

SACP extends invites to former presidents

Nzimande previously shunted Mbeki and Motlanthe in favour of Zuma

Analysis

By **Ranjeni Munusamy**

The opening day of the 14th national South African Communist Party (SACP) congress constituted the ultimate fence-mending/back-peddalling exercise in South African politics.

Apart from the dizzying ironies and about-turns in SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande's political report, there was also a deliberate effort from the party to show President Jacob Zuma the proverbial middle finger.

The SACP not only uninvited Zuma from its congress, but also extended the olive branch to those it shunted to back him in the ANC's two previous succession battles.

Former presidents Thabo Mbeki and Kgalema Motlanthe were invited – although only the latter was seen at the opening session yesterday morning. It is not known

whether the bad blood between Nzimande and Mbeki has dissipated. Mbeki once referred to Nzimande as being “extraordinarily arrogant”.

The SACP also extended an invitation to metalworkers union Numsa, the union that was expelled from Cosatu for, among other things, being critical of Zuma's leadership. But Irvin Jim and his crew seem as yet unwilling to smoke the peace pipe.

After being militant in their demands for Zuma to step down, the SACP leadership seems to have tempered its language – perhaps under the glare of the ANC's lead delegate and deputy secretary-general Jessie Duarte, who was seated in the front row.

Nzimande made no mention of the party's repeated calls for Zuma to leave office.

In his opening remarks, SACP chairman Senzeni Zokwana broached the issue, but said they had “advised” the



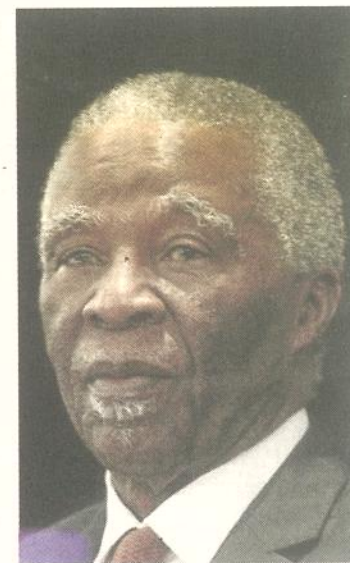
The SACP uninvited President Jacob Zuma from its congress. /MASILOSI

president to go. But delegates kept the message going, singing: “Have you heard the good news? They say Zuma is leaving!”

Nzimande lashed out at the Gupta family in his report, but



Kgalema Motlanthe was at the opening session yesterday. /SIMPHIWE NKWALI



Thabo Mbeki, previously shunted, received an invitation. /VATHISWA RUSELO

said that those “collaborating” with them should also be blamed for “state capture on steroids” post 2014.

Nzimande, however, defended his and other SACP leaders' continued presence in the “captured state”, saying party leaders have served in cabinet positions since 1994.

He also criticised the “massive overspending” on the security upgrades at Zuma's Nkandla residence. However, three years ago he called the outrage over Nkandla “white people's lies”.

It seems the role of SACP

deputy chairman Thulas Nxesi, who was public works minister when the Nkandla fiasco was at its height, has also been expunged from memory.

Nzimande was also critical of how the ANC was attempting to shut down debate.

It is ironic that he was accused of doing the same within the SACP, including on the issue of supporting Zuma's bid for the presidency.

The congress is expected to elect Nzimande, who has been at the helm of the SACP for 19 years, for another five-year term as general secretary.