

# South Africa: What is Happening to the Alliance?

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Much is at stake in the latest spat between Cosatu and the ANC. Disciplinary action as mooted by the National Working Committee of the ANC will threaten the Alliance says Vavi and a number of Cosatu affiliates that have come out in support of their general secretary. Whatever happens, and things are far from clear (leaks and counter-leaks make the water more than muddy,) the ANC is as divided as it was before the Polokwane conference. Masetla, a former Mbekite, now a Zumaite and definitely an anti-Vaviite and many of the nationalists in the ANC resent the regained influence of the SACP and Cosatu in the ANC.

These divisions between the so-called nationalists and the so-called left, (so-called because it is difficult to know who is left in all of this – after all its ANCYL President who started the ball rolling on radical economic change vis-à-vis nationalization of the mines and the deputy general secretary Cronin that opposed it,) has burst out into the public domain through carefully released leaks alleging corruption and tenderpreneurship amongst the main roleplayers.

It would seem that the threats to discipline Cosatu General Secretary Vavi is as much about his criticism of President Zuma's inability to deal with corruption and "tenderpreneurship"; as it is about the death throes of the Polokwane power project. The ANC threat to deal with Vavi is a symptom of the battle for hegemony in the alliance and is characterized by the growing intolerance within the ANC as the nationalists fight tooth-and-nail to preserve their interests, and their grip on power. Caught in the middle is the weak moral and political leadership of an ANC president who lurches from one personal scandal to another. His own political ambitions and financial woes are used as leverage by those who claim power in order to control the wealth of the country.

Vavi's assertion that the impending charges against him are a "dangerous precedent no one would like to live with" is perhaps a knee jerk reaction, and a threat to dissolve the alliance is a tension we have seen before. After more than one year of the Zuma regime and still no progressive movement in policy shifts, Cosatu is getting impatient. They want to prevent its place-holder in cabinet, Ebrahim Patel from being consigned to the no-man's land of the policy graveyard, where policy shifts are buried and almost forgotten.

Notwithstanding Cosatu's alliance membership, which again is in the balance, a union movement which defends working class interests, which can demand the resignation of corrupt cabinet ministers and can certainly criticize ministers, is needed. And for this Cosatu's stand should be supported by all progressives. The idea that debate in the alliance about corruption and tenderpreneurship should be hidden from public life contradicts everything Polokwane was supposed to stand for, not least democracy. The strategies and promises of Polokwane has not left the starting block. The ANC faction attacking Vavi is most comfortable when their self-enrichment activities are neither questioned, nor exposed.

Cosatu may not have the stomach to go it alone, nor the resources, and now is the time to display political fearlessness. It is the time for members of the federation to come out strongly against the greed and corruption which threatens the working class, and South Africa.

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**P.S.**

\* From Amandla! website:

<http://www.amandlapublishers.co.za/home-menu-item/307-happeningtothealliance>