

Ramaphosa's anti-corruption campaign might be slow – but the change is constant

By Oscar Van Heerden - 2 September 2020

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Best that we advise those who know they are implicated in criminal activities during the Zuma years to put their affairs in order. Because once you are arrested, personal belongings, assets and estates are fair game for the SIU and Asset Forfeiture Unit. The best lawyers in the business will not keep you out of jail.

After the much-anticipated ANC NEC meeting this past weekend, and the resounding victory for President Cyril Ramaphosa's anti-corruption campaign, I am reminded of the paper written by Vladimir Lenin to critical acclaim, on factionalism within his own party in 1904.

It was aptly called, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back – The Crisis in Our Party", and was published on May 6, 1904. In it, Lenin examines the circumstances that resulted in a split within the party between a Bolshevik ("majority") faction, led by himself, and a Menshevik ("minority") faction, led by Julius Martov.

Lenin wrote in response to controversies within the Social Democratic Labour Party's Second Congress regarding the status of party membership and organisation, and he frames this conflicting factionalism within the party in terms of dialectics. According to Lenin, there are two conflicting factions within the party: "the revolutionaries", which consists of the majority of party members (the Bolsheviks) and "the opportunists", which are the minority (the Mensheviks).

For our purposes, the analogy also holds in that Ramaphosa is represented by Lenin wanting to rid his ANC party of the opportunists, who are represented by the ANC Secretary-General, Ace Magashule.

The supposed difference between these two factions, the opportunists would like us to believe, is that of Radical Economic Transformation. In other words, the opportunists who actively participated in State Capture illicit activities, stole from the public purse and at every turn enriched themselves and others, would like us to believe that they now have the interests of the masses of our people at heart and hence want to demand that monopoly capital must give back handsomely or else it will be taken.

Lenin states that, "the great Hegelian dialectics which Marxism made its own, having first turned it right side up, must never be confused with the vulgar trick of justifying the zigzags of politicians who swing over from the revolutionary to the opportunist wing of the Party, with the vulgar habit of lumping together particular statements, and particular developmental factors, belonging to different stages of a single process.

"Genuine dialectics does not justify the errors of individuals, but studies the inevitable turns, proving that they were inevitable by a detailed study of the process of development in all its concreteness. One of the basic principles of dialectics is that there is no such thing as abstract truth, truth is always concrete... And, one thing more, the great Hegelian dialectics should never be confused with that vulgar worldly wisdom so well expressed by the Italian saying: *mettere la coda dove non va il capo* (sticking in the tail where the head will not go through)."

We are not fooled by these opportunists.

I am certain now that the NEC of the ANC has decided to comply with the resolution of its 54th National Conference as it relates to those in its ranks being accused, charged and prosecuted, and we will soon see the arrest of and formal

charges laid against Magashule. Yes, and those who constantly remind me that this will never happen, well, watch the next couple of weeks, comrades.

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A few weeks ago, I wrote about JP Landman's analysis around corruption and what has been done in combating it from the government's side. He also indicated that it is now up to the ANC to follow suit, and this is exactly what transpired this past weekend. The president forced the hand of his NEC members by penning a letter, basically a cry for help from the general membership of the ANC, saying that he is fighting an anti-corruption battle in the organisation and it is getting resistance at every turn, bend and corner and he needs their help. The tactic pitted the ANC leadership against the general membership, and it worked.

The NEC, some of whom are implicated by the resolution, had to come out in support of the president. Well played, President Ramaphosa. Now, all that remains is to ensure that everyone complies with the decision of the NEC, step aside if you are facing charges, relinquish all leadership positions if you are formally charged, and expect to be suspended if indeed found guilty either by the Integrity Commission of the ANC or our courts. The proof is in the pudding.

Lenin further reminds us: "One step forward, two steps back... It happens in the lives of individuals, and it happens in the history of nations and in the development of parties. It would be the most criminal cowardice to doubt even for a moment the inevitable and complete triumph of the principles of revolutionary Social-Democracy, of proletarian organisation and Party discipline.

"We have already won a great deal, and we must go on fighting, undismayed by reverses, fighting steadfastly, scorning the philistine methods of circle wrangling, doing our very utmost to preserve the hard-won single Party tie linking all Russian Social-Democrats, and striving by dint of persistent and systematic work to give all Party members, and the workers in particular, a full and conscious understanding of the duties of Party members, of the struggle at the Second Party Congress, of all the causes and all the stages of our divergence, and of the utter disastrousness of opportunism, which, in the sphere of organisation as in the sphere of our programme and our tactics, helplessly surrenders to the bourgeois psychology, uncritically adopts the point of view of bourgeois democracy, and blunts the weapon of the class struggle of the proletariat."

Of course, time will tell whether the ANC is indeed anti-bourgeois democracy.

Lenin continues: "In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation. Disunited by the rule of anarchic competition in the bourgeois world, ground down by forced labour for capital, constantly thrust back to the 'lower depths' of utter destitution, savagery, and degeneration, the proletariat can, and inevitably will, become an invincible force only through its ideological unification on the principles of Marxism being reinforced by the material unity of organisation, which welds millions of toilers into an army of the working class."

This must be what we preoccupy ourselves with, fixing the economy, creating jobs, and effectively dealing with reducing poverty – instead, we are engaged in factionalism and crass accumulation politics.

So, the fight continues between "the revolutionaries", which consists of the majority of party members and "the opportunists", who are the minority. We are indeed encouraged by this weekend's frivolities, and we do hope that the National Prosecuting Authority and all other law enforcements agencies will now take their respective cues from the outcome.

One step forward, two steps back must serve as a litmus test in our fight against corruption. Progress might be slow, but as Heraclitus also reminds us, nothing is as constant as change. There is light at the end of the tunnel and it's not an oncoming train. DM