the emergence of a "shadow state" and a "silent coup" in SA, with state capture taking off on "steroids".

But Nzimande said not only the Guptas should be blamed for this, but also all of those in the ANC and the state working with them. This was a tacit swipe at Zuma, who has described the family as his friends. The Guptas employ his son Duduzane.

The SACP is set to decide whether to contest elections on its own. While there is massive support for this from members, its leaders are more reticent.

Former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas, speaking on the sidelines, said SA needed a "broad front" to mobilise, energise and focus citizens and deepen their understanding of the challenges SA faced.

"I think we need to build a platform which people can believe in, a platform with integrity." He did not want to comment on the state of the ANC, but said the country was in need of refocusing citizens to change its situation. / **With**

Genevieve Quintal

marrian@businesslive.co.za