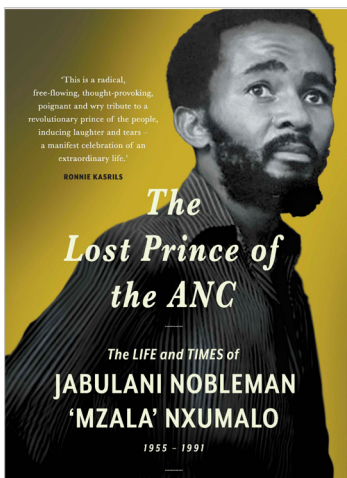


The Lost Prince of the ANC

The Life and Times of Jabulani Nobleman 'Mzala' Nxumalo 1955–1991

MASILO LEPURU 

Institute for Pan–African Thought and Conversation
University of Johannesburg 
lepurumasilo@yahoo.com



The Lost “Intellectual Orphan” of the ANC

“Marx has become a functional, philosophical, ancestral mentor-surrogate for intellectuals either ignorant of, or simply deprived of, their own philosophical lineages — **they are intellectual orphans**” (Ayi Kwei Armah in *Masks and Marx: The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis* 1984).

The Tripartite Alliance comprising of the ANC, Cosatu and SACP is not making progress towards the second stage of the so-called National Democratic Revolution. The Marxist-leaning Cosatu and SACP have succumbed to the hegemony of neoliberalism under the ANC. The two-stage theory of the SACP to resolve the national question in South Africa is clearly failing to transcend the 1994 sell-out project of the ANC.

Socialism remains a “dream deferred”. White monopoly capital (Malikane 2017) or racial capitalism (Robinson 2000) has ensured that since CODESA, the dream of socialism is “lost in transformation” (Terreblanche 2012). This transformation which was effected through an “elite transition” (Bond 2000) was the triumph of the democratization paradigm (Ramose 2007). This paradigm entails the extension of democratic rights to the African majority (without land restoration to the Indigenous conquered people) who were deprived of them since the founding of white South Africa in 1910. What this implies in essence is that for the African majority it is “freedom next time” (Pilger 2006).

The book under review by Mandla Radebe called *The Lost Prince of the ANC* (2022) is a biographical analysis of the important issue of the national question in conqueror South Africa (Ramose 2018). A cursory perusal of this book especially the Preface, makes it clear that Radebe is ideologically aligned with the Congress Tradition as a historical and political movement in South Africa. This tradition emerged as a result of the adoption of the Freedom Charter or the Freedom Cheater (Pheko 2012) in 1955. Radebe operating firmly within this Charterist tradition (Raboroko 1960) evinces a commitment to the political vision of a nonracial democratic South Africa and the bias that the ANC is liberation movement. These historical and political prejudices on the part of Radebe form the overarching ideological framework of this book. Because ‘Mzala’ as the protagonist of the book is also a member of the Congress Tradition, a reader who is not familiar with the essence of this tradition may miss the ideological prejudice of Radebe as the author of the book. Radebe for orthodox methodological and scholarly reasons claims that he will try hard not to exhibit his ideological position. To attain this impossible scholarly ambition Radebe chose the strategic method of conflating his ideological orientation with that of the protagonist of his book. A careless reader may miss this subtle strategy. Radebe as part of the Congress Tradition wrote this book with the spirit of the “road to democracy” except that his book is about “the road to socialism”. This is how in essence Radebe writes within

the two-stage theory of the Congress Tradition by foregrounding 'Mzala' as the protagonist of the so-called National Democratic Revolution.

Despite these problematic ideological trappings of the Congress Tradition, this is a well-written book. For a biography which does not focus mainly on the intellectual contribution of the protagonist but his life and times in general, this is a well-structured book. There are no obvious semantic and grammatical errors. This means that Radebe has done his basic homework as a scholar. Radebe clearly proofread and edited the book with patience and competence. This book is divided into many sections which cover in an interesting fashion the "life and times of Mzala". These sections include a Foreword, Preface, Introduction, thirteen chapters and a Postscript. Readers who are interested in Marxism-Leninism and the National Question in South Africa will find this book a worthwhile read. They will also be treated to a heavy dose of a Charterist historiographical mythology which glorifies the myth of the ANC as a liberation movement and the outdated fallacious two-stage theory of revolution as initially formulated by "communist quacks" (Sobukwe 1963) of the CPSA as the South African white theoretical apparatchiks of Moscow. These "communist quacks" like Joe Slovo raised their "intellectual orphans" (Armah 1984) in the form of African communists such as 'Mzala'.

The book opens with a staunch Charterist Foreword by another "intellectual orphan" (Armah 1984) called Blade Nzimande. This pseudo-communist called Blade provides a brief overview of his friendship with his "intellectual orphan" comrade Mzala before he confidently advances a Charterist political vision of a nonracial, single and new South African nation. Without a comprehension of the glaring contradictions of pseudo-communists in South Africa, a reader will fail to understand why a member of the current useless Tripartite Alliance presiding over neoliberalism in a white settler economy such as Blade can argue that the "struggle to build a new South Africa is inseparable from the struggle against capitalism and its economic inequalities" (Radebe 2022: xiv). The students of the Fees-must-fall movement were right when they called for Blade to fall, but they failed to call for black/African Marxists as "intellectual orphans" (Armah 1984) to fall as well, when they called for decolonisation. As Armah (1984:63) states it regarding "intellectual orphans" like Blade "But for the élite African, Marxism has saving qualities. It enables him to acquire a reputation as a revolutionary while, in fact, he is busily building up a life of unproductive consumerism for himself and elitist privilege for his children, thus expanding the human base of Eurocentrism. Marxism enables a person to do all this at the slight cost of the energy invested in talking. Cold betrayal in practice ; fiery revolution in words".

In the Preface Radebe explains the origin of the book including his commitment to "just telling Mzala's story and letting the readers make their own analysis and direction of his character" (Radebe 2022: xviii). In the process Radebe contrary to what he does in the book by being firmly based in the Charterist tradition (Raboroko 1960), he claims that "I hope, therefore, that political, ideological and familial lineage have not unduly influenced my analysis" (Radebe 2022: xviii). The Introduction which is entitled "Comrade Mzala is dead" provides the basis of the word "lost" in the title of the book. In essence this part discusses how the death of Mzala implies for many of his Charterist comrades the loss of a deep thinker and theoretical contributor to the national question in South Africa on the basis of Marxism-Leninism (the position of intellectual orphans). This loss also means that the fight for the implement of the Freedom Charter has lost its serious Charterist soldier.

The first chapter entitled "The Nxumalos and Mzwandlas" is about Mzala's upbringing and his intellectual formation. It provides an account of his family lineage including Mzala's parents. By emphasizing the fact that Mzala was steeped in christianity before he came across Marxism, it ironically tells us how Mzala became an "intellectual orphan". As Radebe (2022: 33) states it "It was thus clear to anyone who interacted with Mzala that his views on Christianity and his active participation in the SCM(Student Christian Movement) were the foundation that anchored his

determination and involvement in the liberation movement". While the first chapter provides an account of his christian miseducation, the second chapter entitled "Mzala skips the country for exile" narrates how Mzala who was already an "intellectual orphan" left his parents to join the so-called liberation movement of the ANC in exile. It is interesting that in the process of becoming an "intellectual orphan" Mzala joined the Black Consciousness Movement of Steve Biko.

This made Mzala do take seriously the question of race in South Africa as the BCM proceeds from the fundamental premise that white racism is the thesis, and the antithesis is black solidarity/black nationalism (More 2004). But because of his christian and humanist indoctrination Mzala embraced the dangerous fallacious idea of being ant-white supremacy as opposed to being anti-white. Just like A P Mda (2018) who pioneered the naïve idea of "broad nationalism" with christian brotherhood connotations, Mzala "In hindsight, he indicated that when looking at society, his premise was 'initially humanist' 'hence the strong moral factor'" (Radebe 2022: 50). Radebe (2022:50) further states that " Even before Mzala could skip the country, where he officially joined the ANC and the SACP, he was already clear on the national question and the non-racial character of the struggle".

In chapter three called "The June 16 Detachment" Radebe provides a biased narration of the " 1976 Soweto uprising". Radebe does this by claiming falsely that the young black people who skipped the country just like the "intellectual orphan" Mzala found the ANC to be their only viable option. Radebe can proudly claim this because he mistakenly believes that the ANC is a liberation movement as opposed to a Civil Rights Movement which was anti-apartheid. This is in contrast with the BCM which was against the totality of white power which began with conquest since 1652 (Ramose 2007). Many of the young black people preferred the Pan-Africanist Congress while some decided to build a revolutionary movement which was independent of both the PAC and the ANC called SAYCO (South African Revolutionary Council) (Lebelo 208). In addition to this Charterist historiographical narration by Radebe this chapter provides an interesting account of how Mzala's process of being an "intellectual orphan" was cemented beyond recovery. Mzala was subjected to the indoctrination of the Congress Tradition both in the ANC camps and in the Soviet Union. "It is in the camps that Mzala interacted with Marxism-Leninism" (Radebe 2022: 70). Radebe(2022: 74) further states that " However, with further military and political training in the Soviet Union and the GDR, Mzala's understanding of the problem, using Marxism-Leninism, was cemented".

The fourth chapter called "The mergence of a revolutionary intellectual" marks the stage at which Mzala is immersed in nonracialism which traces back its origin to his christian and humanist indoctrination which despite adopting the materialist epistemology of Marxism, he could not escape. From christian nonracial brotherhood Mzala transitioned smoothly to the nonracialism of Marxism and the communist quacks in the SAPC such as Joe Slovo and Ruth First. As Armah (1984:58-59) states it "Continuity is one more reason why Marxism attracts those of the non-Western élite who like to talk of revolution. Most Africans educated in Western schools are indoctrinated with Christian worldviews when they are too young to put up any resistance. After that, inertia if not active acceptance keeps them Christian. Much later, if they generate sufficient intellectual energy to break free of Christianity, they still need an alternative worldview, a sort of half-way house after primary addiction and Marxism is an excellent half-way house for anyone previously addicted to Christianity. The mythopoeic composition of the Marxist thought-system is similar to that of Christianity".

Unlike the Makiwane brothers (the so-called Gang of Eight) who in response to the absurd charge of racism by Joe Slovo as one of the white intellectual parents of many "intellectual orphans" in the Congress Tradition, Mzala could not "defend the African Image and Heritage" by rejecting white intellectual and political leadership and comradeship. Mzala bought into the ridiculous idea that if he rejects white comrades in the tradition, he may be regarded as "an enemy hidden under the

same colour” by white communist quacks such as Joe Slovo. In the Charterist spirit of organizational nonracialism, Mzala accepted the so-called white comrades who were working towards a nonracial South African nation in the interest of all white settlers in South Africa. This is how Mzala captured this through the following absurd statement “Matanzima is a white man in a black man’s skin and Joe Slovo is a black man in a white skin” (Radebe 2022:104) This is how Radebe (2022: 104) as a fellow nonracial Charterist further states it regarding whites and the ANC “ This is a non-racial organisation that is fighting for a non-racial, free democratic South Africa”.

“*Habashwe!* Death to the Traitors: Swaziland and the Battle of South Africa” is chapter six of the book. It captures the attempts by Mzala to contribute to arms-struggle within the ANC as a Civil Rights movement. This chapter shows how Mzala merged theory and praxis. He did this by pushing for arms-struggle inside South Africa based on his article called “ Cooking the Rice inside the Pot”. It also provides an account of Mzala’s defence of the Charterist tradition by critiquing the Azanian Manifesto and calling for the implementation of the Freedom Charter in the resolution of the national question in South Africa. The title of chapter 6 is based on Mzala’s article and thus it is called “Cooking the Rice inside the Pot”. The essence of this article and chapter is to show that Mzala was committed to the people’s war inside South Africa. Mzala was impatient with the tardiness of the ANC in exile. He called for the members of the ANC to de-exile themselves and to stop “building pyramids in Egypt”. As Radebe (2022: 143) states it “ For Mzala, the motive force behind the revolution was not the exile leadership but the masses back at home”. Mzala was correct in this regard except that the ANC was never a revolutionary movement. It is this sense that the ANC persisted in “cooking the rice outside the pot”.

The Charterism of Radebe and his protagonist Mzala reaches its apex in chapter seven, which is revealingly entitled “The Freedom Charter is our loadstar”. Both Radebe and Mzala propagate the myth about the “democratic” creation of the Freedom Charter. The dishonest argument put forward is that the masses were involved as they submitted “slips” which captured their ideas of freedom. This is an annoying myth because Rusty Bernstein and other communist quacks like him actually drafted the Freedom Charter. This is how Radebe(2022: 157) states it “Therefore, he argued, the development of the Freedom Charter was not a secret event”. Mzala was overwhelmed by the fake nonracial gestures of the white Marxists as his intellectual parents, by naively “defining the enemy as a system of white supremacy rather than simply white people” (Radebe 2022:160). This position is absurd because the simple question is, who created white supremacy and who benefits from it?

“Towards people’s war and insurrection” is the eighth chapter which encapsulates Mzala’s article called “Cooking the rice inside the Pot”. Mzala entertains the hope of the people’s war in South Africa before the negotiation. He seems to be worried about how big business can co-opt the ANC. We now know that this is actually what happened (Terreblanche 2012). Mzala engages critically with the two-stage theory of revolution and accentuates the idea that only socialism will resolve the national question. He is also adamant about his Charterism by believing that the Freedom Charter is the right document to resolve the national question in South Africa. “Thus, he envisioned a South Africa aligned with the principles of the Freedom Charter where all people shall enjoy equal rights whatever their colour ,race, or creed” (Radebe 2022: 183). Chapter nine which is entitled “ Chief with a double agenda” is based on the title of a book which was written by Mzala. This is one of the intellectual contributions of Mzala which made him famous and established him as an upcoming intellectual within the Congress Tradition. There is really nothing new about this chapter. It discusses the problematic tribalistic politics of Buthelezi. “Aids: Misinformation, racism and the imperialist connection” is the tenth chapter which discusses Mzala’s critical engagement with biological warfare. It is about his interesting research on the origin of HIV. Mzala was at least critical enough to suspect the role of the CIA and racism in germ warfare.

Chapter eleven which is entitled “ Negotiations: Thank God things are moving” captures Mzala’s embrace of the negotiation and his persistent pursuit of the people’s war to crush the Apartheid regime. “Mzala, like Chris Hani, did not oppose the negotiations” (Radebe 2022: 247). This support of the negotiation process was based on a dishonest view about the ANC which both Mzala and Radebe (2022: 251) capture thus “ He situated his views on the transfer of power on the fact that the ANC is a revolutionary movement and ,as such its political business is not to reform South African majority but to transform it from the social foundation”. But because the ANC was never a revolutionary movement it worked with white business to reform South Africa.

The penultimate chapter captures precisely how the ANC as an unrevolutionary movement worked with white business. This chapter is aptly entitled “ Dazzled by capital: The ANC and the transition to democracy”. Apart from the inevitable betrayal by the ANC, this chapter provides an account of how Mzala pursued his studies in PHD on the national question. This would have been the culmination of his intellectual contribution to the Congress Tradition and endowed him with repute among his Charterist comrades such as Palo Jordan and Eddy Maloka. Chapter thirteenth as the last chapter captures the title of this book. This chapter is called “The Lost Prince of the ANC”. This is however misleading because Mzala as we argue is an African Marxist who embraced christianity and Marxism–Leninism. Therefore, instead of being “the lost prince of the ANC”, Mzala is “the lost ‘intellectual orphan’ of the ANC”. This is how Ayi Kwei Armah(1984: 56) in *Masks and Marx: The Marxist Ethos vis-à-vis African Revolutionary Theory and Praxis 1984*), encapsulates the gist of our critique of African Marxists like Mzala “Marx has become a functional, philosophical, ancestral mentor–surrogate for intellectuals either ignorant of, or simply deprived of, their own philosophical lineages — *they are intellectual orphans*”. This last chapter basically provides an account of how Mzala dies and how he attained the wrong title of “the intellectual prince” instead of the correct one which is “the intellectual orphan”.

The book closes with a Postscript which discusses how the “intellectual orphan” Mzala would have advanced the cause of socialism had he not passed away so young at the age of 35. This loss is lamented by loyal Charterists like Radebe who still believes in the useless idea of two–stage theory of revolution. The last part of the book provides a summation of the intellectual contribution of Mzala, on the basis of his European “intellectual surrogate parents” such as Marx and Lenin. Even a perfunctory shows how the “intellectual orphan” Mzala embraced orthodox Marxism as recommended by white communist quacks in South Africa. The emphasis on the working class as the revolutionary class without regard to race is glaring manifestation of his uncritical embrace of classical Marxism. The inherent racism of Western culture and civilization (Robinson 2000) which informs the racism of the white working class is ignored by Mzala despite his bad experience in the Socialist Countries he visited at some point in his training to be an “intellectual orphan”. This is because as Armah (1984:59) argues “As an intellectual product, Marxism has the prestige and convenience of a ready–made Western thought system loaded with impressive–sounding terms and mouth–filling phrases redolent of education and instantly useable in academic debate or dinner–table chit–chat”. This is why for Afrikanists like us Mzala is not an “intellectual prince” but an “intellectual orphan” thus, “the apparatchik that peers from underneath the cloak of scholarship”, to paraphrase Neville Alexander.

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