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## LESSONS FROM PETER CYRIL JONES

As we bid farewell to Comrade Peter Cyril Jones, it is perhaps opportune to reflect on his life and that of his friend and close comrade, Bantu Steve Biko.

In AZAPO circles, Peter Jones, who is affectionately referred to as Comrade PC, is often described as the last person who saw Biko alive. The reason AZAPO comrades insist that he was the last person to see Biko alive is that the brutes who arrested Biko and the savages who murdered him do not qualify to be referred to as people. For someone to be a person, one must have a human soul. A human soul has compassion. Those murderers of our founding father lacked all the elements that made humans, humans. They lacked true humanity.

Jones was a living ancestor of the Black Consciousness Movement. He was instrumental in the formation of AZAPO in 1978, a few months after the banning of the Black People's Convention (BPC) and other BC aligned organisations.

He served AZAPO as its Vice President. His commitment to the liberation of the oppressed masses of our country was unquestionable. He served in the struggle until the end.

Jones was arrested with Biko outside Grahamstown (now Makhanda) on August 18, 1977, on their way from Cape Town. At the time of his arrest, Biko had been banned and not allowed to leave his hometown of Ginsburg. Because of Biko's commitment to uniting the forces fighting settler-colonialism, he defied his banning order and went to Cape Town where he held a meeting aimed at promoting unity between the different components of the liberation movement.

It is believed that one of the people who attended the secret meeting in which Biko made his plea for unity tipped the security police about the visit. The police set up a special roadblock outside Makhanda. After that arrest, Biko was murdered on September 12, 1977, just over three weeks later.



What do we learn from Jones? He was a man of principle. Many people who were in our Movement with him left to join the ruling party, which had access to State power and State resources. Jones remained in AZAPO to the end. He believed in working with the people to enable them to be self-sufficient.

Jones joined the BCM when leaders of our Movement deliberately went out of their way to destroy the racial classification of the oppressed. The apartheid regime had sought to divide and conquer by classifying the oppressed as Africans, Coloured and Indians. The BCM

smashed these divides and made it clear that being Black was not a matter of the skin pigmentation but mental attitude of a people who were on a path towards liberating themselves. That is why AZAPO had members with Indian ancestry such as Strini Moodley and Professor Saths Cooper. Sadly, this heritage of uniting the oppressed across the racial classification is under threat with the revival of ethnicity in our country.

We salute Comrade PC who served his people with honour and dignity without expecting anything in return. We honour him for advancing the liberation agenda. How we wish those running our country could learn from Jones what it means to be a true patriot and to truly serve the people.

## THE POST OFFICE CANNOT JUST EXIST TO RETAIN EMPLOYMENT

Predictably, the news of the planned retrenchments of 6,000 workers at the South African Post Office has been met with mixed reactions.

In many respects, the Post Office has reached its sell-by date. This is the plain truth. When last did you receive a letter or a parcel via a post office? In the past post offices played a vital role. They connected people who wrote letters to others from different ends of the country. For migrant workers who were not allowed to stay with their wives on the reef, letters were the only way of getting information back home in the Transkei or Venda or Giyani.

At the time when there were few telephone lines, many of which were reserved for whites, post offices were crucial in that they would be used to deliver telegram messages. Those who went to school in the 80's would remember how they were taught to construct a telegram message. It was extremely short and straight to the point. You would be taught to summarise a message about the passing away of you father. All that the telegram would say was: Father dead.

As technology advanced, post offices were also used to deliver parcels. When the government rolled out social grants, some of the post offices were used as pay-out points.

But the post office business model was changing fast. The introduction of cellphones meant that people no longer needed to send letters to their loved ones, informing them about their state of health. With regard to the business of delivering parcels, other private players entered the field with cheaper and more reliable services to deliver the same service. It did not help that post offices had a reputation of losing people's parcels.



With the rise in criminal activities, government encouraged people to have bank accounts where their social grants could be deposited. Gradually post offices had little business. Often, they were deserted as more and more people used alternative services.

With declining business, the Post Office struggled to meet its financial obligations. Sometimes it even struggled to pay its workers.

Unlike ESKOM which is crucial for the economy and wellbeing of the country, the Post Office was different. There is no universal support to pump money into the Post Office to pay the workers who seem not to have work. It might appear insensitive, but what is the wisdom of borrowing money to pay an operation that cannot stand on its own? The Post Office cannot just exist to retain employment. It has to exist to offer a service. If there is no commercial reason for its existence, it should close down. The proposed retrenchments should be seen in that light. Yes, retrenchments are bad and will affect workers negatively, but failing to act to save the Post Office will result in the entire business closing down. The retrenchments are designed to cut costs so that the Post Office can still operate.

## THE POST OFFICE CAN BE A CONDUIT TOWARDS THE STATE BANK

If one occupies a management position and looks at workers as assets to deliver a product, it is much easier to look at retrenchments as a possible solution to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

But in a democratic dispensation, it is fair for workers to expect the State to have compassion in dealing with their plight. As it is, unemployment is at a record high. When 6,000 workers are thrown out of employment onto the streets, we should accept that we are creating more social problems in the communities where the workers come from.

Let us remove the veil that hides the real reason of the retrenchments. On the surface, the retrenchments are about improving the efficiency and financial viability of the Post Office. But in reality, this government is on a mission to weaken the State. The plan is to run virtually all the State-owned entities to the ground and force them to have private partners or to be privatised completely.

It would be a difficult sell to embark on a privatisation of a State-owned enterprise that is financially viable and running profitably. But if it is struggling financially, when suggestions are made to sell it, they appear sensible and right.

There are hundreds of post offices throughout the country. The ruling party has a Conference resolution on creating a State-owned bank. If the ruling party was genuine in its resolution, it would implement the creation of a State-owned bank and use the infrastructure of the post office to create branches throughout the country. Suddenly, the people living in the remote villages will have access to the bank. The government at different levels, from national to provincial to local, can then take their accounts from the big commercial banks that pay lip service to transformation and give their accounts to the State-owned bank.

If the State was serious about improving the efficiency at the post office, it would modernise the offices and the networks of parcel delivery so that the post offices offer the best and cheapest delivery compared to any in the private sector. And when these things are done,

the Post Office will not only stop retrenchments, but they will look for more employees.

The real problem is that those in power are puppets of big business. They accept the nonsensical argument that the State should have minimal role in business. Everything should be done by the private sector. And in the context of South Africa, private sector is a code for whites.



The white tribe has the Black-led government where they want it. The government should effectively hand over the running of the State to the private sector. It is the same script with ESKOM. Destroy it and then sell it for nothing just as you did with the South African Airways.

Wake up. Real power is economic. Stop this self-mutilating exercise to please white capital. After complying with the instruction to retrench workers at the post office, you will be told your cabinet is bloated. Eventually, you will be told that the civil service needs to be trimmed. Be careful, unemployment is a potent ingredient for civil rebellion.

## FRIGHTENING CRIME STATS

Ours is a country under siege by criminals.

Below is an edited statement released by the Minister of Police Bheki Cele last week.

“Out of the 7 555 people murdered in the three months of reporting, 3 144 people were killed with a firearm, 2 498 people were killed with other weapons such as knives, sharp and blunt instruments, bricks and in many cases bare hands.”

“It is alarming that a total of 5 935 rape incidents took place at the residence of the perpetrator/victim, including residence known by victims/ perpetrator, these are family, friends and neighbours.”

“The truth of the matter is that poverty and inequality and unemployment coupled by little to no basic services is impeding on policing.”

“That is why the Integrated Crime and Violence Prevention Strategy, recently adopted by government to address the drivers of crime, must be fast tracked in order to boost safety and security in communities and the country as a whole.”

“Results and desired outcomes can only be achieved if management leaves the offices and leads from the front in the streets.”



AZAPO Voice is posing this question to the minister. If you know what can solve crime in South Africa, why are you not doing that?

What is clear is that crime is out of control as the figures below show:

All Contact Crimes increased by 11.6%

<i>Crime Category</i>	<i>Figures</i>
Murder	10.1%
Sexual Offences	9.6%
Attempted Murder	24.3%
Assault to do grievous bodily harm	8.7%
Common Assault	12.0%
Common Robbery	21.2%
Robbery with aggravating circumstances	10.8%

All Sexual Offences increased by 9.6%

<i>Crime Category</i>	<i>Figures</i>
Rape	9.8%
Sexual Assault	4.1%
Attempted Sexual Offences	5.6%
Contact Sexual Offences	-25.4%

<i>Crime Category</i>	<i>Figures</i>
Carjacking	2.8%
Robbery at Residential Premises	8.6%
Robbery at Non-Residential Premises	- 3.0%
Robbery of Cash-In-Transit	-5.0%
Truck hijacking	9.8%

All Property-Related Crimes increased 7.2%

Burglary at residential premises	7.4%
Theft of motor vehicle and motor cycle	- 3.3%
Theft out or from motor vehicle	9.9%
Stock Theft	0.6%