

er — Thabo Ndabeni; Pro-  
Co-Ordinator — Zithulele Cindi  
he Constitution was amended to  
vide for Regional Executive Com-  
ees and the Branch Executive  
nmittees will all have to include a  
ects Director in future.

he National Congress is the  
me and highest governing and  
-making body of the organisa-  
efore, delegates must leave  
s with a sense of mission, a  
work and a clear set of direc-  
s for the year. Congress must  
vide cadreship with definite pro-  
mmes of action: revolutionary  
ggle is based on linking theory  
practice.

Congress 1984 can be described  
an unqualified success **only** from  
ublic relations point of view.

The same can hardly be said about  
sense of purpose and hard-  
ided evaluation of AZAPO's

policies and progress these features  
were sadly lacking.

The long speeches, nine on the  
first day alone, acted as a soporific  
and prevented maximum response.  
Commissions were often searching  
for terms of reference — surely the  
reams of rhetoric in the papers  
should provide the requisite  
guidelines.

AZAPO should seriously consider  
the following suggestions for all  
future congresses:

1. The number of papers should be  
at a **necessary minimum**.
2. Two points of view should be  
presented on contentious issues,  
e.g. Speaker A can justify  
AZAPO's stand on Cultural Isola-  
tion while Speaker B can attack  
it.
3. All formations of the Organisation  
should be given advance notice  
of the topics to be discussed at

Congress.

4. Speakers should refrain from  
repeatedly "justifying" BC —  
AZAPO must move beyond  
fighting rear-guard battles.
5. Commissions should be assigned  
topics directly related to the  
papers presented.
6. Symposia must be arranged at all  
levels of the Organisation, par-  
ticularly on the following topics:  
(A) The Nature of the Soviet  
Union,  
(B) The National Question in  
Azania and the Role of the  
Peasantry,  
(C) Scientific Socialism,  
(D) The Isolation Campaign,  
(E) Economic Self-Sufficiency,  
(F) Black Theology,  
(G) The Trade Union Movement  
in South Africa, and  
(H) The Specific and Multiple  
Oppression of Black Women.

## AZAPO ON THE MARCH

A terrified ruling class dropped the  
netlet on Black Consciousness  
(BC) organizations on 19 October  
1977. The aim of the bannings was  
re-create the post-Sharpeville era  
when blacks stood in awesome fear  
of their white "masters"; in a word,  
the aim was to destroy the ideology  
of Black Consciousness.

What the ruling class reckoned  
it lost was the vitality of BC and  
that it had grown from the daily ex-  
periences of the oppressed people.  
It cannot be killed for it  
characterizes the resistance of the  
oppressed, the plundered, the  
disadvantaged and the colonized  
against an arrogant white world, one  
in which the white man has tried to  
impose his value systems.

As an ideology BC was first ar-  
ticulated by a group of students  
responding to problems that affected  
them as students. Steve Biko,  
Mpetla Mohapi, Onkgopotse Tiro  
and their counterparts in the South  
African Students Organization  
(SASO) did not proceed from any  
preconceived theoretical frame. In-  
stead, the most remarkable fact about  
it is that it is a developing world  
view: as Amilcar Cabral says- "I can-  
not ... pretend to organize a Party, or  
struggle on the basis of my own  
ideas. I have to do this starting from  
the reality of the country." BC does  
not seek to construct conceptions of  
man and his relation to the world  
step-by-logical-step but rather seeks  
to embody the fears, the frustrations,  
loves and hates, the needs,

desires and the aspirations of the op-  
pressed and the exploited in a  
coherent and a revolutionary  
ideology.

When the BC Movement first  
emerged, the very mention of the  
word "politics" was enough to kill a  
conversation: black people were in  
the grip of a paralysis and they readi-  
ly allowed white liberals to misrep-  
resent the cause of the oppressed, a  
cause liberals can never properly ap-  
preciate because they do not feel and  
suffer as the oppressed.

BC protagonists in the 70's pro-  
ceeded from the reality of the coun-  
try and proclaimed that the first re-  
quirement was for black people to  
shed the psychological shackles of  
slavery, to reject the dwarfing of their  
consciousness and to stand up and  
define themselves as people who  
have every right to live, work and  
love in the land of their birth.

The early protagonists also suc-  
ceeded where every other liberation  
movement had failed — they  
brought **all** black people into single  
organisations.

The lethargy that had gripped the  
60's was shaken off, resulting in  
renewed black trade union activity in  
December 1973, in recurrent student  
action at high schools and univer-  
sities which climaxed in the Soweto  
uprising of June 1976 and in a  
plethora of BC organisations such as  
the South African Students' Move-  
ment (SASM), the National Youth  
Organisation (NAYO), the Union of  
Black Journalists (UBJ).

As a result of the 1977 bannings,  
there arose a vacuum in political ac-  
tivity. But the spirit of pride and de-  
fiance was carefully nurtured and this  
prevented the paralysis of the move-  
ment.

The BC groups which survived the  
bannings such as the Black Priests  
Solidarity Group and the Teachers  
Action Committee formed the  
Soweto Action Committee, chaired  
by Ishmael Mkhabela. A sub-  
committee of the Action Committee  
convened by Lybon Mabasa was to  
investigate "national possibilities".  
This sub-committee called a conven-  
tion at St. Ansgar's near Welgespruit  
in Roodepoort on 28 — 31 April  
1978: Lybon Mabasa delivered the  
theme paper "Blackman, Whither  
Goest Thou?". Father Buti Tlhagale  
gave a hint of the new thrust of the  
BC Movement in his paper "A Fur-  
ther Determination of Black Con-  
sciousness". Mabasa's voice rings  
with the proud BC spirit:

*"Our peacefulness does not  
presuppose timidity. No timid  
people can become a nation. To  
augment our peacefulness we also  
need a militant spirit, a strong will  
and a desire to survive in a violent  
and carnivorous world."*

and Tlhagale hammers home the  
point that the Black worker is the  
most oppressed and exploited seg-  
ment of South African society and  
must become the vanguard of the  
liberation movement.

The St. Angsar's Convention decided that an Interim Committee under the chairmanship of Mkhabela called the "AZAPO Interim Committee" be charged with the formation of an overt political organisation which will provide a rallying point for the Black masses. Mkhabela and Mabasa were banned after the Convention and the Interim Committee was relentlessly harassed. The Interim Committee succeeded in inaugurating the AZANIAN PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION (Azapo) in September 1979.

The theme of the Inaugural Conference was "A Further Determination of Black Consciousness and an emphasis on the workers' situation": from the necessary emphasis on BC being an "attitude of mind" in the 70's, AZAPO set about translating this attitude of mind into an empirical consciousness to challenge the system as a whole. It must be emphasised that the exploration of questions relating to the class struggle was a logical development of the BC ideology: after all, South Africa has to a greater extent been built on Black labour.

AZAPO held its first Congress at Houtbospoort in Pietersburg in January 1981 where Khangale Makhado, in a paper entitled "Black Consciousness as a Driving Force" examined the definition of and the interconnection between the "eight

classes of society" and concluded:-

*"Having seen the situation for what it objectively is, BC offers itself as the only viable and appropriate vehicle that black people can ride to final victory and freedom."*

In order to clarify concepts relating to the "class/race debate", a symposium was held at Hammanskraal in April 1981 where Quraish Patel argued with disarming simplicity:

*"The consciousness of the power of black workers is gradually taking root. Is this consciousness of the power of black workers anything other than black consciousness operating in the sphere of labour? This is merely a labour-directed view of black consciousness."*

AZAPO has thus succeeded in working out the dialectic between race and class: it argues that in South Africa, race is a class determinant and that the white labour aristocrat is an integral part of the ruling class. Furthermore, AZAPO argues that a cardinal issue is the repossession of Azania by the black people. AZAPO sees black nationalism as the driving force of the Azanian struggle. On the level of political theory, AZAPO's coalition of the National Question (i.e. the solution of national contradictions) and the Social Question (i.e. the resolution of questions relating to the class struggle) has

been thorough and cogent indeed.

AZAPO's task is to mobilise and consolidate the black masses around the revolutionary ideology of BC.

To do this, AZAPO has embarked on numerous strategies and can chalk up a number of successes: the bus and rent boycotts in the Northern Transvaal in 1981, the scuttling of the SAB International Soccer Tour in 1982 and the launching of the National Forum Committee (NFC) in 1983, to name but a few.

As a result of the strides made by the people's movement, there have emerged counter-strategies by the system with its ancillaries, the semi-system and the sub-system. Saths Cooper identifies the following as characteristic of this counter-strategy:

- a. "Improving the quality of life" in the ghettos,
- b. The promotion of "community-based" organisations with reformist civic and civil demands,
- c. The promotion of non-white leadership,
- d. Re-defining the concept blackness in racist, reactionary terms, and
- e. The revival of multi-racialism and liberalism and the active encouragement of ethnicity.

With these various forces making insidious inroads into black life, the challenges facing AZAPO are formidable.

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**CHATTING:** From left to right: Saths Cooper, Ishmael Mkhabela, Zithulele Cindi, Lybon Mabasa, Ramakgopa, Muntu Myeza, Letsatsi Mosala, Pandhelani Nefolovodhwe, Kehla Mthembu, Kenny Rachidi.