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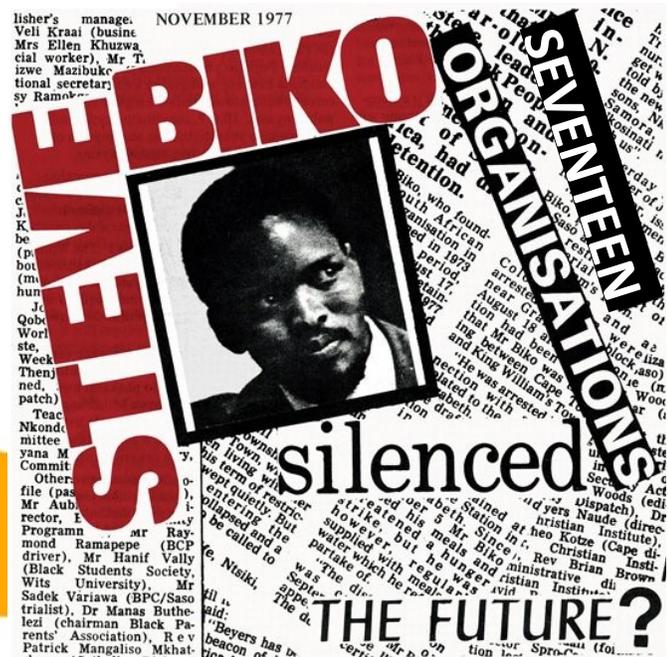
BLACK SOLIDARITY DAY

Tomorrow, 19 October, it will be the 41st anniversary of the banning of 17 organisations of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and two publications like The World and Rand Daily Mail under the notorious Section 10 of the Internal Security Act. Jimmy Kruger was the white settler-colonial regimes' Minister of Justice. The banned organisations included the Black People's Organisation (BPC), South African Students Organisation (SASO), South African Students Movement (SASM), Black Women's Federation (BWF), Union of Black Journalists (UBJ), Black Community Projects (BCP), National Youth Organisation (NAYO), Medupe Writers Association (MWA) and Zimele Trust Fund.

the BCM preferred "Black Solidarity Day" for obvious political reasons.

The mass banning of the radical BC organisations was a demonstration of the effectiveness of the BCM in shaking the foundations of settler-colonialism and white racism in Azania. That took place within just a decade of the founding of SASO – the pioneer organisation of the BCM. You have to take into account the fact that the BCM was led by young people in their 20s. And these fearless young people had to lead the Azanian Masses out of the "political lull" that was created by the banning of the historical organisations and the relocating into exile of many activists. The bravery and heroism of the young leaders of the BCM surprised the world.

Within a radical decade of institutionalising the BC philosophy by establishing organisations almost in every sector, the flames of the June 16 Uprisings engulfed Azania as an indication of the potency of the philosophy of Black Consciousness. SASM, a high school students wing of the BCM, was the one that provided immediate leadership to the Black students. The likes of Tsietsi Mashinini and Khotso Seatlholo were the BC leaders of the students. SASM had formed the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC), of which Mashinini was the President, to lead the campaign against the apartheid imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction.



Though "Black Wednesday" was the immediate name that made waves as a reference to 19 October 1977,

It is common knowledge that the military wings of the

exiled political organisations benefitted tremendously from the mass exodus of politicised and radicalised Black young people of the BCM who left Azania for exile. This 1976 national rebellion under the direction and leadership of the BCM breathed life into those organisations.

Yet there was a political and mobilisation build-up to the June 16 Uprisings. In 1974 the BCM organised the VIVA Frelimo Rallies, which were scheduled for 25 September. The white racist regime was naturally hostile to anything that sought to recognise and celebrate what the regime saw as the victory of communism next to its fence. That led to the mass imprisonment of the BCM leaders and the historic SASO-BPC Trial where Steve Biko was the articulate defence witness. After the June 16 Uprisings, the 9 Trialists were each sentenced to between 5 to 8 years on Robben Island.

As a result of the 19 October 1977 banning order, the BCM organisations lost their property which included money in the banks, vehicles and health facilities like the Zanempilo Clinic in Ezinyoka near eQonce in the Eastern Cape.

The final nail in the proverbial coffin of the BCM was the murder of Steve Biko in police custody on 12 September 1977, which was about a month after the banning of the BCM organisations. In about 6 months the BCM defied the counterrevolutionary move of the white racist regime by reconstituting the banned BCM organisations into AZAPO, which kept the fires of the Azanian Revolution burning. It is against that background that AZAPO is historically recognised as the custodian of BC and Biko.

CHEAP POLITICS ABOUT IMMIGRANTS

The utterances by Tshwane Mayor Solly Msimanga about undocumented immigrants may be popular among many citizens, but are unfortunate. There is no doubt that due to limited resources and fewer jobs in the market, the tactic of “othering” people is gaining momentum.

For instance, in a village where there is a mine, local people will “other” or classify people from outside the

village as others and insist that jobs should be given to the locals. Sometimes these calls ignore qualifications. But what is the legitimate reason that a citizen should be excluded from getting a job simply because he or she does not reside in the particular village?

Recently, there was a protest in Soweto whereby people seeking employment directed their anger at the Johannesburg Metro for employing “outsiders”. By outsiders, they meant people outside Soweto. Owing to apartheid policies that had designed townships like Soweto as temporary residences for “migrant workers from the bantustans” who worked on the mines and factories around the cities, many people who live in Soweto have roots in others parts of the country. So, “othering” people in Soweto is simply ludicrous.



For the record, there is merit in the argument that the government should enforce effective border controls and ensure that the country’s borders are not porous. Equally, the government should enforce the country’s laws regulating undocumented immigrants so that there is adequate information to plan for services such as health, housing and education. Planning is impossible when there is no accurate information about the number of people who will require government services.

But that is just one side of the complex issue of the migration of people. The truth is that people will always move to places or countries that they believe offer better prospects. South Africa has a stronger economy compared to its neighbours in the region. It is also seen as the place to go by fellow Africans in the Continent. Skilled African immigrants are working in

our hospitals, universities and other industries such as the financial sector. There is no apparent Afrophobic sentiments towards these professionals who are adding value to the economy. The resentments towards immigrants are directed towards the poor Black immigrants who are battling for limited resources in the townships and informal settlements. It is obvious that the fight is over limited resources.

The long term solution to this problem lies in growing the local economy to create more opportunities for people, but also in assisting the regional economies of countries such as Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Mozambique to grow their economies through increased trade. If there is political stability and economic prosperity in Zimbabwe, there will be no reason for Zimbabweans to cross the border into South Africa.

It should never escape us that as Africans, we are essentially one people. These borders were imposed on us by European colonialists. That is why there are BaSotho in Lesotho and other BaSotho in the Free State. AmaSwazi are found in Swaziland and Mpumalanga, and BaTswana are found in the North West and Botswana.

ARREST THOSE WHO LOOTED VBS

The delay in arresting those implicated in the looting of the VBS Bank can only serve to undermine the credibility of the law enforcement agencies in the country. We have seen various players – including politicians and business people mainly from the ruling party – address the media on their alleged involvement but there is deafening silence from the police and the National Prosecuting Authority about the arrest of the suspects in the crime.

Had the law enforcement agencies moved swiftly to arrest those involved, members of the public would be re-assured that those involved would face justice. Those in authority should understand that the general public is losing confidence in the justice system. This explains why people resort to mob justice in some communities. It is important for ordinary people to be assured that the system works, and that they can trust in the wheels of justice to turn and turn fast. After all, justice delayed, is justice denied.

The VBS debacle is perhaps the worst illustration of the moral decay in our society. Like cancer, corruption and greed are eating away at our moral fibre. At VBS, top management and internal auditors collaborated with external auditors to cook books to hide the “The Great Bank Heist” from the Reserve Bank. The victims of this well organised theft of about R2 billion are ordinary villagers and pensioners – the poorest of the poor. Theft is evil, but it is worse than evil when one steals from the poor.



The VBS scandal should offer us as a nation an opportunity to reflect on what we have become. Corruption is becoming normalised. This is not just for those who are in authority, but each one of us. How many of us pay a bribe to traffic police officers to avoid a speed fine? It gets worse. There are reports that people seeking employment in both the public and private entities have to pay bribes to get appointed. It is an open secret that people pay bribes to get tenders. Inspectors accept kickbacks to approve shoddy construction work. Teachers sleep with their pupils to give them better marks. Examples of the moral decay are too many to mention.

Is there hope? Yes, there is. Nobody is born corrupt. AZAPO believes that we need to build strong institutions of governance. We need an effective police service, a strong and capable NPA and an independent and impartial judiciary. But more importantly, we need a nation infused with Black Consciousness - the philosophy that implores an individual to do the right thing, unpoliced, in preservation of his or her dignity.

RESTRUCTURE THE ECONOMY TO ADDRESS UNEMPLOYMENT

The capitalist economic society is a ruthless story of survival by working largely for someone else. Traditional societies did not have this feature, and thus unemployment was an unknown phenomenon. Household and individuals had productive assets in the form of cattle and land. However, in modern contemporary times, individuals are employed to be exploited for the creation of super profits for the capitalists.



Unemployment in South Africa is prevalent and very high. The formal rate stands at 27.2 percent, since 1994. We know that the expanded definition, which includes those who have stopped looking for a job, takes the number to a horrific 37.2 percent with about 10.2 million of unemployed people in this country. South Africa is a society characterised by systemic social exclusion and marginalisation. The feature exhibits very direct and strong links with the pandemic of poverty in the country, and worsening inequality. This is made worse by the fact that population growth is at present in excess of the employment growth.

The wage-system is critical in the transfer of income.

South Africa suffers from structural unemployment, which by definition, is not responsive to changes in the business cycle of the economy. It is also important to mention at the outset that the private business community has not been doing its part. Fixed investment has been minimal, whilst private companies are flush with investable cash.

There is strong need to restructure the economy in favour of the socialist model where the wealth will be redistributed to address the human development of

the Azanian population. Investment will also be key in that model. However, it will require a new growth dynamic. Only when fixed investment in brownfields is increased will unemployment fall noticeably. In post-1994, the South African economy has focussed on improving intrinsic inefficiencies, and that has undermined the employment growth dividend. Productivity, which is essential in its own right, has a downside because it means the unemployed are kept out of the labour market, and those having jobs are not really secure in their employment.

Historically, South Africa has not been successful in reducing unemployment sustainably below the 20 per cent mark. It is, however, possible to deal with the scourge of unemployment.

Generally, unemployment is severe within Black people, and specifically, amongst the women and the youth who bear the brunt of unemployment. Studies show that entrepreneurship is high amongst the young people. For this reason, it's a rationale choice to develop policies targeted specifically at this group. Indeed, current policies are only focussed on ensuring that the youth finds employment: This is doubtful when the economy is suffering from perennial low economic growth. Moreover, the current structure of the economy provides an absolute limit on the number of new labour entrants that can be absorbed into meaningful jobs.

“What is to be done?” It is important to ensure that any intervention does not burden the government in terms of the fiscus, whether this is through wage subsidy or tax credits. It is important at this point to be bold about economic growth, but mainly, focussing on exploiting new investment opportunities rather than focus on improved efficiency gains, which lack the capacity to absorb new entrants at scale.

Mismanagement of the economy as evidenced by corruption, State Capture and illicit outflows of finance is aggravating the draining of the economy, while not helping to strengthen investor confidence. That is why AZAPO remains convinced that the countless Job Summits will not address unemployment and poverty under the poor governance of the ruling party.