

## **Azania Rising II: The demise of the 1652 class project; advancing alternatives to the crisis of the capitalist class society in Africa.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper seeks to site Africa in general and what remains Occupied Azania (here on referred to as Republic of South Africa-RSA) in particular as cases in point of examining whether the Marxist construct of class remains relevant in the struggle for total liberation from the fetters of Colonial Capitalist Mode of Production which continues to nurture the white supremacist ideology and gross socio-economic disparities among Africans across the continent. (Hall, S (1977): Marx's Theory of Class., pg 17)

Class, class relations and class struggle are central concepts in all of Marx's work. 'men' are always pre-constituted by the antagonistic class relations in which they are cast. Historically they are always articulated, not in their profound and unique individuality, but by the 'ensemble of social relations' - that is as the supports for class relations. (Marx, K: Grundrisse 1968, pg 265)

Capitalism produces and reproduces itself as an antagonistic structure of class relations; it divides the population again and again into antagonistic classes. It is the material and social relations within which men produce and reproduce their material conditions of existence. Marxist analysis maintains that social classes are NOT the basis but the result of prior distribution of the agents of capitalist production into classes and class relations, and the prior distribution of the means of production such as between the 'possessors' and the 'dispossessed'.

The historical incorporation of Africa and its non-capitalist systems into an evolving capitalist mode of production has resulted in even more complex set of class relations. The predominate mode of production in most of Africa remains the Colonial Capitalist Mode of Production; no class analysis of Africa is complete without considering this basic fact. In all regions on the continent, social class formations survive only as long as they complement colonial relations of production.

*It is this common black experience which makes ideas flow across amongst the oppressed; this common ghetto experience that blacks continue to be subjected to.*  
- Biko. S.

## **Introduction and brief background**

The term Azania is derived from the original Hebrew name for the southern portion of the ancient Aethiopia (Africa) empire which preceded and founded civilizations of Kemet /Kermit (Egypt) and Nubia. The term translated to mean the land of those whose cries the Most High hears.

I am keenly aware that would be more correct to refer to Africa's non-industrial systems: because this would take into account that there was mining and metallurgy on a commercial basis in many African countries in the sixteenth century. There was also substantial trade across the Indian Ocean. When the Europeans arrived in India to try and take over this trade, they were initially unsuccessful in the face of the already complicated and successful commercial patterns linking east and south eastern Africa with the gulf and India. It was only later that the European were able to destroy or subvert Aethiopia-India's trading and proto-type industrial system and take over – largely by force – the Indian Ocean trade.

Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital has established itself; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance, in which the division of the world among the international trusts has began, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.<sup>1</sup>

A discussion of class formation would be incomplete without considering the ways in which European and American finance capital has reorganized African labour power to serve imperialist enterprises, and the development of secondary forms of capitalist enterprises, controlled in some parts of Africa by Asian and Eurasian minorities and sometimes by indigenous petty bourgeoisies (after independence serving as both an agent of imperialist capital) also as competitors with Imperial capital.<sup>2</sup>

The over determining role of the state in a capitalist social formation is to act as the factor of cohesion in a social construct based on class domination and class contradiction through politically organizing the dominant classes and politically disorganizing the dominated classes. The political disorganization of the dominated class was related to the defense of political interests of the dominant classes against the struggle by Africans; the principal oppressed class in Africa.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lenin, V: 1968, Collected works, pg 233

<sup>2</sup> Marx: 1968, The Communist Manifesto, in selected works pg 39

<sup>3</sup> Paulantzas, N Political power and social classes: 1977

The colonial oppression and exploitation under capitalism impoverished most strata of African society without creating social divisions typical of the mature capitalist economies. In summary capitalism in Africa was characterized by; the export of mature capital b) the creation of overseas markets c) forced proletarianisation of Africans and cooption of a thin layer of dependent petty bourgeoisies. Africa today, there exists predominant capitalist mode of production which modifies and subordinates to itself the elements of pre-colonial relations of production.<sup>4</sup>

This manifests itself through a violent negation of the historical process of the dominated people by means of usurping the free operation of the process of development of the productive forces. In any given society, the level of development of productive forces and the system for social utilization of these forces determine the mode of production.<sup>5</sup>

In this tone, colonialism is therefore defined as: a system of rule which assumes the right of one people to impose their will upon another.<sup>6</sup>

The violent rapture and penetration of non-capitalist societies and the subjugation of their economic life to the profit impulse of the Western bourgeoisies constitute the fundamental class reality of 'modern Africa'. As a result, much of African land and other natural resources are being exploited not for the benefit of the African majority; but for capitalist classes of Europe and USA.

Class analysis in Africa must critically address the mode of generation of surplus from the African workers and the transfer to the Western metropolis and among the various recipients in the global economic hierarchy. Classes are a personification of the economic categories of a given system of production.

Waterman comes to a conclusion that generally, Africa can be characterized by a political structure in which the ruling stratum was foreign and the original inhabitants appeared in a descending order of subservience and dependence. (7.) The 'Third World' meant that the commanding heights of the new economy and administration were occupied by expatriate groups who had resources from the metropolitan bases which were far in excess of anything which indigenous groups could hope to acquire.<sup>8</sup>

### **Capital development in Azania (Republic of South Africa)**

I have discussed at length in another article entitled *Azania shall return: Re-founding the struggle for complete emancipation from Capitalist Globalisation (2007)*<sup>9</sup> the early capital accumulation process in South Africa, using the sugar industry of Natal and

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<sup>4</sup> Magubani B. M: *African Sociology- towards a critical perspective; collected essays 2000.*

<sup>5</sup> Cabral, A; *Return to the source*, 1973, pg.41-42

<sup>6</sup> Brett, 1973: Vii

<sup>7</sup> Waterman, P: *Stratification in Colonial and post Colonial Africa 1969*

<sup>8</sup> Murray, R. W.; and Wengraf. 1963; *The Algerian Revolution*, *New left review*

<sup>9</sup> Ndlovu, Mafereka Molefi; *Azania shall return: Re-founding the struggle for complete emancipation from Capitalist Globalisation (2007)*<sup>9</sup>

applying the analysis advanced by Rosa Luxemburg please refer to this for a detailed discussion. In this paper I will focus on that transition from competitive primitive accumulation to the transition to monopoly capital to emphasize that:

The priorities of colonial era development were the creation of labour supply for the mines and stolen white farms and for construction of the railways, ports, roads etc to ease the movement of extracted commodities. This was largely achieved by a regimental system of migrant labour applied to the indigenous populations using a myriad of techniques such as the wage to control and ensure the African does not go beyond the level of subservience.<sup>10</sup>

The incorporation of distinct societies under capitalism has proceeded by means of conquest, domination and enslavement of indigenes; this is followed by the socio economic restructuring of the dominated societies in order to install new forms of production exploit the former productive activities. The purpose is to bind the incorporated society into the expansionist world economy as part of its productive system. This is necessarily followed by the forceful diffusion of the colonizer culture and value systems.

Capital accumulation in the South African Gold industry was dependent on the ability of mining capitalists to obtain large amounts of advance capital necessary to 'set-up' a mine ready for production secondly; the costs of production would have to be low in order to make the mining of gold profitable. Davies argues that these factors may had played their role in the relatively early transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism as early as 1885.

Building from Poulantzas (1977)<sup>11</sup> the phase of transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism is a phase of capitalist development wherein there is a qualitative change in the relations of production. First, capitalist centres exercise the powers of *economic ownership* (the power to assign the means of production, resources and profits to this or that end) are rapidly concentrated into smaller units. Secondly; it is a phase where capital affects greater *powers of possession* (ability to determine direction and organization of actual labour processes) in order to gain access to large scale socialized production.

Put differently; the transition to monopoly capital involves a change in economic ownership patterns, a reorganization of actual labour processes as well as the enlargement of the size of actual productive units. (pg299)

This process of transition is approximated to have started around 1896 and was completed by 1910. Out of 576 gold mining companies 1887-1932 only 57 remained in existence by 1932; of these only six 6 finance houses had controlled all. Regarding the social formations; monopoly capitalism required the incorporation of agents of production into three distinct types of places in the division of labour. First the incorporating agents as direct producers. Secondly, it had required the incorporation of

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<sup>10</sup> Davidson, B: "The outlook for Africa." In the Socialist Register, 1966

<sup>11</sup> Paulantzas, N The new petty bourgeoisie: 1977

skilled craftsmen to perform various productive tasks. Thirdly, the transition required agents to be incorporated into performing the dual task of coordination and supervision of the labour process and to play surveillance and control function over direct producers. (pg299)

The machine begins to dictate the organization of the labour process; it brings further contradictory developments with it: the greater ease of substituting one labour force for another; the introduction of continuous production and the shift system and the erosion of traditional skills. The proletariat itself was also acted upon, redefined, recomposed, remolded in the operation of capital's contradictory laws. Capital produces both the massification and simplification of labour yet also internal divisions between skilled and unskilled etc. this has sometimes been called the contradictory double thrust of capitalist development.

### **Modernity and the discourse of working class subjectivity.**

This paper draws from the work of Marx found in the *Grundrisse*, collection of notebooks believed to be the preparatory study for *Capital*, which have helped to illuminate Marx's critique of capitalist modernity. This text gives a clear sense of Marx's views on historical/social analysis of forms of thought, consciousness, and subjectivity – that is, for a critical social theory capable of superseding philosophical thought by convincingly mediating it and its historical context. He does so by developing a conception of historically specific social forms.<sup>12</sup>

As we have noted; the historical incorporation of Africa and its non-capitalist systems into an evolving capitalist mode of production has resulted in even more complex set of class relations. The predominate mode of production in most of Africa remains the Colonial Capitalist Mode of Production; it is a productive mode which in form and content articulates and combines various exo-capitalist modes of existence which are all subsumed by the colonial expansion of capitalist relations.<sup>13</sup>

Most studies of class and class structure focus on local area and appear to avoid the issue of the nature of the world system and the structural relations fashioned by this system.<sup>14</sup>

Modernity as a definition and development of a totalizing thought that assumes human and collective creativity in order to insert them into the instrumental rationality of the capitalist mode of production of the world.

Modernity is the negation of any possibility that the multitude may express itself as subjectivity; this leaves no space for constituent power. However; constituent power and the collective subjectivity that gives it shape are first of all social reality that cannot be

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<sup>12</sup> Postone, M; *Critical theory, philosophy and history*, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Negri; A: *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the modern State*; 1999

<sup>14</sup> Magubani B. M: *African Sociology- towards a critical perspective; collected essays 2000*

negated (the fact of Blackness in Biko's analysis). The neutralization of the multitude in the political demands its separation in the social. The isolation of social strength from political power. The invisible hand denies constituent power.<sup>15</sup>

The tribe of today no longer sets the limits- politically, economically or geographically. It has been incorporated involuntarily into states and empires with which it occupies a subordinate position, its resources in land and labour have been subsumed into the money economy of the Western Liberal state and capitalist world economy.<sup>16</sup>

Modernity is a linear logic that corrals the multitude of subjects in a unity and controls its difference through the dialectic. Modern rationality is a calculation of the individual and transcendental realm that nullifies its singular essence. It is the repetition of the individualization of what is common and colonization of its sphere, claiming to make it transcendental; creating the effect of deterritorialization of subjects, neutralization of their creativity therefore through a series of operations; 'normalization of movement'.<sup>17</sup>

Harold Wolpe's concept of *articulation of modes of production*<sup>18</sup>; advanced analysis on the articulation between capitalist and non-capitalist (African) modes of production. He argued that the distortion and manipulation of indigenous non capitalist modes and then conserving them allowed the capitalists to avoid the cost of generational reproduction of the African working class.

According to Wolpe; racial ideology and political practices in which it was reflected, sustained and reproduced capitalist relations in production, although in complex, reciprocal relations in changing social and economic conditions.<sup>19</sup> The new rationality constructed itself as a genealogy that replaces the one to which the (social) contract had mythically referred, in the interweaving of passions and institutions, interests and entrepreneurial capacities. The fear of the multitude is secured by recourse to violence; violence is born as a synthesis of anguish and the absence of practicable alternatives<sup>20</sup>.

Marx pointed out: the appearance of exhaustion is the effect of the mystification that the practices of constitutionalism stage in order to block the investment of the social and political in being. Constituent power is the social and political subjectivity of this radical constitution of the world of life. Is rationality of modernity adequate to subjectivity that poses itself beyond and against modernity?

Hall attempts to summarize key moments in the historical creation of the working class subjectivity;

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid 13

<sup>16</sup> Ibid 14

<sup>17</sup> Ibid 13 (pg 328, 9)

<sup>18</sup> Wolpe, H; *The articulation of modes of production, essays from economy and society* (1980)

<sup>19</sup> Hart, G; *Changing concepts of articulation: political stakes in South Africa today*, in ROAPE, 2007. pg 87

<sup>20</sup> Negri; A; *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the modern State*; 1999 Pg.326, 7

- a) Mass expropriation of population from ownership of the means of production (land), left only with their labour power to sell in an ‘open market’
- b) Introduction of machines in production process leads to greater division of labour and de-skilling of workforce
- c) Greater exploitation of labour power
- d) Labour organized into industrial army commanded by bosses of capital
- e) Flexible labour conditions, lower wages and dilution of work
- f) More ‘black market’ operations that are exploited by shopkeepers, landlords and pawn brokers over the working class
- g) The thesis that the lower layers of the middle class sink gradually into the proletariat
- h) Predominance of ‘BIG’ Capital. (Hall, S: Marx’s Theory of Class. In Class and Class Structure, pg 28)

### **Imperialism and the reinforcement of white supremacist culture.**

The biggest weapon wielded by Imperialism is what Ngugi calls the ‘cultural bomb’. This annihilates the people’s belief in their names, languages, environments, their unity, their collective heritage of struggle ultimately in themselves. It makes the people identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all those forces which would stop their own springs of life. The intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death-wish.<sup>21</sup>

Over the years many critical thinkers have pointed out that it is not only capitalism that is involved; it is also the whole gamut of white value systems which have been adopted as a standard by South Africa, both whites and blacks<sup>22</sup>. Biko succinctly points out that when ‘one makes calculations or assumptions about white society, one must make the observation that it is deaf to black opinion, very deaf, deliberately. A country like this one..., changes in the common order of society, to make the general order of society truly black, and reflective of the fact that this is in Africa.

In all capitalist social formations, the dominant classes in South Africa came together in contradictory fashion (what Paulontza calls power bloc) under the hegemony of one particular fraction which had been able in the class struggle to assert the primacy of its own particular interests.<sup>23</sup> Davis contends that; the proleterianisation of Africans in South Africa came about through deliberate interventions of the dominant classes and was accompanied by an intense and protracted struggle on the part of the dominant classes to ensure that it took forms most beneficial to the needs of capital accumulation<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Ngugi wa Thiongo; Decolonising the mind, the politics of language in African literature. (1986) pg: 3

<sup>22</sup> Biko, S (interview) in Mngxitama, A et al: Biko Lives, Contesting the legacies of Steve Biko, 2008, 34.

<sup>23</sup> Davis, R: South African labour .The 1922 Strike and the political economy of South Africa.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid pg 301

### **Case 1:**

#### *The 1922 strike and political economy of South Africa.*

10 March 1922; Jan Smuts sends an army of 7000 troops supported by bomber planes and armored vehicles to put down armed uprising of white workers in the gold industry. 153 people died, over 500 wounded and about 5000 arrested. 16 March 1922 mines were re-opened on terms dictated by capital. The strike was overwhelmingly defeated but was a turning point in class relations in the South African social formation and had a profound influence on the trajectory of capitalist development in the South African social formation.<sup>25</sup>

#### **The demise of racial capitalism in Azania.**

*'Marxist theory is dangerous because it seeks to provide the key to understanding capitalist production from the point of view of those not in control of the means of production'*<sup>26</sup>.

Due to confinements of space; I will not enter into the details of the transition from a Colonial Capitalist Mode of Production governed by Apartheid State and the negotiated transference of power to the black government led by the African National Congress (ANC). For this I will ask you to consider my view in: *Azania shall return: Re-founding the struggle for complete emancipation from Capitalist Globalisation* (2007)<sup>27</sup>

A number of 'progressive' white and black intellectuals of the current dispensation adopt an exclusively class analysis in trying to decipher the South African context, openly castigating any analysis that foregrounds an analysis of the racist nature of capitalist society; often this is done in case this analysis has a rebound effect because they are white. The concept of non-racialism has been used as a creed to justify silencing dissent through positive affirmation by the African majority. These scholars refuse to accept that to some extent one must give up a part of themselves in order to be a true Marxist. But white society is agreed on the Liberal-leftist axis: blacks are being denied here and blacks have to come up, they have to be lifted. Many of them don't realize that this entails them coming down<sup>28</sup>.

Contemporary RSA the race-class debate has well presented by the South African Communist Party in *Bua Komanisi* in May 2006 where they say 'the narrow self-interest of an emerging black capitalist stratum with close connections to established capital and to our [*national liberation*] movement, that acts 'not in order to advance the NDR [National Democratic Revolution], but for personal self-accumulation purposes'. Hart points out quoting Neville Alexandra: the liberal-pluralist paradigm was theoretically

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<sup>25</sup> Davis, R: South African labour .The 1922 Strike and the political economy of South Africa

<sup>26</sup> Harvey, D; Social justice and the city, 1973

<sup>27</sup> Ndlovu, Mafereka Molefi; *Azania shall return: Re-founding the struggle for complete emancipation from Capitalist Globalisation* (2007)<sup>27</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Biko, S (interview) in Mngxitama, A et al: Biko Lives, Contesting the legacies of Steve Biko, 2008, 34.

defended by leading SACP intelligentsia in a theoretical discourse of a ‘colonialism of a special type’.<sup>29</sup>

Current developments in the governing alliance only point to the extent of the contestations within this ‘broad church’. After the pre-electoral ‘split’ of seemingly conservative elements associated with the Mbeki era. It remains to be seen whether the so-called left forces within the alliance will also consider radical revisions in its theoretical paradigms. Especially its insistence that there remains no alternatives to the liberal democratic/ Imperial modernity nexus currently dominating academic and political modes of thought; or as some elements seem to suggest; much more effort will be applied to considering seriously cases of alternatives that are emerging in other regions of the global South.

So far as these remain firmly in the hands of monopoly capital; there cannot be talk of ‘normal’ class relations. Whilst we accept that the BEE project produced a couple of hundred (*tha-machansi*) black millionaires; the numbers and comparative significance in the social formations of Azania remains limited largely because they are a class whose sole existence depends on their attachment as and appendage to established colonial capitalist relations.

Whereas in 1922 the then white working class reacted with strike action against the mining giants and brute violence and hatred towards their rapid successors; the black working class; there were defeated and this laid the basis for new constitution of racialised class relations. Today, what is becoming glaringly clear is that the masses on the ground and their ghettos of post-modernity; are awaking; that this rekindling of consciousness of oppression does not necessarily always lead to ‘progressive’ social action.

I argue that as in the ‘crisis’ of 1922 capital has hit a wall in its haste to return to its true basis in the north<sup>30</sup> through a re-configuration effort popularly referred to as globalization. This attempted to reconfigure the relations of production on a continental scale; by using South Africa as a base. The recent incidents of Afro-phobia clearly attest to this. In the labour camps such as Alexandra in Johannesburg, the effects of a transition from colonial capitalist mode of production administered by heirs of initial scramble for Azania; Apartheid regime; included a massive substitution of South African ‘workers’ with those from other regions in the continent has put the African working class component in a similar (reactionary) position as the white working class of the 1922 strikes.

As Martin Carter (Guyanese poet) put it: ordinary people hungering and living rooms without lights, all these men and women from South Africa, Namibia, Kenya, Zaire (DRC), Ivory Coast, El Salvador, Chile, Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, Grenada,

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<sup>29</sup> Hart, G: *Changing concepts of articulation: political stakes in South Africa today*, in ROAPE, 2007. pg 87

<sup>30</sup> Bond, Patrick (2008) *The looting of Africa.. Globalization and the Washington Consensus: its influence on democracy and development in the south.*

Fanon's Wretched of the earth, who have declared loud and clear that they do not sleep to dream, "but dream to change the world"

What awaits it seems; is a history of liberation, dis-utopia in action, relentless and as painful as it is constructive. Hence the concept of class addresses itself to the concern around the distribution of resources in society and the power relations which are implied in the distribution. Social classes describe a relation between producers and those in control of the means of production. Any progressive discourse that overlooks this lends itself to the problem of mysticism and speaking of African contentment through the centuries old colonial trick of paternalistic philanthropy.

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