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VOLUME 4 ISSUE 41

AZAPO WEEKLY ONLINE PUBLICATION

ARMED WITH BC AND LED BY AZAPO, BLACK PEOPLE CAN DETERMINE THEIR DESTINY

The opening paragraphs of the Azanian People's Manifesto, the prime document that outlines the principles of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) states:

"Our struggle for national liberation is directed against the historically evolved system of racism and capitalism which holds the people of Azania in bondage for the benefit of the small minority of the population, i.e., the capitalists and their allies, the white workers and the reactionary sections of the middle classes. The struggle against apartheid, therefore, is no more than the point of departure for our liberatory efforts."

"The Black working class inspired by revolutionary consciousness is the driving force of our struggle for national self-determination in a unitary Azania. They alone can end the system as it stands today because they alone have nothing at all to lose. They have a world to gain in a democratic, anti-racist and socialist Azania, where the interests of the workers shall be paramount through worker control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. In the socialist republic of Azania, the land and all that belongs to it shall be wholly owned and controlled by the Azanian people. The usage of the land and all that accrues to it shall be aimed at ending all exploitation."

Our critics have often accused AZAPO of failing to match theory with practice. They say AZAPO suf-

fers from analysis paralysis. Big on theory but thin on practice.

It is what revolutionary theoretician Amilcar Cabral warned against when he stated: "Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children."



As the country approaches general elections, the political arena is dominated by populists who say anything and everything to attract votes. The electorate is besieged by public relations gimmicks launched by politicians who want the shortest way to power. But increasingly, the voters are getting suspicious and are losing faith in the electoral system which they perceive as a mere stepladder for politicians who want to access State resources for their personal benefits.

The immediate task for AZAPO is to mobilise the population around the principles of the organisation and what it stands for.

In this regard, it is prudent to explain what AZAPO means when it states: "Our struggle for national liberation is directed against the historically evolved system of racism and capitalism..."

After the European settlers – both the Dutch and the British – had defeated the indigenous Blacks and robbed them of their land, they institutionalised racism through a myriad of laws that essentially denied the Black people of their most basic rights. Blacks who were more than 90 percent of the population, were confined to less than 13 percent of the land. Even in those bantustans, which served as labour reserves for the white-owned farms and firms, Black people were not allowed to own land like their white counterparts. They were only given permission to occupy land. The land was essentially owned by the State. By and large, this situation remains unchanged even today, almost 30 years after the dawn of democracy.

Black people were removed from the most fertile land and forced to settle in barren land. They were forced to keep their livestock to a minimum because they had very limited grazing land. They were denied the same quality education that was given to their white counterparts by the apartheid regime. The inferior education - in some cases no education at all as they were forced to start working on white farms and mines as young people - that Black people received meant that they had limited skills and had to rely on the white people for employment by providing cheap labour.

As racism was entrenched, over time some of the oppressed people almost gave up fighting the system. AZAPO, as a revolutionary liberation movement, had to prick the conscience of the people to rebel against the system of racism. The antidote of racism is Black Consciousness philos-

ophy. It is only when Black people realise that they are not inferior to whites and that their position of dominance over their lives by the white tribe is not ordained by God or some supernatural power, that they can demand what is rightfully theirs, which is the land that was taken from them through colonial conquest. When Black people take control of their land and its wealth, they can then pursue self-determination or self-rule.



Currently, Black people have the vote but do not have the land, the wealth and the control of the economy. Black people are merely consumers of products made by other people. The liberation project was aborted before it achieved its main objective – the repossession of land from the white tribe to its indigenous owners. This is the foundation of racism. When a people do not have power, they are vulnerable. The powerlessness state of Black people makes them vulnerable to racists.

As the Azanian Manifesto states, the system of racism and capitalism holds the people of Azania in bondage for the benefit of the small minority of the population, i.e., the capitalists and their allies, the white workers and the reactionary sections of the middle classes.

In the neocolonialist era, one of the biggest threats to the aspirations of Black people is the reactionary section of the middle class. The

following case studies are illustrations of how the reactionary section of the middle class have conspired with their capitalist bosses to advance the anti-Black agenda.

- Transnet Chief Executive Officer, Portia Derby, has expressed concern that solving the rail network crisis will result in job losses in the trucking business. In any normal democracy, such utterances should have resulted in her dismissal. The Chief Executive is basically saying that she is prepared to sleep on the job in order to save jobs in a rival industry. Derby may have let her tongue slip. She has exposed what is known in the industry. There are too many members of the reactionary middle class who benefit from the failure of the rail network. Some politicians, Transnet officials and even union leaders have invested in the trucking businesses. These trucks carry cargo to the ports for export. Should the rail-network be fixed, they will be out of business. Derby may have been careless to make the revelation public, but she is correct. There are too many people who will lose a lot of money should cargo be transported on goods trains as it was the case in the past. While this may be great business for a few members of the reactionary middle class, it is a huge drain to the fiscus. Funds that should be used to help address the social backlogs such as the building of new schools, hospitals, provision of water and electricity are being wasted on privately-owned trucks. The subtext is that Black people cannot govern. "Just look at what they have done to the rail system". This entrenches racism as ordinary people may be tempted to look at apartheid with nostalgia.
- A Midrand school made headlines last week when a Black female learner was forcefully removed from her class because she had been wearing dreadlocks. According to the Gauteng education department spokesperson, the school owned by the principal Tanya Booysen and her husband Andries, had

been operating illegally. The failure of the government to provide quality public education is driving Black parents to enroll their children in fly-by-night schools. Added to this, the ingrained racist-inspired assumption that schools run by whites offer better education lies at the core of why many Black parents will stop at nothing to have their children taught by whites.

From the illustrations above we note a few things. The first is that some Black people who have been entrusted with the responsibility of delivering a service, fail to do so and create an opportunity for the private sector to provide the same service, albeit at a higher cost.



While we used Transnet as an example, we can list many other services that are now being provided by the private sector as the section of the reactionary middle class in the State conspires with the capitalists to weaken the State.

The reactionary middle class run public hospitals to the ground, creating a great opportunity for the private healthcare system to thrive. Because this class has medical aids, it could care less about the collapse of healthcare in the public service.

The reactionary middle class, as they have smuggled themselves into the areas where the capitalists live, pay little attention to improving public police because their areas are guarded by private security companies.

Given the raw deal that the majority of the people get from the collusion of the reactionary section of the middle class that has become members of the political aristocracy and the white capitalists, how does AZAPO heed Cabral's advice that says "Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas...?"



As our political rivals engage in popularity contests and catchy slogans to attract votes through populism, AZAPO should remain the voice of reason. AZAPO should remind the voters that: "The struggle against apartheid, therefore, is no more than the point of departure for our liberatory efforts."

The removal of apartheid from the statute books is not the end of the struggle but the beginning. In AZAPO, we were not fighting just to end apartheid. We were not fighting to use the same toilets as white people. Our struggle was not just about being allowed to sit in whites only restaurants. Our struggle was not to be integrated into white schools, into white suburbs or to be allowed in white owned hotels. No! Our struggle was, and continue to be, for the repossession of our land, our wealth and the ownership and control of the economy. Ours is a struggle for self-determination.

When we approach voters, this is our basic message. If you want to render the white man irrelevant, vote AZAPO!

AZAPO is the only organisation that has Black Consciousness as its guiding ideology. Black Consciousness is Black people's response to white racism. Black Consciousness teaches Black people to be on their own, not to rely on others to do things that they should do for themselves. Black Consciousness teaches Black people to take pride in what they do. This means that if you are a teacher, be the best teacher. If you are a nurse, be the best nurse and render the best service with pride. If you are a police officer, serve with honour and dignity.

AZAPO's proposition of a functional and strong State is anchored on the notion of Black excellence. For this to be realised, we, collectively as Black people, attain the point of departure, the eradication of apartheid which keeps our people in mental bondage.

A vote for AZAPO is a vote of confidence in Black people and their ability to govern. A vote for AZAPO is a vote for the restoration of dignity to Black people.