

Just another poodle

I guess we were naive. We've been duped. Those who thought that Kgalema Motlanthe was a rare breed, free of or unencumbered by the intrigue that propelled him to high office in the first place, should disabuse themselves of that thought.

He speaks softly, deliberately. He's mild-mannered, with an almost inborn presidential bearing. One could not have hoped for a kinder uncle. On the face of it, his was a welcome antidote to the cunning, Machiavellian tenancy of Thabo Mbeki. We fell for it. A breath of fresh air, we thought.

But as we learnt this week, Motlanthe is a true believer, a loyal cadre and a crucial cog in the *mshin'wam* project. It was a rude awakening. Despite protestations to the contrary, Motlanthe is not his own man. He's dancing to the tune of the man who's made Zulu dancing part of his political patois.

I don't think we should blame him at all. Deployed cadres, or soldiers, in the true traditions of the ANC, cannot be blamed for carrying out orders, no matter how unpopular they may be. Instead, we should be embarrassed by our naivete.

In terminating Vusi Pikoli's services as national director of public prosecutions this week, Motlanthe has finally discharged a crucial part of his mandate as a stop-gap president. He can retire now. The job is done.

"This is my own decision," Motlanthe said. The man doth protest too much. He wouldn't have to say that if it were indeed the case.

Jacob Zuma is no fool. He wouldn't plonk Motlanthe in the Union Buildings so that the man could muddy the waters for him. To borrow from Motlanthe's own construction, it would be illogical. Motlanthe is there to clear the decks for his boss. It's in the script.

The Frene Ginwala inquiry was pure, unadulterated humbug, an attempt to soil the reputation of an honest and conscientious civil servant. How Ginwala, herself a victim of Mbeki's sharp elbow, involved herself in such a tawdry affair is a mystery. Many would have thought better of it. I guess party poodles are never taught to say no. But even

this pathetic whitewash wasn't good enough for her bosses. Heaven knows she must have tried to nail the guy, only to be let down by the evidence. It just wasn't there.

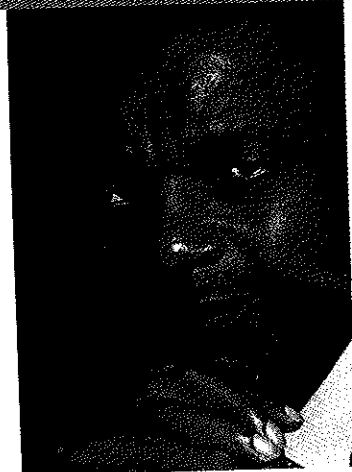
So Motlanthe took one look at her report. Illogical, he said, tossed it aside, and proceeded to finish the job Mbeki had started. The real villains of the piece: Menzi Simelane, who spun a yarn with nary a care; his blundering boss, Brigitte Mabandla, who didn't have the stomach to show her face at the inquiry; and yes, Jackie Selebi, our redoubtable police commissioner, are still happily drawing a salary from the state, while an upstanding man is made to carry the can. A great injustice has been done by people who claim to uphold the highest tenets of justice.

If Ginwala wanted to be taken seriously, she should have insisted on evidence from Mbeki and Mabandla, the two people who, by protecting Selebi, have in effect committed a crime. In any case her inquiry was a sideshow that has been overtaken by events. Judge Chris Nicholson has strongly advised against political interference in the NPA.

Now that the decks have been cleared, here's what's going to happen. Motlanthe, acting on instruction from Zuma, and probably advised by one of his many sidekicks, will appoint a believer or loyalist to succeed Pikoli. The new incumbent, smitten with joy at his good fortune, will do a perfunctory assessment of the Zuma case, after which he will announce with all fanfare that Zuma has no case to answer. Case closed.

I'm happy to be proved wrong. I doubt it. It's a perfect opportunity to kill the case once and for all. They are not going to let it pass.

The Zanufication of the ANC is complete. It is time for good men and women in the ANC to either speak up or get out — for their own sanity, if not for the good of their country. ■



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