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UNITY OR DEATH

South Africa (our Azania) has witnessed a complex and confusing political matrix after the 1994 General Elections, which cemented the sellout political process. Those Elections gave birth to a politically deformed and ideologically malnourished child called the Government of National Unity (GNU). Instead of being arrested and forced to account for apartheid and genocide against Black people, the leader of the racist Nationalist Party FW de Klerk was cleansed and anointed to be the Second Deputy President to Nelson Mandela.

Without fail, AZAPO has always characterised the post-1994 democratic dispensation as a neocolonial era where the white ruling class retained the economic power, and handed over political office to the political elites associated with the liberation struggle. In that way, the white ruling class managed to use the Black managerial class (comprador bourgeoisie) as a buffer between the white ruling class and the people. That is in similar fashion the apartheid companies used to recruit a popular trade unionist and made him a “personnel manager” to deal with the anger and frustrations of his former Comrades. His role was to counsel the Black workers about how irrational and unrealisable their demands were. This neocolonial era is the one that comes across as enemy-less because of the invisibility of the colonialists and racists in the white ruling class.

There was already a need for the revolutionary forces to unite during the liberation struggle with the racist Nationalist Party as the visible and active enemy of the Azanian people. Through the exiled Black Consciousness Movement of Azania (BCMA), AZAPO made energetic efforts to meet the PAC in Tanzania in 1982 with the objective of forming a United Front. Those efforts drew a blank. AZAPO tried again in 1991 and got itself, its sister organisation BCMA and the PAC to meet in Kadoma in Zimbabwe in 1991. Unfortunately, the spirit of the Kadoma Consultation was not adhered to by all the parties as was agreed. Around the same time, AZAPO forced itself into the Steering Committee of the so-called Patriotic Front, which initially had only the ANC and the PAC. That one was doomed to fail because it was conceived to shepherd the Liberation Movement into the sellout concentration camp. Therefore, AZAPO made sure that it would be stillborn.

Those failed attempts were pre-1994. This side of 1994, AZAPO made spirited attempts to forge some working relationship with the PAC around 2002. Nothing much happened by way of implementing a programme to grow and cement the relationship. In February 2022, AZAPO tried again and talked the PAC into this necessary working relationship. We did this because our political analysis has convinced us that no political force of the Liberation Movement would be able to keep the flames of the revolution burning, to remind the people that the liberation project has been derailed, by suggestions that democracy and universal franchise are what we were struggling for. Land repossession, liberation and socialism have been systematically erased from the struggle agenda and vocabulary. Those terms have been so stigmatised that you are made to appear foolish by merely mentioning them.

The financialisation of electoral politics is such that there is a real possibility that liberation organisations like the PAC and AZAPO might die a natural death if they didn't adopt tactics to adapt in this democratic dispensation, which unfolds within the context of neocolonialism. Nostalgic revolutionary rhetoric will make these important liberation organisations appear like a square peg in a round hole. The peg need not shed its reality of being a peg. It just needs to be chiseled in order to have its whole rounded a bit to be relevant in this "hole" politics of today. Of course, the principal objective of the liberation struggle is Land Repossession. But Land Repossession may not make immediate sense to the people of Hammanskraal dying of water poisoned with cholera. Socialism may not make immediate sense to the Black students who are denied access to the Institutions of Higher Learning. Our message needs to be repackaged and re-articulated to resonate with the immediate conditions of existence of the people. The choice is simple for AZAPO. Adapt or die. As true revolutionaries, we choose to adapt.

We are convinced that it is not in the nature of the people to be charmed by opera solos. The choral approach is the way to go. The Azanian Liberation Front is a progressive attempt to eliminate the monotonic solo in favour of the choral harmony and rhythm. The AZAPO-PAC Cooperation must be viewed in that light. It is in the same light that AZAPO attended the EFF 10th anniversary celebrations and pledged its support. We are acting in line with our political convictions and Political Programme. There is no turning back. Biko, the Founding Father of our Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), died on the mission to unite Black people and their political organisations. We shall not betray that spiritual mission. You either embark or disembark to be devoured by the political sharks.

History has lessons for us. Many people don't pay attention to the fact that FRELIMO was a United Front. It was founded in exile in Dar es Salaam in 1962 with three nationalist organisations merging into one movement. They were the Mozambican African National Union (MANU), National Democratic Union of Mozambique (UDENAMO) and the National African Union of Independent Mozambique (UNAMI). In fact, FRELIMO stands for the "Liberation Front of Mozambique". Of course, they later transformed into the Partido FRELIMO (FRELIMO Party) during the era of political independence and governance.

Take Zimbabwe. Even though there appeared to be challenges of a political and ethnic nature, the political circumstances forced the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) into a troubled United Front in 1976. For reasons that we will not entertain for now, that United Front never gained traction. But the 1983 Gukurahundi killings seem to suggest there may have been a tragic need for a genuine United Front. A fresh attempt for a United Front, starting with the 1976 Unity Accord, had to be attempted but to no avail. Hegemonic politics made it difficult for a genuine

United Front to take root. It remains to be seen if the monotonic solo worked in Zimbabwe. There must be a lesson there for our Azania.

Not even Namibia could avoid the pressing need for the sweet melodies of the choral approach. Similar to the Zimbabwean setup with ZANU enjoying a strong base of ShiShona-speaking people, while ZAPU had a base of isiNdebele-speaking people, the 1959-founded South West African National Union (SWANU) enjoyed a strong presence of the Herero people. The South West African Progressive Association (SWAPA) came together in a United Front with the Ovambo People's Congress to form SWANU. SWAPA's objective was to expand its supporters base into the Ovambo people. Now called the Ovambo People's Organisation (OPO), this organisation withdrew from SWANU in 1960 and rebranded itself as the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO). I remember that SWANU remained as such and attended the 1985 Durban Congress of AZAPO under that name. Even here, it remains to be seen if the solo monotony of politics will hold on for how long.

With all these history lessons, AZAPO is determined to realise and finish Biko's mission of Black Solidarity. That's what the people of Azania want, and that's what AZAPO will do. AZAPO is not an organisation exclusively for its members. As the name "Azanian People's Organisation" suggests, AZAPO is the movement of the people. AZAPO will not walk alone. It will march in one step with the like-minded Left Forces in an Azanian Liberation Front to make the dream of Land Repossession, Liberation and Socialism a reality. AZAPO had Biko in mind when it successfully helped form a United Front in the shape of the National Forum (NF) in July 1983. The NF comprised more than 200 political, labour, civic and religious organisations. The NF adopted the socialist Azanian Manifesto as a blueprint for the envisaged liberated Azania. Therefore, the Azanian Liberation Front we are talking about has a predecessor. It has an institutional reference.

We reject the negative and reactionary notion of a domesticated AZAPO that seeks to remain pure by avoiding to mingle and fight alongside like-minded Left Forces. We reject the notion of a paranoid AZAPO that wants to be a political hermit in the name of purity and uniqueness. We are determined to take AZAPO out of the doldrums of cautious passivity and get it to the streets where it may sometimes return home bruised and bleeding. That's what the struggle is all about. Our purity and consistency will be in terms of principles and ideological line. However, AZAPO will adopt tactics and strategies that will help us navigate the rough and tricky political terrain. Some of the tactics and strategies may puzzle some political commentators. That is the nature of tactics and strategies. If they are obvious to the enemy, then they are good for nothing. Tactics and strategies need not be understood by everyone. They just need to achieve the purpose for which they are employed. That's all.

Paradoxically, AZAPO does not necessarily need 60 million members. It just needs to be of productive influence to the critical population. Our strategies and tactics must launch AZAPO in that direction of being Field Workers, rather than Domestic Workers.