

A TRIBUTE TO COMRADE THABO SEHUME

Cde Thabo Sehume, a BC and **AZAPO** stalwart community worker and leader. A shrewd trade unionist, an uncompromising political activist, an irrepressible and devastating political opponent, an ideologue and visionary and, above all, a revolutionary intellectual, is no more.

His passing on is of an icon in revolution and, by any conceivable standards, an enormous loss to **AZAPO** and those still committed to the emancipation of our country and people. Cde Sehume loomed large over the security apparatuses of the apartheid regime and handled with mocking impatience those who pretended to represent the true interests of the oppressed black people. For this reason, he was banned and house-arrested, subjected to countless detentions without trial and was always a must in the list of those to be apprehended in Atteridgeville on every preventative detention occasion.

In spite of the sharp intellect he was endowed with, cde Sehume never prioritised the acquisition of intellectual titles – he actually deferred this task to focus more on work with the municipal workers' union, the establishment of an advice Centre for the community of Atteridgeville, in particular, and Pretoria, in general, and general agitational and mobilisation work. It was in this context that cde Sehume piloted and won a groundbreaking legal decision against the Atteridgeville Town Council. In terms of this decision, the Atteridgeville Town Council owed residents rent money in excess of fifty-one million rands (R51 million). The evil machinations of the apartheid regime ensured, however, that the residents of Atteridgeville did not benefit from this achievement.

For the record, cde Thabo proceeded to collect a junior degree with Unisa and, thereafter, a post-graduate LLB degree.

Cde Thabo was a member of the South African Students Organisation (**SASO**) and the Black People's Convention (**BPC**) both of which were banned on 19th October 1977. He was then elected National Organiser of the Azanian People's Organisation (**AZAPO**) and it was in this position that he made a huge contribution in the growth and acceptance by black people of the Black Consciousness outlook. The responsibilities implied by this position send him to various flashpoints to mediate the internecine political hostilities that involved the BC and the Charterist movements. He himself was scarred by these events, but he emerged a stronger cadre of the revolution.

With the dawn of a new political dispensation in our country have emerged new opportunities which provide for the immediate transformation of the lives of those who were oppressed in the past era. However, these opportunities exist for a tiny minority alone – those with the type of education that cde Thabo had. But, notwithstanding the approaches and offers made to him which included ambassadorial postings in key capitals of the world, chief positions in government and others, cde Thabo elected to remain on the side of those for whom struggle is the only hope for life.

And so, like many other leaders who stood firmly on the side of the door, cde Thabo takes leave of us and the constituency that needs him far more earlier than the struggle we are engaged in demands. We take solace, however, in the fact that his spirit lives on and that this can only strengthen our resolve.

His soul shall rest in peace.

By: Dan Habedi