

South Africa and the Terrible Tragedy of the ANC

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President Jacob Zuma [pictured left] is not a fool. He makes gaffes every week and has no idea what constitutionality means. But he is not a fool.

He might not read – as has been alleged – but that does not mean he does not know what levers have to be cranked to ensure that he never gets inside a court.

Since he became the president of the ANC in 2007, he has overseen the most concerted and successful assault on the country's independent institutions.

The judiciary is today facing a major crisis of confidence because of cases involving him at the Constitutional Court.

The minute he won the ANC presidency in Polokwane, the Scorpions – which had been investigating him – were disbanded. It was quick, cruel and ruthless.

Over the past few months it has been the public protector's turn. In that time, we have witnessed concerted and coordinated attacks from parliament, the executive and various wings of the ANC on the office led by possibly the most admired "public servant" in the nation today – Thuli Madonsela.

This past week we had the extraordinary sight of our security cluster – which has over the past few weeks made fools of themselves saying all kinds of nonsense about Madonsela – turning on the populace and declaring that publication of pictures of the taxpayer-funded Nkandla monstrosity were illegal and that the full might of the law would come down on those who dared to do so. All this for one man: Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma.

The man is not a fool. He has managed to get Africa's oldest liberation movement to become a tool for his protection.

Whatever he does – whether it is his friends the Guptas landing their planes at military key points with impunity or a hideous compound being built for him for R208-million, the man has got the party rushing to do his bidding.

And so one has to ask: Which ANC is this?

How can an organisation that refused to have a personality cult built around Nelson Mandela allow itself to become a mere tool in the hands of Zuma? How can its leaders cast aside the party's historical mission – to transform the lives of millions of poor black people and build a united, non-racial, prosperous and democratic country – to simply become gophers for Zuma?

Yet that is what the party's 86-member national executive committee has become.

ANC MPs are now introducing legislation that is aimed solely at protecting this one man.

Across the land, provincial party leaders hobble state machinery merely to protect and keep this one compromised leader out of jail and in power.

It is an incredible sight.

Once proud leaders who served our nation in exile, in the United Democratic Front and in trade unions now scrape and bow before one man.

The ANC no longer has leaders. It has zombies who mindlessly follow this one leader and do his bidding.

It is quite extraordinary.

What has happened to the culture of debate and contestation that once permeated this movement?

What happened to the pride that made this once great organisation stand up and expel people who muddled its name?

How can this lot walk in the shoes of Albert Luthuli, AP Mda, Anton Lembede, Pixley kalsaka Seme?

So, as we look at the extraordinary lengths that the current ANC "leadership" has gone to defend an embarrassment of a leader whose entire family seems to be infused by a shocking culture of entitlement – Zuma's brother, Michael, last week admitted using his name to swing tenders to his benefactors – we have to ask: Where is the ANC?

The answer is heartbreaking: The ANC is compromised; it is lost.

It has lost its moral compass and its leadership of society.

The man at its head is a reflection of what the party is: ill-disciplined, compromised and unprincipled.

The desperation one sees among the ANC's leaders is a reflection of this. When a man as widely admired as Cyril Ramaphosa has no other argument to convince a voter to still support the ANC than "the Boers will return", then you know that this is a movement that is both intellectually and morally bankrupt. The emperor and his lieutenants have no clothes.

And so we will remember the reign of Zuma. We will remember it not for its achievements but for the cowardice, callowness and bankruptcy of the leadership that he brought with him. We will remember his lackeys for their bowing and scraping and their destruction of the continent's greatest liberation movement.

What an ignominious end for the party of Mandela.

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Note by Anthony Bellchambers: If you want to make more people aware of how our country is being undermined by one man's personal greed and, in the hope of stopping this runaway train, encourage people to be part of finding a solution, please forward the above article to all your friends, family and associates. Thank you.

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