

The British-Inspired Campaign Against Mbeki

by David Cherry

When the African National Congress (ANC) assembled in Polokwane on Dec. 16, 2007, for its national conference and party elections, South Africans witnessed a shocking discontinuity: a large number—reportedly a majority—of the 4,075 delegates abandoned civility and debate, preferring to attempt to humiliate the president of their party and their country, Thabo Mbeki. When Mbeki finished reading his report to the conference, a large number of delegates rose to their feet, singing “Umshini Wami” (“Bring Me My Machine-Gun”), the theme song of Mbeki’s opponent, Jacob Zuma, whom the delegates then elected to replace Mbeki as ANC president. That was the high point of the rageful irrationality visited upon the President, his Cabinet, and others at Polokwane by the recent converts to uncivil society.

One observer noted the discontinuity, in a letter to the editor of the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* Jan. 6, 2008: “The anarchic tendencies that have taken root in the ANC lately, coupled with the blatant disrespect towards the highest office in the land, raise high suspicions of a Third Force in operation. . . . South Africa wake up. *Zemk’iinkomo magwala ndini!* [The cattle are being stolen, you bloody cowards!]” The letter may be the only published acknowledgement, apart from *EIR*, of a third force guiding the attack on Mbeki. It was signed by Epainette Mbeki, the President’s 92-year-old mother.

Since Polokwane, British institutions—and South African media and institutions under British influence—have raised cattle-stealing to a fine art. The rush of attacks on the President and the Presidency is shown here.

April 3: House of Lords Zimbabwe debate

Frances Gertrude Claire D’Souza, Baroness D’Souza: “My Lords . . . does [Minister of State Lord Mark Malloch-Brown] agree with the view expressed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu that now is not the time for quiet diplomacy, and that every possible . . . repre-

sentation should be made to President Thabo Mbeki . . . ?”

Malloch-Brown: “The Prime Minister has spoken to Mr. Mbeki and will speak to him again. . . .”

Daphne Park, Baroness Park of Monmouth: “My Lords, does the Minister agree that we have left the decisions too long to [the Southern African Development Community]?”

April 13: Trade union actions to discredit the Mbeki government

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) staged the first of its protests against rising prices by leading a march through Polokwane. The demonstrators, misguided by Cosatu’s impotent populism and localism, demanded a reduction in the price of bread and prosecution of those accused of price fixing. The protests succeeded in giving Cosatu a higher public profile against the government.

April 15: *Washington Post* editorial

Mbeki’s government “has consistently allied itself with the world’s rogue states and against the Western democracies . . . defended Iran’s nuclear program . . . shielded Sudan and Burma . . . supported one-sided condemnation of Israel. . . . Now Mr. Mbeki’s perverse and immoral policy is reaching its nadir” in Zimbabwe.

May 14: ANC treasurer says Mbeki must resign

Following the sudden, unexplained outbreak of deadly violence against foreigners on May 11, Mathews Phosa, the new ANC Treasurer General, called for Mbeki to immediately resign. Phosa is one of a group of leading opponents of Mbeki with old scores to settle.

May 20: *Times* of London editorial, “The Shame of Thabo Mbeki”

“By failing to condemn Robert Mugabe’s murderous dictatorship, Mr. Mbeki has done more than any other outsider to keep him in power. He has also perpetuated the flood of Zimbabwean refugees. . . . They seek . . . livelihoods in an economy burdened further by systemic corruption and sharply rising food prices. The results include lynchings and looting. . . . For Mr. Mbeki to announce . . . a panel to study the causes of the lawlessness . . . is fiddling while Rome burns. . . . Mbeki could still reverse much of the damage by . . . ending

his puerile sabotage of British efforts to isolate Mugabe at the UN.”

May 24: Times of London blames Mbeki for using the Army to stop xenophobic attacks

“President Mbeki reluctantly authorized the Army to assist police—a move severely denting the country’s reputation for stability and tolerance in a turbulent continent.”

May 25: Sunday Times (Johannesburg) gives clout to demands that Mbeki resign

In a front-page editorial attacking Mbeki for his handling of the xenophobic attacks, the *Sunday Times* charges that Mbeki has “shown himself to be not only uncaring but utterly incompetent. . . . [H]e no longer has the heart to lead. He did not visit any scene of violence and did not speak to the nation. . . .” The British-allied opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, had already called for Mbeki’s resignation at this point.

June 4: Mail & Guardian (Johannesburg) commentary instructs ANC who should replace Mbeki

William Gumede, in “National Crisis in SA Calls for Extraordinary Steps,” says Mbeki must resign immediately, and tells the ANC whom it must appoint in his place—which it has now done. Gumede also writes for the City of London’s *The Economist*.

“The South African state is imploding. . . . The black majority . . . will no longer wait patiently for the benefits of post-1994 economic growth. . . . They want jobs, food, affordable education, health care, electricity . . . and they want it now. . . . Mbeki must step down as president immediately. . . . Because this is a national emergency, the ANC leadership must offer the job as South African President to ANC deputy president Kgalema Motlanthe, ANC treasurer Mathews Phosa,

or ANC national executive committee member Cyril Ramaphosa. . . .”

June 6: Politicsweb cites authority of the New York Times and Wall Street Journal

Politicsweb, part of the Moneyweb family of South African online publications, wrote: “Mbeki has been accurately and justifiably denounced in the *Sunday Times*, *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* and there is nothing further that need be said about this failed leader; he must simply be removed from power.”

June 16: “We will kill and die for Zuma”

ANC Youth League President Julius Malema, at a Youth Day rally in Thaba Nchu, Free State, declared, “We are prepared to die for Zuma. We are prepared to take up arms and kill for Zuma.” Malema still defends his statement today. Days later, at a funeral, Cosatu Secretary General Zwelinzima Vavi said: “He is one of our leaders, for him, we are prepared to lay [down] our lives and to shoot and kill.”

July 8: G8 governments’ statement to undercut Mbeki and destabilize Zimbabwe mediation

“We will take further steps, inter alia introducing financial and other measures against those individuals responsible for violence [in Zimbabwe].” The statement recommends that the UN Secretary General appoint a special envoy “to support regional efforts to take forward mediation between political parties.”

Aug. 3: Sunday Times (Johannesburg) uses British “secret report” to accuse Mbeki

The exposé claims that Mbeki accepted a bribe of 30 million rand (\$3.75 million) from German ship-builder MAN Ferrostaal, in exchange for a submarine contract, and that he gave R28 million of it to the ANC and R2 million to Zuma, then Vice President. A “central European manufacturer,” defending against a hostile takeover bid by MAN Ferrostaal, hired “a British specialist risk company” to investigate MAN Ferrostaal; the risk company wrote in its “secret report” that “a former South African official who had access to such information informed us in confidence. . . .” *Times* editor Mondli Makhanya, in an interview on the *Times*’ website, treats Mbeki as guilty: “We at the *Sunday Times* believe Mbeki betrayed us and cannot stay on.”

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