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RADICAL ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

By Dave Steward: Chairman, FW de Klerk Foundation

Earlier this week Nkosazana Zuma, odds on favorite to become our next president, assured whites that they have nothing to fear from Radical Economic Transformation (RET) “because if it doesn't happen peace cannot be guaranteed in the country.” What is this “radical economic transformation” that her former husband, President Zuma, refers to in virtually every major speech - and where does it come from?

RET's origins may be found deep in the ANC's Marxist-rooted National Democratic Revolution ideology which has as its core goal “the resolution of the national grievance arising from colonialism and apartheid”.

The ANC believes that although it achieved political liberation in 1994, it has not yet achieved economic liberation because - as President Zuma incorrectly insists - the economy is still controlled by “white males”.

The ANC continues to view itself - not as an ordinary political party - but as a national liberation movement with an uncompleted revolutionary mandate. Because “the continuing legacy of colonialism and white minority rule” is the “defining reality of our society”, its core revolutionary task is the achievement of ‘economic liberation’ through Radical Economic Transformation.

President Zuma describes this as “a situation of contending forces with antagonistically contradictory interests domestically and globally” that “Marx and Engels would have understood...very well.” It is a struggle in which, according to Marx, “the oppressor and the oppressed” stand “in constant opposition to one another” in “an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open, fight...”

The ANC's “enemy” in the RET process is “white monopoly capital” - which actually means all whites - since all whites are subject to the ANC's discriminatory policies irrespective of their income, wealth or education. President Zuma regards whites as manifestations of what SACP ideology calls ‘colonialism of a special type’, a situation in which “the colonised stay in the land with the colonisers after freedom”. As he told the Youth League in July, “they took land, power, your dignity and everything. When we were liberated, they stayed here...In those other (African) countries, they were administrators, and when you were freed, they left...The ball is in your court young people to liberate ourselves economically...If we don't, we will suffer for many years to come.”

RET's central goal is the elimination of ‘apartheid social and economic relations’. This will be achieved through the “de-racialisation of ownership and control of wealth, including land; and equity and affirmative action in the provision of skills and access to positions of management”. It will culminate in the establishment of a “National Democratic Society” in which:



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- all the significant levers of state power will be controlled by the “democratic forces” (i.e. the ANC);
- “apartheid property relations” will have been eliminated; and in which
- there will be demographic representivity at all levels of ownership, management and employment in the public, private and non-governmental sectors.

In his State of the Nation speech earlier this year, President Zuma quoted a 1981 statement of Oliver Tambo to the effect that it was “inconceivable for liberation to have meaning without a return of the wealth of the country to the people as a whole. To allow the existing economic forces to retain their interests intact is to feed the roots of racial supremacy and exploitation, and does not represent even the shadow of liberation.”

According to the President RET means a “fundamental change in the structure, systems, institutions and patterns of ownership, management and control of the economy in favour of all South Africans, especially the poor, the majority of whom are African and female, as defined by the governing party, which makes policy for the democratic government.”

Of course, the beneficiaries of RET would not be “all South Africans” - but elements in the ruling faction and its associates. In effect, those involved in state capture, having looted the SOEs and the public sector, are now eyeing the lush pastures of the private sector as their next area of unrestrained despoliation.

RET would inevitably have a catastrophic impact on the economy, on the vast majority of citizens, and on national unity. It implicitly requires a severe dilution of property rights, massive intervention by a corrupt and incompetent government and a concerted assault on the legitimate rights of millions of South Africans solely on the basis of their race. It would inevitably drive away investment and essential skills and precipitate economic collapse on a Venezuelan or Zimbabwean scale. It would result in untold deprivation, suffering and social and racial conflict.

RET is an intensely racialised process that must once again “place the interest of the black majority right at the centre of our political programmes”. Political liberation is not enough: the objective of political power is “to penetrate all other sectors of power and break once and for all the backbone of apartheid colonialism which is monopoly control of the economy.”

It would be a mistake to dismiss all this as empty rhetoric. The public sector has already been transformed in accordance with demographic representivity; tightening BBBEE regulations are making it increasingly difficult for white owned companies to do business - and throughout the economy and at our universities whites are losing jobs to enable their employers to meet increasingly stringent racial quotas. The latest example is the Mining Charter - which would effectively destroy the mining sector were it ever to be implemented.



Where does all of this leave those who do not belong to the black majority - and who have not been consulted about the ANC's plans for them?

Not in a very good place. The ANC's *Strategy and Tactics* documents envisaged that the proposed redistribution of wealth on racial lines would inevitably elicit a reaction from its intended victims "because property relations are at the core of all social systems." It believed that the tensions caused by the decisive pursuit of this objective would require "dexterity in tact and firmness in principle."

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of RET is the almost complete lack of any coherent reaction from its intended victims - the great majority of whites and white-owned businesses. There are, perhaps, a number of reasons for this lack of reaction:

- Most of them do not have the vaguest understanding of the ANC's ideology or of the seriousness of its revolutionary agenda. They are not aware that their government regards them as its principal antagonists in a titanic revolutionary struggle. Hence they tend to dismiss RET as incomprehensible gobbledey-gook;
- Beyond this, most white South Africans are loath to self-identify according to their race. They do not want to be driven into a 'white corral' where they will be judged according to their race;
- Others have bought into the ANC's propaganda regarding their indelible guilt for the past and for all the country's continuing problems. They have been silenced by what Helen Zille calls "speaking while white" which is the ultimate sin in terms of "critical race theory";
- There is no one that can - or wants to - speak on their behalf - not the political party to which most of them belong; not civil society; not business.

The ANC is probably surprised by a lack of any significant push-back. In a manifestation of "dexterity in tact" it issued a statement on 26 June, reassuring white South Africans that "the struggle of the South African people led by the ANC was and remains a struggle against racial domination not a struggle against a particular race. The ANC remains committed to resolving the national grievance not by fighting white people, but fighting the system of oppression and its legacy." Nkosazana Zuma's statement should be viewed in the same light.

The ANC's reassurances are patently untrue. In resolving "the national grievance" RET is clearly intended to deprive ordinary South African citizens of property, jobs and land on the basis of their race. This is the only interpretation that can be placed on President Zuma's definition of RET - and on his view that white South Africans are alien and unwanted relics of "colonialism of a special type". President Zuma's statements and the ANC's own documentation make it perfectly clear that RET is at heart a racial struggle - and that its goal is not the elimination of domination - but the imposition of a new and comprehensive form of racial domination - of the kind that Nelson Mandela promised we would never, never and never again witness in this beautiful land.



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As President Zuma told the MKVA on 12 June, “Freedom means that you must be in control of everything, politics, economy and the security of the country.”