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FIGHT IGNORANCE, KNOW YOUR HISTORY TO REBEL AGAINST ABUSE

Voter registration could not take place in at least 140 polling stations throughout the country. Given that there are more than 22 000 voting stations in the country, one can argue that the figure of 140 is relatively negligible in the greater scheme of voter registration.



But in virtually all the affected stations where registration could not take place, local residents were expressing their unhappiness with the government over lack of delivery of election promises. Protesters' demands range from jobs, electricity, water, houses, better schools, proper roads to end of abuse of power and corruption.

In some areas, school principals openly refused to allow their schools to be used as Voter Registration Centres because they were concerned that the community members may burn down the schools as they vented their anger against the government.

The unequivocal message from the protesters throughout the country is that "we will not vote to show our disapproval of the government". **AZAPO** Voice has said in the past that people who are not happy with the delivery record of the government should actually use their vote to vote for change. This message does not seem to be getting through to our people. This is why for many of our people, there were two opposing forces during the white settler-colonial rule. One force was the progressive revolutionary liberation movement and the other was the reactionary forces, led by the National Party that had wanted to maintain the status-quo. The National Party went through metamorphosis to be swallowed by the ANC, while the remnants became the Democratic Alliance (DA).

The ANC, as the oldest liberation organisation, was generally seen as the leading force in the Liberation Movement. However, the truth is that the ANC alone does not constitute the Liberation Movement. The other two sections of the Liberation Movement are the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the Azanian People's Organisation (**AZAPO**). The PAC was formed in April 1959 while **AZAPO** was formed in 1978 after the banning of 17 Black Consciousness organisations that included the Black People's Convention (**BPC**), a direct predecessor of **AZAPO**.

Since the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, there have been three major developments that paved the way to the dawn of democracy in 1994.

The first was the Sharpeville Massacre on 21 March 1960, where the apartheid regime unleashed its brute force on unarmed and innocent civilians, murdering 69 people and wounding hundreds others. That historic event was organised by the PAC under the leadership of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe.

The Sharpeville Massacre was a game changer. The forces of liberation realised that they could no longer continue to talk peace to a regime whose response was brute force. After the banning of the ANC and the PAC by the racist junta, both organisations went into exile to establish their military wings – Umkhonto-we-Sizwe (MK) and the Azanian People’s Liberation Army (APLA).

But there was a political lull after the arrest of the Rivonia Trialists that included Nelson Mandela and Govan Mbeki who were sent to Robben Island in 1964. It was the emergence of the South African Students Organisation (**SASO**) led by the likes of *Steve Bantu Biko, Onkgopotse Tiro, Harry Nengwekhulu, Nikiwe Debs Matshoba, Mosibudi Mangena, Strini Moodley and Pandelani Nefolovhodwe*, that the politics of resistance were revived in the late 1960s. **SASO**, which was a pioneer BC organisation, spread the philosophy of Black Consciousness throughout Azania, creating a fertile ground for the eruption of the Soweto student uprisings in 1976.



The June 16, 1976 Uprisings were the second major catalyst in the revolution towards our democracy. It was after the Uprisings that thousands of young BC adherents such as *Nkosazana Dlamini, Welile Nhlapho, Jackie Selebi, Tsietsi Mashinini, Strike Thokoane* and

countless others left the country into exile to further the struggle. The **BCM** did not have strong structures outside the country at the time. As a result, the majority of the young people who left the country as BC cadres found themselves straying into the ranks of MK and to a lesser extent APLA.

The third major development in the history of our struggle for the reconquest of the land was the brutal murder in police custody of our revered leader Biko. His death united the world against apartheid South Africa, and also moved the international community to take a greater interest in our politics, particularly what was happening in our prisons and to our political prisoners and detainees.

Why all this long history lecture? The simple fact, which may not be obvious to many, is that in all the three major catalysts for our revolution, the ANC does not feature. Perhaps that is why the ruling party would rather have the Sharpeville Massacre known as a Human Rights Day and the June 16 Uprising as a Youth Day, where our youth attend music festivals and other recreational gigs. The point is that we need to explode the myth that only the ANC fought for our freedom.

AZAPO has a rich political and revolutionary legacy. Some cunning politicians know this. This is why they have embraced Biko. This is why they now talk of Azania. This is why they mimic **AZAPO** in calling for the land to be returned to its rightful owners. This is why they sing our revolutionary songs. If this truth is shared with our people, they will realise that the narrative that says only the ANC fought for freedom, and has the exclusive right to rule, is a fallacy.

The truth is that it was the collective efforts of our people through various generations that culminated in the dawn of democracy in 1994. When we are armed with this knowledge, we should know that no political party, regardless of its glorious past, has the exclusive right to rule over us. When we are not happy with the current rulers, we should not abstain and cause chaos, but we should use the power that we have through the ballot to vote thieves out of power. Again, the power is in our hands!

AZAPO AND THE SOWETO COMMUNITY REMEMBERS DR ASVAT

This past Sunday marked 30 years since the murder of **AZAPO** leader Dr Abu Baker Hurley Asvat, who would have turned 76 on 23 February this year. Taking cue from Steve Biko who warned that “a nation that forgets its martyrs will itself soon be forgotten”, **AZAPO** worked with the Asvat Institute to organise a befitting Commemoration Service for the late Head of the **AZAPO** Health Secretariat.



The Service began in the early hours of the morning with a visit to Dr Asvat’s gravesite in Lenasia Cemetery by the Asvat family and the leadership of **AZAPO**, the Asvat Institute and the Crescent Cricket Club. From there a motorcade rolled down to Regina Mundi, the battleground of the liberation struggle in Soweto. The community joined the march from Regina Mundi to the house that used to be Dr Asvat’s surgery in Rockville. The necessary rituals were conducted before the march snaked down to its destination at the Thokoza Park where the main Commemoration Service was held.

Dr Asvat’s widow Zorah and the children were present. Several speakers delivered their moving tributes to the memory of a great Azanian Revolutionary. **AZAPO** President Strike Thokoane summarised the contributions and sacrifices of Dr Asvat by pointing out that his modest grave of a heap of soil and a small zinc sheet on which his name details are written, was

distinct and visible among the “mansions” of graves and expensive tombstones. He said **AZAPO** was relentless in making sure that the contributions and sacrifices of Dr Asvat were not forgotten in Azania and the whole world.

Mrs Kholeka Nzunga spoke on behalf of the Soweto community, which was kind enough to honour Dr Asvat in his lifetime by referring to him as The People’s Doctor. Mrs Nzunga, who was a neighbour to the Rockville surgery and Dr Asvat’s patient, recalled how they used to be harassed by the police looking out for Dr Asvat. She related how she was shocked by Dr Asvat’s bravery who gave them his number to pass on to the dark forces that were hunting him like an animal. She said one day they woke up to learn that Dr Asvat had been murdered in his surgery. Community members sobbed and wept like children who had just lost their parent. That was how much The People’s Doctor meant to the community.

This cofounder of **AZAPO**, had shocked many people when he decided to open up a surgery at shack settlement in McDonald’s Farm, which the locals called the Chicken Farm. He took healthcare to where the people were. By so doing, he cut out bus and taxi fares from the expenses of the community members. They only needed to walk to the surgery. He saved them a lot of time and energy of waking up in the early hours and walking to the distant bus and train stations.

But he was also aware that he could be putting his life in danger from criminals. His understanding of the Black community convinced him that his people could not hurt him because he was not their enemy but their Comrade and friend. Indeed, his people never touched his skin. The painful and tragic part is that not even the enemy had the courage to murder him. The “unkindest cut” came from the leaders of rival political organisations. Yet he had the love and tolerance to employ even leaders of the organisations like the UDF/ANC.

Though **AZAPO** and the Asvat Institute successfully campaigned for the renaming of the highway that connects Lenasia and Soweto to Dr Abu Baker Asvat, it remains a political mystery why the Coronation Hospital or the Rahima Hospital was not renamed

after Dr Asvat. Coronation was where he did his internship, while Rahima was where he worked as a professional health practitioner.

AZAPO ON AN ELECTION OFFENSIVE

AZAPO knows that its being armed with a revolutionary philosophy of Black Consciousness and correct politics cannot mean much if **AZAPO** does not enjoy the State power to implement its Political Programme, which the people hail as the most progressive.

The various **AZAPO** Provinces have hit the ground running to get the multitudes of our people to vote for **AZAPO** in these 2019 Elections. Our work is made easier by the fact that all the facts and details of corruption are now out in the open. We know the political party that was responsible for the Arms Deal corruption. We know the party and the politicians that helped the Gupta family to steal the State resources for a small change. Everyone knows the political party and its politicians that were bought groceries and liquor in return for allowing Bosasa to milk our country dry of its resources.

We also know that the Marikana Massacre in which the Black workers were butchered for the super profits of foreign mining companies, took place under the direction of the ANC-led government. Nobody can say they do not know who murdered martyrs like Andries Tatane who died fighting for the delivery of services to the poor majority. We all have seen the young militants of the #FeesMustFall Movement having to fight for free and decolonised education 25 years into democracy. We have witnessed how our children were brutally attacked and harassed by the police under this government.

At the moment, there are 3 Commissions of Inquiry running at the same time. They are the PIC, NPA and Zondo Commissions. It is not difficult to see that all the culprits flocking at those commissions come from the same political party. The corpse of the corrupt is rupturing and the worms are coming out into the open. Politics - as the art of government and as the art of influence - has been given a bad name by the corrupt politicians.

The sense our Provinces got from the ground is that the people are yearning for **AZAPO** to step up and save the country. The people love the political message of **AZAPO**, which carries the sharpness and honesty known to Steve Biko. In Provinces like Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, North West, Free State and Mpumalanga, our Comrades have descended upon the Taxi Ranks, Train Stations and Shopping Malls where they distributed pamphlets and encouraged the people to register and vote. In the Eastern Cape, our Comrades have visited the besieged people of Xolobeni and attended several community meetings organised by Amadiba Crisis Committee against the auctioning of our land to foreign mining companies for a small change. **AZAPO** leaders have been invited by the community to offer their support in terms of skills and resources. In Limpopo, our Comrades are invading the villages where they have held meetings with the traditional leaders and the various rural communities. The reception is generally receptive and enthusi-



astic.

To ensure that **AZAPO** gives the people the best and what they deserve, we have ensured that the moral and ethical quality of our cadres is beyond reproach. **AZAPO** is known for its rare capability of marshalling its membership to always stay the course of its ideological mission - not of **AZAPO** only, but for the benefit of the entire nation.