

"I will only vote for a free Azania"

With the advance of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 70's and particularly since the Soweto Uprising of 1976, the atmosphere in Azanian politics has been suffused with antagonism towards apartheid and all its institutions. The Black people have in leaps and bounds graduated from the sterile politics of reacting to every machination of the settler regime to actually formulating their vision of a free Azania and working towards its fulfillment.

BC's twin cardinal principles are Black Solidarity and non-collaboration. Both these principles actually flow from the definition of Black: Black people are defined as those who are politically oppressed, socially discriminated against and economically exploited in South Africa and who identify themselves as a unit in the struggle for Azania — see section 22(1) of the AZAPO constitution in the **Supplement**. This definition immediately excludes all those who, although born in the ranks of the oppressed, deliberately oil the wheels of the oppressive machinery, as well as those who seek to fragment the Black resistance by dividing us along ethnic lines.

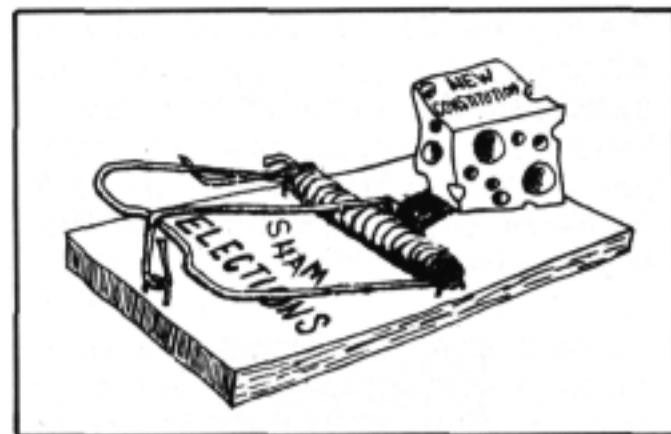
This was a novel vision by the Black Consciousness Movement: never before have the oppressed pooled their collective efforts in single organizations, never before has there been such a concerted effort to destroy thinking on lines laid down by the ruling class and to inculcate the ethic of creativity.

At the level of mass struggle — on the factory floor, on school-grounds and university campuses and in the townships — the BC vision was translated into action. The extent to which Black people identify themselves as a unit can be seen in thousands of campaigns and particularly in the 1973 and post-1980 worker strikes, in the 1976 and 1980 Uprisings.

The 22 and 28 August 1984 most certainly constitute a highwater mark for Black Consciousness. Sham elections were orchestrated by the settlers on these days — on the 22nd for the so-called Coloureds and on the 28th for the so-called Indians. It was hoped that these sections of the Black community would eagerly imbibe the new constitutional brew (entirely concocted by the settlers, of course).

The referendum held on 2 November 1983 established that white society firmly supported the Botha-Malan junta and their diabolical plans. Black people were never consulted about these plans, and in the absence of such consultation, the abysmally low polls recorded during these "elections" demonstrate quite vividly that:

- ★ Black people reject racist labels such as "Indians" and "Coloureds". In fact, the term "Indian" suggests that a section of our people belong to the Asian continent and the term "Coloured" is a meaningless catch-all classification.
- ★ Black people see themselves as a unit. The elections were never considered as being of special interest to "Indians" and "Coloureds" only ever since the lucid analysis by the 1983 AZAPO Congress at Edendale, Pietermaritzburg where it was suggested that anti-election efforts be mounted by the entire Black community. The media is deliberately underplaying the fact that all sections of the Black community mounted the anti-election effort, whether in the form of house-to-house visits, drafting of pamphlets, maintaining a physical presence at the polling booths or participating in the nation-wide boycotts of schools and universities. Thus students actually marched from Soweto to polling booths in Eldorado Park or from Ga Rankuwa to polling booths in Laudium, for example.
- ★ The racist system is facing an acute credibility crisis, and has resorted to desperate measures such as detaining anti-election leaders on the eve of the elections (amongst them Shabeer Randera, 1982 Vice-President of AZAPO; Cassiem Christians, 1983 Chairperson of the Western Cape Region of AZAPO and Glenda Constadt, 1983 Chairperson of the Johannesburg Central Branch of AZAPO); keeping many of the leaders under 'preventive detention' (amongst them Peter Cyril Jones, Cape Vice-President of AZAPO; Muntu ka Myeza, AZAPO's Publicity Secretary; Saths Cooper, AZAPO's Deputy President; Haroun Patel, Chairperson of the Lenasia Branch of AZAPO and Oupa Hlomuka, Chairperson of the Sebokeng Branch of AZAPO), brutalizing people who were registering their protest




against the farcical elections, bringing spurious charges against anti-election activists (amongst others, charging 2 AZAPO members with defacing public property in Queenstown, charging 8 AZAPO members for putting up anti-election posters or distributing anti-election leaflets in Durban, charging 24 cadres for public violence in Ga Rankuwa, 4 in Pietermaritzburg and 11 in Pietersburg; detaining and releasing Azapo members in Nelspruit and Rotunda), parroting the "intimidation" cry (when polling booths literally thronged with armed policemen) and attempting to dupe people into voting (by suggesting that voting is compulsory, by threatening pensioners and by a multiplicity of distasteful and disgusting methods).

- ★ Sellouts of long-standing (read Biko's article on **Fragmentation of the Black Resistance** on page 17) have availed themselves for even juicier crumbs from their master's table. They were seen jogging for positions in Botha's stooge political kindergarten but the people have shown to what extent these non-whites and their "political parties" such as the Labour Party, Solidarity Party and the National People's Party are rejected. It must also be mentioned that the reason why Gatsha Buthelezi and Inkatha rejected the "New Deal" is because there is no fourth chamber for so-called urban blacks. The heroic resistance to incorporation into the Kwa Zulu puppetstan by the people of Lamontville and Hambanati illustrate clearly that the principle of non-collaboration has permeated into the very warp and woof of the liberation movement.
- ★ The imperialist media is once again showing its colours by touting for participation in the system (underlining yet again

that whites can never articulate black interests or even begin to properly understand the black experience) and by glossing over the role of the Black Consciousness Movement in the massive anti-election effort.

The regime of Pieter Wapen Botha is determined to go ahead with its constitutional monstrosity aptly labelled a "shamocracy". This cannot be viewed as surprising after 332 years of white settlerdom in our motherland.

Flushed as we are by the anti-election victory, however, we should bear in mind that this campaign was only one more battle in our struggle for total liberation from settler colonialism and the accompanying economic exploitation. The election issue, the struggles against rent hikes and bus fare increases, the resistance to re-settlement and to influx control are situational battles provoked by the enemy and his various tentacles. Winning these enemy-initiated battles will not in itself bring us liberation. In order to repossess what is rightfully ours, we will have to initiate our own battles in which **we** shall dictate terms and the pace of events. The AZAPO slogan "I will only vote for a free Azania" assumes significance in this context: may the character of our blows against the enemy reflect a definite and unmistakable advance towards an anti-racist, socialist Azania!

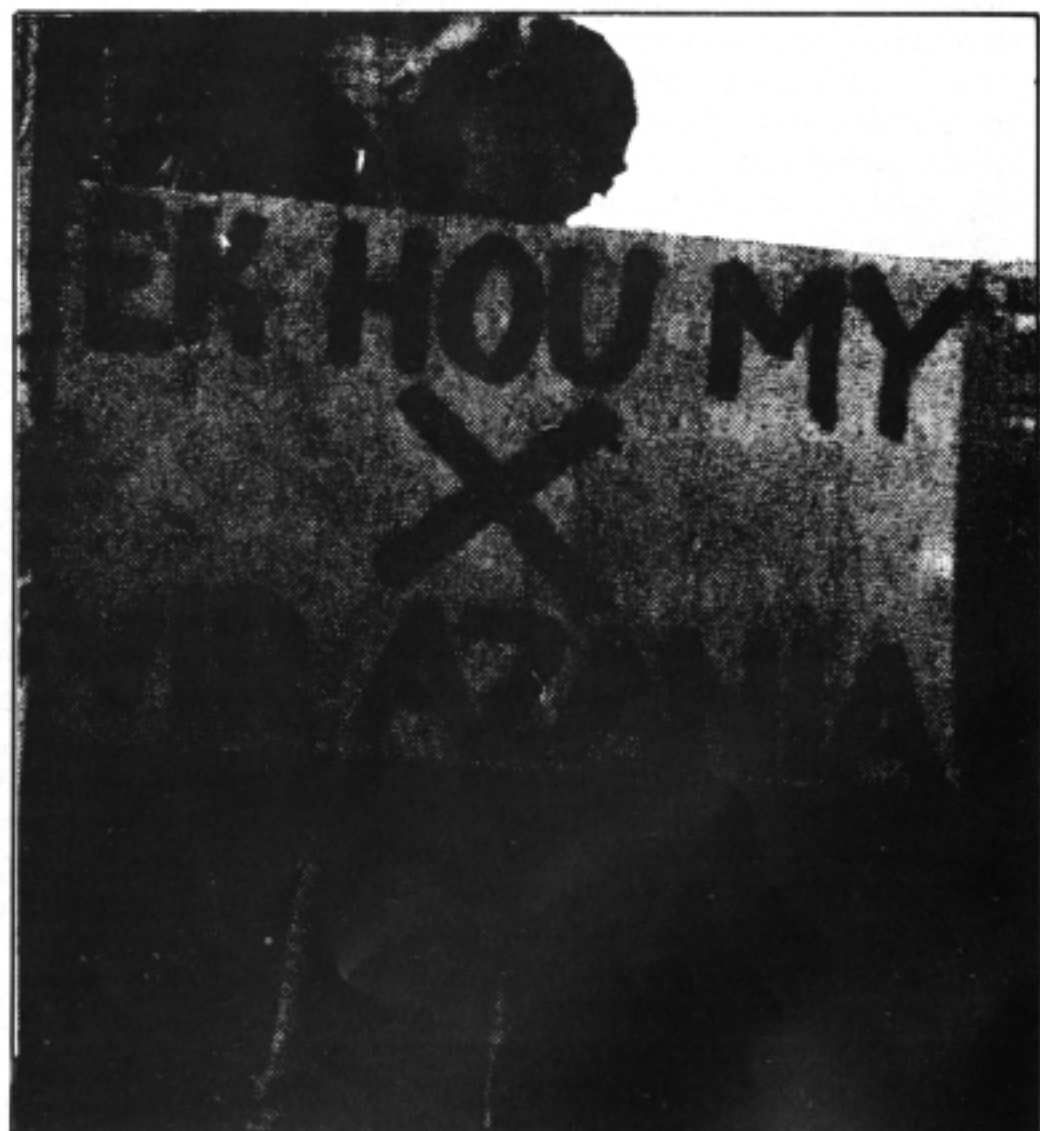
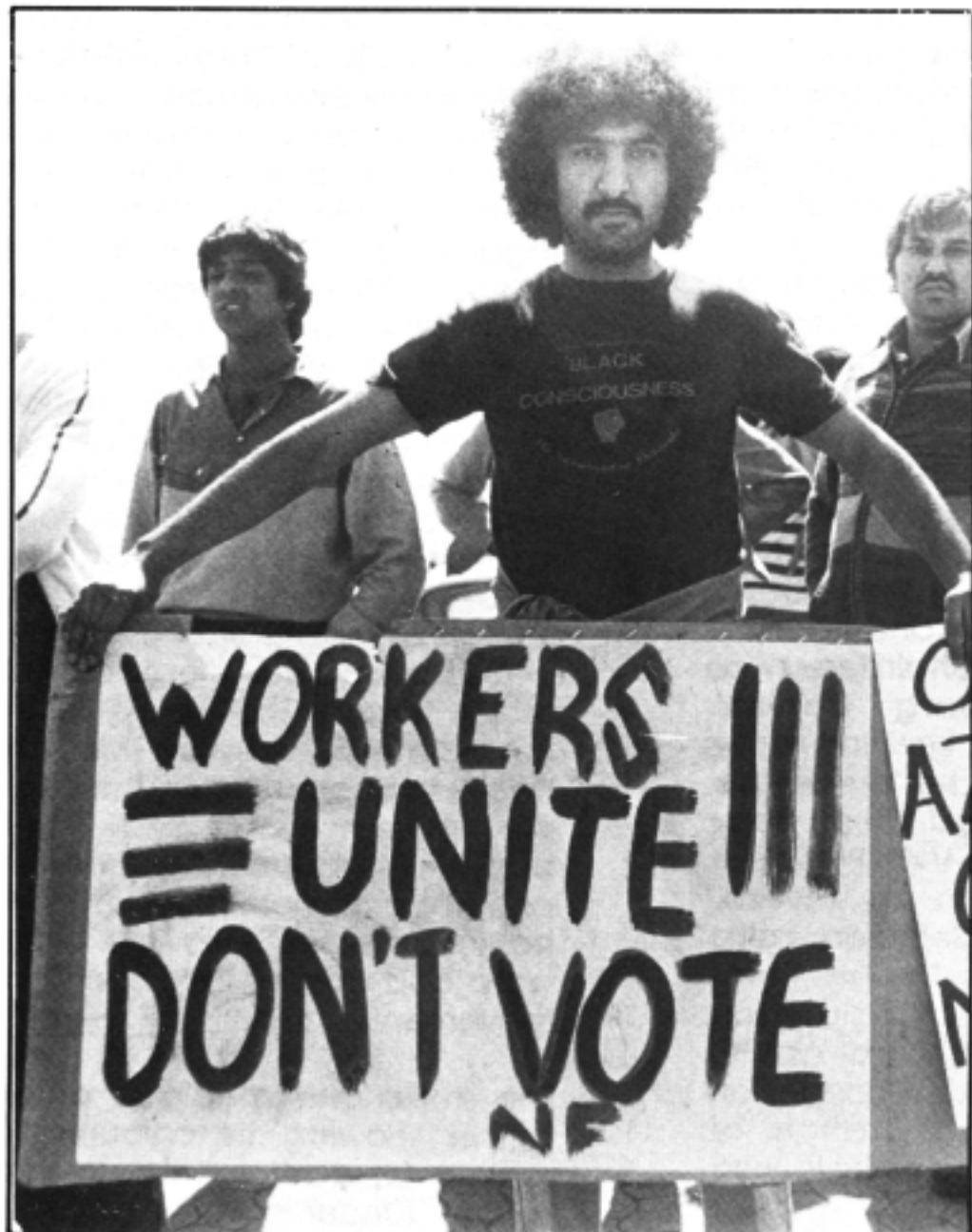
 **ONE PEOPLE
ONE AZANIA**



Pre-election clash — Cape Town, 1984.



Lenasia, 28 August.



Protesters in Riverlea on the 22 August (above) and in Lenasia on the 28 August (left) showed where they stood — in both official languages.