

Get rich or lie trying: Why ANC millionaire Julius Malema posed as a radical



This article aims to explain, from an anarchist / syndicalist perspective, the rapid rise and fall of Julius Malema, the controversial and corrupt multi-millionaire leader of South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress's (ANC's) "youth league" (ANCYL). It is demonstrated that Malema's posturing as radical champion of the black poor was simply a means to an end: rising higher in the ranks of the ANC, in order to access bigger state tenders and higher paying political office.

Introduction

This article aims to explain, from an anarchist / syndicalist perspective, the rapid rise and fall of Julius Malema, the controversial and corrupt multi-millionaire leader of South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress's (ANC's) "youth league" (ANCYL). It is demonstrated that Malema's posturing as radical champion of the black poor was simply a means to an end: rising higher in the ranks of the ANC, in order to access bigger state tenders and higher paying political office.

The larger political implications of the Malema affair are also considered, especially the role of the ANC – as a vehicle for the accumulation of wealth and power by the rising black elite, which is centred on the state. It is not a party that serves, or can serve, the working class; on the contrary, it is the site of bitter struggles for state contracts and office between rival elite factions. It is a bureaucratic-bourgeois-black nationalist party, lodged in the state.

Malema represented a frustrated faction of the black elite in these internal battles, who sought to build a black working class base by posing as a radical, in order to win a better seat on the ANC's "gravy train". In doing so, however, Malema made enemies in high places. His defeat by the dominant Jacob Zuma-Gwede Mantashe faction must be understood in this context. In turn, the largely black state managerial elite is allied to the largely white private business elite.

Neo-liberal measures – including privatisation through state tenders – are key to the enrichment and empowerment of these two wings of the ruling class. This elite pact rests

upon the exploitation and domination of the whole working class, and reproduces the national/ racial oppression of the black, Coloured and Indian working class majority.

In the absence of a left pole of attraction, able to break the ideological grip of the ANC over large swathes of the masses, it becomes possible for racist demagogues like Malema to pose as radicals, to get rich or lie trying. Such posturing hides the complicity of the ANC elite in South Africa's terrible inequalities – indeed, it feeds upon it. In the context of mass suffering, such demagogy will certainly resurface again, promoting racial tensions and providing fertile grounds for serious clashes, while providing no solutions to the problems of the working class.

Obviously many sincere working class and poor youth join the ANCYL for the best of reasons. However, the ANCYL, like the larger ANC, is controlled by the rich and powerful; it has no genuine interest in empowering the masses.

It is therefore necessary to build an effective anarchist/ syndicalist movement, rooted in the black working class, that is able to promote an independent, participatory-democratic, revolutionary front of the oppressed classes. This will build counterpower and counterculture in order to end national oppression and class domination and exploitation, through a fundamental change in society. Such a movement must, naturally, be independent of the ANC tradition.

Background: Malema Rising

The ANCYL grabbed headlines for several years, particularly under Malema. Politics can change rapidly: Malema has since been expelled from the ANC, stripping him of his party position. This removes his access to the lucrative state contracts that made his fortune, as well as the access to the money and patronage networks that funded his political activities. Also affected are five other key ANCYL figures, including Malema's lieutenant, Floyd Shivambu. The purge followed prior disciplinary actions against the Malema group, going back to 2010.

None were more shocked at this outcome than the six affected. Malema had held the media spotlight for years, and was presented in the media as a rising ANC leader, even, perhaps, a future head of state.

Malema's claims to fame were many, including outrageous public statements (successfully) calculated to maximise coverage; ongoing investigations for corruption, money-laundering and fraud, notably his R16 million mansion on a monthly ANC salary of R25 000; insulting journalists at press events; open support for the dictators Muammar Gaddafi and Robert Mugabe; and public threats against both the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the SA Communist Party (SACP).

But most striking of all was Malema's call for "economic freedom," meaning specifically the "nationalisation of the mines" and "other monopoly industries." This was presented as a means to redistribute wealth, fund welfare and create more, and better, jobs. [1] Malema even called himself an enemy of "ruthless capitalism." [2] Yet, behind the imagery of Malema-as-champion-of-the-poor, is a man who spent R400,000 on his 2010 birthday party without batting an eyelid. [3]

This call resonated widely precisely because it touched a nerve: it was directed to the oppressed black working class, and framed as the key to complete national liberation – something that remains to be achieved.

Questions: Malema Mysteries

There are several mysteries here.

First, why was Malema expelled, especially since he was having real success in presenting the ANC as a champion of the black working class? Cynicism towards the ANC is widespread in the masses, although loyalty is strong. Malema seemed to show that the ANC could become radical.

Second, why did Malema, an out-and-out capitalist and an open anti-communist, start to champion nationalisation? His wealth, after all, has been made largely through state tenders for supplying hospitals, schools and public housing projects – that is, through privatisation. [4]

Malema is a typical “tenderpreneur” (a capitalist reliant on state tenders) – hardly a rare species in the ANC. But he is especially famous for the high prices, poor services and outright fraud that characterise his contracts. (Malema and his family have made their fortune through state privatisation contracts. No enemy of mining capitalism, he has instead been closely linked to mine bosses like the late Brett Kebble [5] and ANC minister, mining billionaire Tokyo Sexwale.)

Third, why did Malema increasingly use racist populism – demagoguery mixing pseudo-left and racist rhetoric – in the form of an increasingly vicious anti-white (and sometimes anti-Indian) rhetoric, exemplified by use of the old (now banned) ANC song Dubul’ ibhunu (“kill the Boer”)?

This racist populism is at odds with the elite pact between the black state managers and white capitalists at the very heart of the post-apartheid system. Malema’s racist populism actually targeted groups closely allied to the ANC in a range of ways.

ANC: Storm Centre of Elite Rivalry

The ANC is not a progressive party which the working class can capture, and win to a left position, as Cosatu and the left-wing of the SACP insist. Instead, it is an integral part of the capitalist state, and a key means for the rising black elite to access state power and the wealth that brings (e.g enormous salaries and benefits, access to lucrative privatisation tenders and deals etc.). Not only has the ANC never been anti-capitalist, but it today embraces the free market so long as this benefits (mainly black) ANC leaders and state officials – and their (mainly white and Indian) allies in big private business.

Because the black elite is largely locked out of the core of the private sector corporations (for various reasons), it is heavily dependent upon access to the state for access to wealth as well as power. (At most a quarter of Johannesburg Securities Exchange-/JSE-listed company directorships are held by people of colour, [6] with the proportion of senior and top managers in the private sector at 32.5 percent in 2008).[7]

Since the ANC, as a bureaucratic-bourgeois-black nationalist party, provides the main vehicle for accessing state resources, it is inevitable that the ANC becomes the storm centre of the struggle between different factions of this emerging elite for access to state resources. ANC factions are not organised on ideological lines, that is, around serious divisions in ideology and strategy, but into rival groups of the wealthy and powerful, fighting for top ANC and state positions.

Issue 1: Why Malema fell

Malema was expelled, not for being a radical (as he claims), but for openly challenging the dominant Zuma-Mantashe faction, openly lining up with ANC factions that aimed to oust Zuma, and by defying ANC directives. Malema has also blamed everything from “imperialism” to white conspiracies “in the ANC”. [8] In reality, Malema was expelled by the ANC’s black leadership, and this can only be seen as a result of the failure of the Malema

faction to successfully challenge the Zuma-Mantashe bloc in the ANC's endless factional struggles.



Malema's insistence that he was expelled for his fight to win "economic liberation" for the black working class [9] is false. Calling for nationalisation formed no part of the charge sheet that the Zuma-Mantashe faction wielded against Malema; rather, the charges centred on ill-discipline i.e. insubordination to Zuma (ANC President, as well as South African head of state) and Mantashe (ANC secretary-general).

Malema has no real commitment to nationalisation, let alone "economic liberation" for the masses. He was part of the ANC, an openly neo-liberal party, and part and parcel of the same corrupt establishment and ruling class that helps oppresses the black working class.

As evidence for Malema's real views: one of Malema's businesses (in engineering) made R130 million from tenders to supply water, sanitation, drains and paving in poor areas, yet spectacularly failed to deliver on the contracts. [10] This outright theft from the black poor has helped fund Malema's lavish lifestyle of German sedans, Gucci suits and R700-a-bottle whiskeys. Cosatu is perfectly correct to describe Malema as a "political hyena" who wants a "predator state". [11]

This is certainly not to suggest that the black elite, represented by men like Zuma and Malema, is any more venal or corrupt than its white counterparts: large, mainly white-led, corporations were directly responsible for apartheid; they are today routinely involved in corrupt deals involving white as well as black politicians, [12] plus have been proved, beyond a shadow of doubt, to actively collude to "fix" the prices for building materials, food, gas, and medicine.[13]

A Paper Tiger

The notion that Malema was ousted since he was a major power in the ANC, a supposed kingmaker, is also incorrect. The ANCYL holds only a small minority of seats at ANC congresses (a mere 68 out of around 4,075 voting seats at the 2007 ANC congress in Polokwane), and, outside Limpopo province, it has no real purchase on the larger ANC apparatus.

Hysterical private sector media attention has exaggerated Malema's power, within as well as beyond the ANC. He was, and remains, a paper tiger. The ANCYL's "Economic Freedom" march in October 2011, organised as a show of strength ahead of an ANC disciplinary hearing, attracted at most 7,000 people. This was despite millions spent on bussing and publicity – and despite a claimed ANCYL membership figure of 366,435 (2010).

[14]Township protests around corruption and poor conditions attract similar figures on a weekly basis. But most members of the ANCYL (as of the ANC) are passive; most local branch structures do not function.

This farce was repeated in September 2012, when Malema addressed soldiers fired for their role in a strike (strikes are illegal in the army; unions are not). Press hysteria about Malema “destabilising” the military fell flat when a mere 40 ex-soldiers arrived.

Nor did Malema ever have sole control of the ANCYL. For instance, when Malema’s initial suspension was reaffirmed in February 2012, ANCYL rivals organised street celebrations, including in his home town and supposed stronghold Seshego. [15] Equally notable is the absence of any real ANCYL campaign for its reinstatement.

Losing the Factional Battle

Last, Malema was not expelled for corruption, as some commentators have speculated. This was also not on his ANC charge sheet. And besides, corruption only rarely leads to expulsion from the ANC.

Corruption infuses the party – although let us stress, the ANC is by no means uniquely corrupt; it is part of a corrupt parliamentary system, a corrupt capitalism, a corrupt state. And the ANC is simply a prominent example of the corruption infusing states and capitalism everywhere.

To his credit, Zuma has stepped up prosecutions of corrupt officials since taking the Presidency in 2009, but no well-connected figure has ever been subject to serious sanctions – let alone expulsion from the ANC.

Zuma himself is a perfect example: dismissed from the Cabinet by then-President Thabo Mbeki in 2005, for his apparent role in a corrupt R40 billion arms deal, Zuma remained an ANC member. He was able to mobilise a coalition of anti-Mbeki factions, including Cosatu, the SACP, and Malema’s ANCYL, ultimately ousting Mbeki at the ANC’s 2007 Polokwane congress.

As Zuma’s power rose, court cases for rape, racketeering, money laundering and fraud fell away, with dozens of charges dropped around the time he was sworn in as State President in May 2009. Money talks, and might makes right; Malema was himself untouchable despite endless revelations of his crooked deals, until he challenged Zuma and Mantashe.

Top-Down Party Power

Malema’s expulsion underlines the fact that the ANC is very much a top-down party machine: whoever wields the ANC machinery can make short shrift of enemies. Mbeki tackled Zuma; Zuma tackled Mbeki; Malema tackled Zuma; Zuma tackled Malema. The most powerful person at any time, is a member of the most powerful faction. Mbeki’s faction had a weak grip, and was ousted by a coalition of other factions; the Zuma-Mantashe faction currently enjoys an iron grip on the party, and acted decisively when challenged by the loud, but weak, Malema faction.

But the anti-Mbeki Polokwane bloc collapsed rapidly. SACP leaders, in particular, benefited handsomely from appointments under the Zuma administration, not least SACP general-secretary Blade Nzimande (now a minister). Mantashe, now at the top of the ANC, is also SACP chair. Cosatu was largely ignored, and the Malema faction quickly sidelined. Its limited power, and its flirtations with Zuma rivals, like Sexwale, [16] led straight to Malema’s crushing in 2012 by the Zuma-Mantashe bloc. Sexwale was also quick to back away from Malema. [17]

Then-product of this party infighting, Malema now finds himself its victim. During Zuma’s fight against Mbeki, Malema’s demagoguery was useful to Zuma; now it proved a problem.

Few have shed few tears for Malema, least of all Cosatu and the SACP. But the authoritarianism of the ANC should be feared, not praised.

The disciplinary decision shows that Zuma and Mantashe can suppress any ANC member who “divides” the party, or brings it “into disrepute”. And this is part of a larger ANC intolerance of criticism and opponents, seen recently in the attempt to impose a draconian Secrecy Bill and the increased repression of struggles. (NOTE: this was written before, but is confirmed by, the Marikana Massacre).

Cosatu and the SACP defend their ongoing alliance with the ANC on the basis that the party can somehow be made pro-working class. But what space is there to make any real changes in the ANC? The high-handed treatment of Malema shows that no serious internal challenges will be tolerated. And the changes Cosatu wants in the ANC – not least, an end to privatisation and “tenderpreneurship” – will get short shrift.

Issue 2: Why Malema Posed as Radical

Malema’s faction sought to increase its power in the ANC. It lacked access to the central ANC structures; its leaders were confined to enriching themselves from tenders in the economically marginal Limpopo province.

The only way to escape this marginal base, which frustrated their elite ambitions, was to become a national force in the ANC.

But how? Their genius was to recognise, in the then-moribund ANCYL, an excellent opportunity. South Africa has a young population, and around 72% of the unemployed are “youth” under 36, predominantly blacks. [18] Unemployment has risen sharply under the ANC, from 38% of blacks in 1995, to 50% today, in large part due to ongoing capitalist crisis and the effects of ANC-led neo-liberal restructuring. [19]

The black working class youth is a potentially powerful, but generally marginalised group – and Malema and his cronies saw in it an untapped resource – as a constituency that could be used as a power base for ANC factional battles, through which they could ride to the top of the ANC.

Of course, it is not only the ANCYL which has sought to use this constituency for its own agenda. The ANC’s main rival, the equally neo-liberal Democratic Alliance (DA) has tapped it too: in the 1990s through sponsoring the murderous Unemployed Masses of SA (UMSA) group, and more recently, in its May 2012 march on Cosatu House.

But the matter had to be handled very carefully. Mobilising these youth could backfire easily; especially since they have been at the forefront of post-apartheid township protests. Raising their class temperature could easily boil over into mass protests against the ANC.

And rightly so. ANC policies have played a direct role in the oppression of black working class youth. It is the ANC that governs most of the black ghettos, the ANC that operates the rundown state schools, the ANC that has gutted jobs. Many are unemployed, and amongst them, the face of the ruling class most seen is not a private capitalist, but a state manager.

Therefore, the ANCYL under Malema took two approaches: radical talk combined with no action, to get rich or lie trying. Of course, the ANCYL cannot wage a serious campaign against matters like cut-offs and evictions, without fighting the ANC, and it is part of the ANC – the very party responsible for such cut-offs.

Get Rich – or Lie trying

Fearful of the consequences of mass mobilisation, the Malema faction – by now heading the ANCYL structures – began to rely on radical rhetoric.

Some of this was racist populism. Popular frustration with the daily oppression of black working class life was carefully channelled away from the ANC and the black elite, towards

whites in general. This required presenting all blacks as poor and oppressed, and all whites as rich capitalists. In this way, the differences between the black elite, of which Malema was merely one example, and the black poor, could be hidden away. Malema's address to the SA Students' Congress (Sasco, an ANC-aligned university formation), is one example of this manipulation of the truth: [20]

Quote:

The rich keep getting richer and it is white males who continue to own the means of production in the country. Not even Tokyo (Sexwale), who is the Minister of Human Settlements, is an owner. Tokyo is owing the white baas because he wants to borrow from the banks. Who owns the banks? Tokyo is a rich man, but he doesn't own...

This is simply baseless. The ANC state accounts for around 23% of the value of total GDP, 44% of fixed capital stock and at least 25% of land (not including land through state companies). [21] Sexwale is one of a number of black billionaires that populate the country's list of the 20 richest. [22] Even if only a quarter of JSE-listed company directorships are held by people of colour, [23] that still means wealth is not entirely white.

As Murray Bookchin once noted, "There is no collective 'white man' who is the universal enemy of a collective 'black man'", because both blacks and whites are deeply divided by class and other hierarchies. [24] True, rich whites abound in wealthy Sandton in Johannesburg, and huge numbers of poor blacks suffer in the immediately adjacent Alexandra slum. But rich blacks – among them Nelson Mandela, Patrice Motsepe, Sam Shilowa and Malema – also live in Sandton, and hundreds of thousands of poor whites live in squatter camps and trailer parks. [25]

Issue 3: Racist Demagoguery

However, such claims make good propaganda, and when tied to Dubul'ibhunu, make the elite ANC sound almost like a party of the poor. Malema portrayed the ANC as a liberation movement waging an anti-colonial struggle, and played on traditional South African racial hatreds – insulting whites plays to grassroots frustration at the failure of the ANC to deliver national liberation to the black, Coloured and Indian working class, while letting the ANC off the hook.

There is no doubt that large (mainly white) private corporations are central to the ongoing exploitation and national oppression of the majority of the working class. However, the ANC itself also plays a direct role, being allied to those corporations, and committed to neo-liberalism.

The Malema-led ANCYL is not just playing to the gallery, however. It has long been a stronghold of the ANC's racist Africanist wing that is overtly hostile to the national minorities: Coloureds, Indians and whites.

Something more was added, and this was the slogan of nationalisation: the ANC had once advocated (like many others, including the old apartheid government), a degree of nationalisation. This was dropped in the neo-liberal period, but revived in Malema's hands, the old ANC nationalisation call seemed to promise the prospect of escape from poverty for the masses.

If implemented – an exceedingly unlikely prospect, given the ANC's neo-liberal outlook (see below) – nationalisation would also have opened access to additional wealth, for well-connected ANC leaders. (It would not, however, have benefitted the black working class: see "Alternative Needed to Nationalisation and Privatisation" article in Zabalza 13 and on Anarkismo.net).

Talk, not Action

So, the Malema faction sought to feed upon the very misery that the ANC (and Malema) helped create – through privatisation – in order to rise in the ranks of the rich and powerful – not to end this misery.

Great care was meanwhile taken to reduce the youth to passive spectators, cheering the antics of the demagogue and his bold talk.

For a man who posed as a militant and revolutionary, one thing stands out: the almost total absence of the ANCYL under Malema from any actual mobilisation; theirs was the politics of the press conference, not the protest. On the contrary, the ANCYL condemned a number of township protests, as it “does not approve of violence and destruction of infrastructure”. And, in line with the ANC position that protests should be calmed, not addressed, the League “appreciates President Zuma’s and other government leaders visits to protesting communities.” [26]

There are only two exceptions to this pattern of lethargy. In 2010 and 2011, the ANCYL protested degrading municipal policies (notably, open toilets and evictions) in the Western Cape slums. [27] Its role was actually quite minor, largely based around parachuting in with press statements and media events. In fact, the ANCYL plays almost no role in any Cape Town social movements, [28] although there are some individual activists.

However, these protests raised the ANC profile in the 2011 local government elections – in the one province that the ANC consistently loses to the DA. This was cheap politicking, which the Malema faction hoped would raise their value in the party. Meanwhile, identical anti-working class, anti-poor policies in the rest of the country (including open toilets), by the ANC were carefully ignored.

The other ANCYL protest was the 2011 “Economic Freedom” march from Johannesburg. The march attracted some militant working class youth, desperate for a better future, but the march was not to serve their needs: it was part of Malema’s struggle against Zuma-Mantashe.

Malema’s elite agenda was laid bare when, straight after the march, he flew out to Mauritius for the all-expenses-paid island wedding of his ally, David Mabilu –an event costing over R10 million. [29] (NOTE: Malema, now expelled from the ANC, has turned his attention to the victims of the ANC bloodbath at Marikana: this is a desperate gamble, feeding upon misery to try to win back into the ANC).

Conclusion 1: what the ANC really is

What this sordid tale reveals is that the ANC is central to the current order in South Africa, to deep racial divisions, enormous inequality and ongoing attacks on the working class. ANC factional struggles, and supposed ANC “radicals”, have nothing to do with fixing this mess – these are simply fights over access to the spoils – having very little to do with issues like nationalisation or privatisation, socialism or capitalism.

The ANC and the ANCYL actively maintain the system that traps poor black working class youth, the majority of the unemployed, in misery. The ANC (like all political parties) is not a party that can change society for the better; it is not for the working class, it is not a party that end the national oppression of the black, Indian and Coloured working class, and nor will it end the exploitation of the white working class.

The ANCYL (like the ANC) played a role in the anti-apartheid struggle, an often heroic role, but post-1994 is another matter entirely. The ANC since 1994 must not be mistaken for a liberation movement; but rather an integral part of the state machinery – the central role of which is to ensure the continued existence of capitalism, and to defend the ruling class.

A jackal cannot be expected to look after sheep. An elite party cannot be expected to look after the working class and poor masses.

Neo-Liberalism plus “Black Empowerment”

Official ANC economic policy is fundamentally neo-liberal. This predates the so-called “1996 class project”, being the central thrust in the RDP White Paper (1994), Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear), 1996, Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for SA (Asgisa) 2006, and the New Growth Path (NGP), 2011. (See article “All Geared Up for a New Growth Path” in Zabalaza 13 and on Anarkismo.net).

In this framework, state outsourcing and public-private partnerships (PPPs) are used as a key means of creating a black bourgeoisie via state-backed Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) – the rise of Malema from son of a domestic worker to a very wealthy man, through state contracts, is a case in point.

The ANC-led, largely black, state elite is allied to the largely white private corporate elite: together they wreak havoc upon the working class, and perpetuate the legacy of apartheid for the black, Coloured and Indian workers and poor, impoverish a growing section of the white workers, and terrorise immigrant workers.

BEE serves a small, powerful elite, while the NGP attacks the poor. By 2002, 10 million South Africans (mostly poor blacks) “had their water cut off and 10 million ... had their electricity cut off”; further, “two million people have been evicted from their homes” for non payment of services. [30]

Cut-offs, evictions, and shoddy (but expensive) services will continue to generate ongoing protests. These factors contributed to the rise of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF); official reports noted around 19 township “protests” per month in 2009, half “violent.” [31]

No Principles but Power

Tolerance of the Malema faction’s racist demagogy, because of political calculations, exemplifies the cynicism and lack of principle at the heart of the ANC. Senior ANC officials including Mantashe supported Malema when he was prosecuted for hate speech. Regardless of whether we support this kind of censorship (see below), Mantashe’s backing effectively enables hate speech to be a legitimate part of ANC discourse – and mocks the ANC’s own 1955 Freedom Charter, which declares that South Africa belongs to “all who live in it, black and white,” that “our people” must “live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities,” and that “all national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride.”

And this incident, as Mikhail Bakunin pointed out, shows that the ruling class has a “very shabby, very narrow, especially mercenary” attachment to its own “patriotism”: it is “quite willing to sacrifice the property, life and freedom of the proletariat,” but “rather reluctant” to sacrifice its “own gainful privileges” on any matter of principle. [32]

Conclusion 2: on Hate Speech

Malema was subject to two successful prosecutions for hate speech: one, for claiming that a rape victim had had a “nice time”, and another, for calling whites “criminals,” and singing the now-banned Dubul’ibhunu, which certainly advocates racial violence.

Anarchists/ syndicalists defend free speech, and this means defending the right of people to express views that are fundamentally against the basic principles of anarchism – including sexist and racist ones. This implies disagreement with censorship of any kind, including that which is attempting to silence Malema.

But equally, a defence of free speech must include using it to openly contest, critique and defeat these anti-anarchist views. And where those views are tied into actual racial or xenophobic attacks, even more serious actions may be needed.

Facts must also be faced: Malema's racist attitudes promote his agenda, but also reflect the views of a deadly tendency in the ANC. This tendency has second thoughts about the black elite's alliance with big white capital; it would rather have big black capital instead.

Now, an attack on big white corporations is hardly dangerous, but racially polarising South Africa – a country with a serious national question and deep racial tensions certainly is, no matter what reason is given.

It can only inflame multi-sided racial and ethnic conflict, divide the working class, and burn down the door to civil war. The combination of immense misery in the country and the lack of a powerful left pole of attraction provides explosive grounds for populist demagoguery to ignite. No matter how cynically racist demagoguery is used, it has real consequences.

Anarchists defend Malema's right to sing racist songs, but must explain that South Africa's problems cannot be solved through racial conflict, that working class whites are not real enemies of the black poor – any more than poor black immigrants are the enemy – and that the real enemy is the ruling class, rich black capitalists like Sexwale (and Malema) as much as rich white capitalists like Nicky Oppenheimer.

Conclusion 3: Take the Gap

Unwittingly, Cosatu and the SACP create the space for corrupt demagogues like Malema because they fail to provide a serious, socialist struggle and alternative.

This is because they are, first, tied to the ANC (which is part of the problem, not the solution); and second because their most ambitious hopes, which they hope the ANC will implement – Keynesianism plus exports – is unworkable in today's South African and international conditions. [33]

It is a severe indictment of the revolutionary movement – of the whole left, not just the anarchists/ syndicalists – that it was outpaced by a crooked millionaire, who can promise nothing more than looting the state and keeping the working class down.

Malema is not a solution, but a warning. Unless there is a real alternative to the ANC, black working class desperation will be ruthlessly exploited by demagogues of the Malema type, emulating his political style of authoritarian leadership, patronage politics, and the larger system of BEE plus neo-liberalism.

But what sort of left alternative is needed? The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the horrors created by its classical Marxist dictatorship, should shatter any illusions that the old road of “the dictatorship of the proletariat” under the Marxist-Leninist vanguard is worth following. This is a discredited system of totalitarian state-capitalism.

Faced with this collapse, the SACP and Cosatu have shifted to social democracy, hoping to slowly reform capitalism into something better. Not only, however, will the ruling class never allow itself to be peacefully shut down, but the greatest social democratic examples – the Nordic Keynesian welfare states – are in crisis, destroyed by the very capitalism they promised to tame.

So, this leaves anarchism/ syndicalism.

Black Working Class

What is needed is an independent, participatory-democratic, revolutionary front of the oppressed classes, infused with anarchism/ syndicalism: a counterpower to the system and a

counterculture based on honesty, solidarity and humility, and internationalism – far removed from the politics of the ANCYL and ANC.

This requires building an anarchist/ syndicalist pole of attraction, centred on a black working class cadre. And black working class youth will be central to this project, belonging under the red-and-black banners of anarchism/ syndicalism, not the ANC's black, green and gold.

Footnotes

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