

REVISITING THE STANCE OF THE LEFT-WING LIBERATION MOVEMENT PRIOR TO THE APRIL 1994 GENERAL ELECTION IN SOUTH AFRICA: ITS IMPACT ON THE FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THESE MOVEMENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

In order to discuss the stance of the left-wing groups prior to the 27 April 1994 democratic election, one must begin with a great riddle. The statements of the left-wing liberation movements over the three decades before the 1994 election warrant this kind of a research. From the foregoing it became clear that the demands made by these left-wing groups would have an impact on the outcome of the election and also during the first decade of democratisation. This article therefore analyses the stance taken by the left-wing groups prior to the election, and whether such a stance was a viable move or not. The article also disputes the widely held view of other political parties before the election that, like the right-wing groups, the left-wing groups had little to offer in the 1994 April election. Even if that was the case, knowledge about the demands made by these groups need to be documented. Many historians and political analysts as well as journalists poured cold water on the analysis of the demands forwarded by these groups.

Although clearly not preferred by a majority of the South African electorate, the left-wing groups like the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)¹ and the Azanian People's

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¹ The Pan Africanist Congress was formed by a group breaking away from the African National Congress (ANC) in April 1959 because it felt that the ANC was incapable of promoting black liberation. This group was known as the Africanists. The Africanists believed that Africans should be in control of their own liberation struggle and should not be prompted by the white liberals, including the communists. Being a liberation movement, the PAC's earlier support (1959-1960) is said to have been even greater than that of its sister movement, the ANC. This organisation had its strongest support base in the Eastern Cape from where it launched its early resistance campaigns, anti-pass campaigns and also ran a 'status campaign' to wean the black population of its psychological subservience to white people. In 1960 the PAC ceased to be an important player in the political game. This decline could partly be blamed on the organisation's constant internal turmoil and leadership conflicts. Three decades after its banning, in 1990, the

Organisation (AZAPO)² had messages to convey to the electorate. Since these messages were not clearly articulated and publicised by the media, scholarly research of this subject is mostly neglected with literature on this subject being scarce.

This article attempts to evaluate the demands made by the left-wing liberation movements and their stance prior to the election. This, however, must be understood mainly on two levels: firstly as having influenced the electioneering process itself and secondly as an attempt to destabilise the election. It scrutinises the reasons for this destabilisation and the impact this had on the electorate. It tries to highlight the detrimental effects the above-mentioned factors had on the future prospect of these liberation movements in the 'new South Africa'.

2. THE DEMANDS OF THE PAC AND AZAPO PRIOR TO THE ELECTION

The negligence of researchers to pay sufficient attention to the failure of the PAC and its organisational weakness during the election, coupled with the demands of AZAPO, has had negative consequences on the part of these left-wing groups. The PAC's failure to make a bigger political impact during the election or even gain a larger representation in parliament, could be traced back to the unbanning of parties in February 1990 after which the ANC dominated the political arena and took advantage of the negotiation process.³

Contrary to the above, the PAC appeared to be hardliners who would not 'collaborate' or 'compromise' and steadfastly refused to negotiate unless its demands were met. This stance by the PAC allowed the ANC to steal the limelight and gain popularity in the eyes of the majority of the African people and therefore appeared to be a viable alternative. The PAC continued to portray itself as a revolutionary purist party who rejected all forms of compromise. This inability to flex and bend

PAC experienced the same internal conflicts which contributed to its poor performance in the first non-racial democratic election of April 1994.

² The Azanian People's Organisation was established in May 1978 to fill the vacuum when the National Party government banned almost all black political organisations. It has its roots firmly established in the philosophy of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). Its philosophies are based on the awareness among blacks that their human dignity hinges on the fact that they are black and proud of their skin pigmentation, culture and history. The content of its constitution included: repossession of land; transfer of political and economic power to the black majority; redistribution of the wealth of the country; dismantling of the Bantustans and tricameral structures; total liberation of the black people; the setting up of an anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-capitalist state. The BCM, to which AZAPO is a subscriber, seemed to harbour the hope of having the masses behind them.

³ Personal collection. Interview with Mr T Selemela, former PAC member in the Free State, 10 December 1999.

to the necessary political limits cost the organisation much needed support. The inability to acclimatize to the new trends of South Africa's politics counted against the PAC during the election period. The PAC continued to bask in its past glory⁴ and surprisingly this glory vanished when the election period dawned. Although both the PAC and AZAPO claimed to have fought violently against the apartheid government, they did not show themselves to be the representatives of the voteless African majority which is what they claimed to be. This was downplayed by I Mosala, the then President of AZAPO, when he lashed out at the ANC, accusing it of being the most dominant and the biggest party because whites felt less threatened by it. He also accused the ANC of conniving with the NP's government, thus giving it more press coverage at the expense of other liberation movements.⁵

The PAC further blamed the ANC and indicated that the multi-racial approach of the ANC to the election was a means of safeguarding white interests with proportional representation, irrespective of population figures.⁶ This approach by the ANC did not go off well with the Africanist membership. The political ambition and demand of the PAC was to see South Africa under a government of the Africans by the Africans.⁷ Even in 1994, the PAC still adhered to this past vision which had guided its leadership when it was established in 1959. This was evident in Robert Sobukwe's inaugural speech as the first president of the PAC when he stated: "The African people can demonstrate to the world genuine democracy in action, a democracy founded upon the ruins of the material and spiritual conflicts and contradictions of the existing social order, a democracy in which man shall at long find his true self and a democracy in which the human personality shall blossom to the full."⁸

For the PAC to have adhered to this vision of more than three decades before the 1994 election was a lofty and ambitious aim, especially when one looks deeply at the meaning of democracy and how much the majority of the electorate wanted this democracy. This version and understanding of democracy by the PAC continued

⁴ Prior to the election, the PAC wanted to bank on its struggle credentials. This organisation claimed that it had been responsible for the 1960 anti-pass campaigns which rocked South Africa; and that it had spearheaded the expulsion of this country from the United Nations (UN). These may indeed be realities which contributed in many ways to shaping the country's present political history and it would be naïve for historians to expect the PAC not to wrap itself in these historic events.

⁵ Personal collection. Telephonic interview with Prof. I Mosala, former president of AZAPO, 14 January 2000.

⁶ Personal collection. Interview with Mr M Likotsi, leader of the PAC in the Free State, 14 January 2000.

⁷ **Ibid.**

⁸ B Pogrand, **Sobukwe and apartheid** (Johannesburg, 1990), pp. 89-128. For further reading see also J Grobler, **A decisive clash? A short history of black protest politics in South Africa 1875-1976** (Pretoria, 1988), pp. 117-26.

during the electioneering period in 1994. One could conclude that the PAC's leadership was ill-advised in this regard because by 1994, the mindset of the electorate had changed when compared to the 1959 era when the organisation was established. Without doubt, looking at the outcomes of the 1994 election, it was clear that the electorate preferred a multi-racial kind of government which was promoted by the ANC. The PAC maintained that it was on the right track as far as the solving of the problems was concerned, hence it established a Patriotic United Front⁹ which adopted a statement that the transfer of power from the minority government of the NP to the Africans was the main objective of the struggle.¹⁰ According to the PAC, the ANC's leadership sabotaged the progress of this front by negotiating with the NP in its absence. It viewed the front as the only means by which to speak with one voice.

AZAPO leaders also shared the same sentiments as the PAC. L Mabasa, former deputy president of AZAPO and later leader of a splinter organisation called the Socialist Party of Azania (SOPA) stated: "We would not fear that our people would not support us in an election, but we would also not want our people to be dragged into an election if that election will not deliver freedom to the majority of our black people."¹¹

Despite the above-mentioned reservations of the PAC, as well as AZAPO, these two liberation movements were afforded an opportunity to present their demands at the negotiations held at Kempton Park prior to the election. They, however, were skeptical of this negotiating forum which they dubbed 'a slaughter table'.¹² Subscribing to a broader philosophy of the BCM, AZAPO rejected the negotiations and embarked on a nation-wide programme of raising the political consciousness of black people and hammered the slogan 'Black man, you are on your own'. This organisation saw the mental oppression as its point of departure for the total liberation of the black people rather than mobilising the African masses through the numerical strength of the people. According to Mosala, the rejection of the negotiations was initiated by the fact that these negotiations were predominantly

⁹ The Patriotic United Front was to be a platform for those political organisations which were opposed to the NP government. At the forefront of the formation of the Patriotic United Front was the PAC. It wanted the negotiations with the government to be approached by a front because it was aware that the strategy of the NP's government of meeting the African political parties separately would be counter-productive for the liberation movements. The Patriotic United Front launch in Durban was boycotted by AZAPO which rejected the inclusion of the Bantustans and the tricameral structures in the Front.

¹⁰ Speech by the President of the PAC, Clarence Makwetu, to the special congress of the PAC, 15 December 1991, pp. 1-2.

¹¹ Personal collection. Telephonic interview with Mr L Mabasa, former executive committee member of AZAPO, 12 January 2000.

¹² Personal collection. Interview with Mr M Likotsi, leader of the PAC in the Free State, 14 January 2000.

the NP's government initiative. He further stated that the negotiations were structured in a way that created the impression that FW de Klerk was the hero in the whole negotiation process and that was a source for concern to AZAPO.¹³ AZAPO's leadership viewed the negotiations as a backhanded way of obstructing the transfer of power to the black majority. Sounding skeptical about the role of the NP government in the negotiations, P Nefolovhodwe, the former deputy president of AZAPO, also criticized the process. He said that it was impossible for the Government to determine its own political demise and therefore its funeral.¹⁴ Here Nefolovhodwe did not understand why the Government was at the forefront of the negotiation process.

By rejecting participation in the negotiations, both liberation movements tinted their image. These two left-wing groups did not realise that FW De Klerk, the then president of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), was demonstrating his willingness to accept changes and showed that he was prepared to give and take.¹⁵ Without doubt, in this regard, De Klerk showed his leadership qualities and that he was a calculative politician. M Pheko, the then deputy president of the PAC, stated the following about the PAC's stance pertaining to the negotiations: "We cannot sit around the same table and discuss our liberation with the oppressor; our liberation is non-negotiable."¹⁶ Although this was the case, both the NP's government and the ANC tried to involve the PAC and AZAPO in the negotiations, but in vain. The PAC stated that through the negotiations, the ANC was selling out the liberation of the African masses.¹⁷ This attempt by the NP and the ANC became a futile exercise because both the PAC and AZAPO rejected any kind of compromise.¹⁸

Inevitably, the negotiations were to bring a consensus approach to South Africa's conflict and end the NP's rule without bloodshed. Unlike the PAC and AZAPO, the ANC succeeded in taking advantage of these negotiations and brought their demands to the negotiation table. AZAPO summarily rejected any deal with the NP's minority government and also accused the ANC of having engaged in the struggle for power rather than liberation.¹⁹ Later AZAPO found itself trapped

¹³ Personal collection. Telephonic interview with Prof. I Mosala, former president of AZAPO, 14 January 2000.

¹⁴ P Nefolovhodwe, CODESA: An extension of the regime/imperialist strategy, **a paper presented at the opening of the fourth National Council of the tenth AZAPO Congress**, Phuthaditjhaba, Qwaqwa, 1 February 1992, pp. 1-12; **Sowetan**, 5 May 1993.

¹⁵ JA Du Pisani, Negotiating a democratic South Africa: Bilateral and multiparty negotiations, June 1992 to December 1993, **Journal for Contemporary History**, Vol. 19, No. 2, September 1994, pp. 28-81.

¹⁶ Personal collection. Telephonic interview with Dr M Pheko, former Deputy President of the PAC, 6 December 1999.

¹⁷ **The Star**, 17 February 1993.

¹⁸ **Ibid.**

¹⁹ **City Press**, 14 February 1998.

concerning the negotiations because the PAC had initially agreed to talks with the government, but insisted that such talks be held at a neutral venue.²⁰ Unlike AZAPO, the PAC had initially met with the representatives of the government in Nigeria as early as April 1992.²¹ Furthermore, talks between these two parties took place in August and October 1992. The two parties also agreed on the urgent need for establishing a more representative negotiating forum which would be inclusive and managed impartially.²² It was therefore ironic that the PAC rejected further negotiations with the NP government as they had already started the process.

Talks with the PAC were suspended by the government in December 1992 when five people died in two attacks in the Eastern Cape for which the PAC's armed wing, the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) claimed responsibility.²³ Attacks on white farmers for which APLA claimed responsibility had also occurred a few months before the election.²⁴ While the PAC made some demands about the neutral venue of the negotiations, the NP government also demanded that, should the negotiations continue, the PAC should dissociate itself from APLA's attacks.²⁵ Rejecting this demand by the government, J Mlambo, former deputy president of the PAC, stated that there was nothing to talk about at that stage because the complete transfer of power from the white minority to the indigenous Africans was non-negotiable. He further indicated that the racist NP government understood only one language, the language of the gun and nothing else.²⁶ Referring to the looming election, C Makwetu, president of the PAC, uttered a somewhat instigative statement: "One cannot be expected to abandon the bullet until the ballot is secured to contest power."²⁷ This was one of many statements made by the leadership of the PAC which contributed to its demise in the period before the election. The NP government held several meetings with the PAC, trying to open up the negotiation forums. From the 23rd to the 24th of October 1992, a meeting was held between the NP government and the PAC in Botswana.²⁸ According to the PAC, this meeting was exploratory with the view of seeking a common understanding of the processes which should produce an end to white domination. In this meeting the PAC

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Ibid.

²¹ **Race Relations Survey** 1992/1993, p. 495.

²² **Cape Times**, 14 August 1992; **The Citizen**, 19 August 1992; **Business Day**, 20 October 1992.

²³ **The Star**, 8 December 1992.

²⁴ **Beeld**, 3 July 1993.

²⁵ **Ibid.**

²⁶ **Ibid.**

²⁷ **Ibid.**

²⁸ The delegates from the PAC were ED Moseneke, G Ebrahim and W Seriti. They were assisted by J Seroke, M Ditheko and RF Martin. The delegates from the NP government included Pik Botha, R Meyer and JAC Rabie. This group was assisted by SS van der Merwe, N Barnard, Gen. le Roux and R Evans. The neutral convenor was the Botswana government represented by Dr Gaositwe Chiepe, Foreign Minister of Botswana.

proposed an alternative negotiation forum and explained that this forum should have the following features:

- a neutral convenor, chairperson and meeting administrator;
- participants should be political organisations and unions;
- Bantustans should be left out or not empowered to the extent that they could frustrate the meeting;
- funding had to be independent from central control.²⁹

3. THE REASONS FOR THE POOR PERFORMANCE OF THE PAC IN THE APRIL 1994 ELECTION

Although the PAC contested the April 1994 election, its performance was not satisfactory to both its members and leadership. In this election, the PAC managed only to secure 1,25 % of the votes.³⁰ In this article, the authors cite only three main reasons which led to this poor performance. Firstly, there was a problem of infighting within the organisation, weak leadership and organisational structures. Secondly, its armed struggle, which targeted whites, did not receive wide support in South Africa. Lastly, it failed badly because of its ambivalence towards the political processes leading to the election.

As indicated in the introduction of this article, the PAC is the oldest non-Charterist organisation which broke away from the ANC, based on two reasons, namely, the prominence of whites in the struggle, and the issue of land. These two issues remained the dominant features of its policies. On the level of conventional indicators of the relative strength of a political movement, namely, funds; organisation; international and domestic prominence; demonstrable mass support; organisational alliances and signed-up membership, the ANC was much stronger than the PAC.

In 1993, a survey conducted by two academics from Rhodes University, Professor JK Coetzee and Mr GT Wood, proved that there was an expansion of the PAC's organisational structure in the Eastern Cape region due to APLA's strategy on selected hit and run attacks on whites that yielded dividends for the die-hards of the PAC.³¹ Findings of the survey indicated that most respondents believed that only two political organisations, namely the ANC and the PAC had 'a right to campaign

²⁹ Report on the meeting of the PAC and the NP government held in Gaborone, Botswana, 23-24 October 1992.

³⁰ PW Coetzer, Opinion polls and opinions on the results of the election of 1994, *Journal for Contemporary History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, September 1994, p. 257.

³¹ JK Coetzee and GT Wood, How the vote will go: a survey of African potential voters in the Eastern Cape, *Politikon*, Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 25.

in the Eastern Cape area'. This served as an indication of a very limited degree of tolerance in the region and that resulted in the violent attacks on other groupings seeking to make inroads into the region.³² The lack of general political tolerance in this region was worrying. Even if the conditions were not that favourable, far more people in this region were prepared to grant the PAC the right to organise than actually supported it.

The **Reader's Digest** poll published in 1994 revealed that the PAC and the ANC were the first and second choices of the South African black voters.³³ According to the Markinor survey conducted in mid-1993, the ANC had the overwhelming support of black voters but 28 per cent indicated that they could possibly defect to the PAC. In September 1993, the four parties with the biggest support among urban blacks had the following percentage: ANC 68; PAC 22; NP 10; and AZAPO 7.³⁴ Early in 1994, 22 per cent of black voters indicated they felt 'close' or 'very close' to the PAC, while 13 per cent said this of AZAPO.³⁵ All the above-mentioned election polls showed that the PAC had some support. These supporters tended to follow their party's line which depicted a fairly radical character.

Critical political analysts noticed that the name of the PAC was not included amongst the so-called big parties. In the case of the PAC, a shortage of funds was largely the cause of a rather modest campaign.³⁶ In its campaign, the PAC confined itself almost exclusively to the land question. As stated in its election manifesto launched on 20 February 1994, the rejection of an Afrikaner Volkstaat and the repossession of African land were major tenets.³⁷ In this regard, the PAC's statements appeared to be without any political finesse: "The PAC's objective is to work for the unification of the Africans. The purpose of such unification is to get back our land. We say this loudly and clearly. We are not going to buy this land. There is no receipt to show that this land was bought."³⁸ With this attitude demonstrated by the PAC's leadership in its approach to the electioneering campaign, it is not surprising that the campaign itself did not attract many people. This was evident in the poor performance of the PAC in the election.

The attainment of land by the PAC seemed to be more of an ideology than a reality. The organisation failed to lay down a strategy which was to be employed in achieving this goal. Addressing the PAC's poll campaign launch in Khayelitsha,

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Ibid.33 **Financial Mail**, 4 February 1994.34 **Die Volksblad**, 16 July 1993.35 **Sowetan**, 11 January 1994; **Beeld**, 13 January 1994.36 **Sowetan**, 28 March 1994.37 **PAC Election Manifesto**, 1994.38 **Sowetan**, 7 March 1994.

near Cape Town, the President of the organisation, C Makwetu, indicated that the PAC would return to the armed struggle if necessary to ensure the return of land to the African people.³⁹ To the PAC, the question of to whom the land belonged remained one of the fundamental differences between this organisation and other liberation movements. As to how this land would be brought back remained a mystery. While the majority of the black electorate had a soft spot for the PAC's liberation struggle profile as one of the liberation movements which had played a significant role, the organisation's campaign message had very little impact on the electorate. The single campaign promise of 'the land first and everything else will follow' was inappropriate for a constituency which hoped to reap the fruits of a modernising economy. Many people still remembered the poverty and hardship of life in the rural areas.⁴⁰ To pursue this claim, the PAC needed tight discipline and philosophical pragmatism as these were crucial ingredients of what this organisation desired to achieve.

The above-mentioned message of the PAC contributed negatively to the campaign strategies of the organisation. The campaign themes were centred on the idea that the PAC upheld the fight for liberation for blacks. It took great pains to recall the organisation's historical contribution when fighting apartheid while in exile. This organisation sought to emphasise its unwavering commitment to long held principles of promoting Pan Africanism as an ideology.

It must be borne in mind that the PAC not only campaigned using the land question as some analysts claimed. The organisation's manifesto also highlighted certain aspects of concern in caring for the social welfare of people, namely, a health policy; a housing policy; a safety and security policy to fight crime; an education policy; a public transport policy; a policy on African royalty; a gender policy, a youth policy, an environmental policy; a welfare policy; a policy on disabled persons; a labour policy and a foreign affairs policy.⁴¹

The PAC's combative slogan of 'one settler, one bullet' continued to instigate acts of violence. This type of slogan did not promote this organisation as being peaceful and trustworthy. In the hearts and minds of ordinary South Africans who were seeking peace and tranquility, the PAC appeared both wrathful, unreasonable and to a larger extent stubborn; thus a fine recipe for never-ending violence. Slogans like these revealed that the PAC was never able to break through the barrier among the Africans. The interpretation given to this kind of sloganeering by the PAC was

³⁹ **Sowetan**, 21 February 1994.

⁴⁰ G Gotz and M Shaw, "The election on the Reef: Choice and first-time voters in Gauteng (PWV), in RW Johnson and L Schlemmer, **Launching democracy in South Africa: The first open election, April 1994**, p. 281.

⁴¹ **PAC Election Manifesto**, 1994.

that this organisation was basically racist and anti-white.⁴² At the best of times, the PAC leadership displayed incoherence and lack of clear direction. Its lapse into rhetoric, more often with wild slogans like 'whites must leave' and historically based claims of legitimacy, was the most common feature of its campaign in the run-up to the election.⁴³ Clearly though, this was insufficient to garner the required number of votes to retain the PAC's erstwhile status as a key player in national political life.

The second argument concerning the reasons that impacted on the PAC's performance in the April 1994 election, was its history of factionalism within its leadership which dates back to the exiled period of P Leballo's reign. In exile, the PAC was never able to enjoy stability. Leballo undermined the PAC's principle of collective leadership and his leadership style could be described as both authoritarian and manipulative in a sense that he worked with a few individuals who did not question his leadership approach.⁴⁴ There was a very short period when, in the late 1980s, Z Mothopeng, who had been released from prison on health grounds, managed to pull the various factions of this organisation together. His death resulted in the ex-Robben Islander, C Makwetu, assuming leadership of the organisation, but he was singularly unable to make effective use of his position,⁴⁵ hence prior to and after the April 1994 election the PAC continued to experience leadership squabbles.

C Makwetu did not have an understanding of the modern media and was caught out making ponderous responses which were not amicably accepted by the electorate and by some members within PAC circles. B Alexander (later known as Khoisan X) and P de Lille were the PAC's most effective communicators and good public orators who could convince the electorate to join the organisation, but because of leadership problems they could not fulfil voter's expectations. It was also surprising that during the run-up to the election, B Alexander, who was a good public orator, was given a small public role to play. The PAC's campaign was made stark by his absence.⁴⁶

⁴² Personal collection. Interview with Mr T Selemela, former PAC member in the Free State, 10 December 1999.

⁴³ **Ibid.**

⁴⁴ KMM Kondlo, "In the twilight of the Azanian revolution'. Leadership diversity and its impact on the PAC during the exile period (1962-1990)", **Journal for Contemporary History**, Vol. 30, No. 1, June 2005, pp. 25-35. For more information read also JEH Grobler, "PK Leballo: Opportunistiese swendelaar of koersvaste knoeier?", **Journal for Contemporary History**, Vol. 18, No. 2, December 1993, pp. 88-113.

⁴⁵ T Plaatjie, Factionalism, misrepresentation and power struggle in the Pan Africanist Congress, 1966-1978, **paper presented at the biennial conference of the South African Historical Association**, University of the Western Cape, July 1999, pp. 1-21.

⁴⁶ A Reynolds, **Election '94: South Africa** (London, 1994), p. 199.

W Masombuka, the former PAC spokesperson, cited the integration of exiles and those who were based inside the country and the former Robben Islanders as a factor that complicated and worsened internal divisions within the organisation.⁴⁷ The PAC was bound to have leadership problems. According to B Alexander, the two camps of the PAC, namely, the PAC (internal)⁴⁸ and the PAC (external)⁴⁹ were separate and distinct groups.⁵⁰ P Burnett of **City Press** described the leadership of the PAC as directionless because of what he termed 'campism' and 'cliqueism' between the leaders who had returned from exile and those who had not been in exile; those who had been on Robben Island and those who had not been. This classification according to camps led to a constant and meaningless struggle for positions, open hostilities and public bickering.⁵¹ Some political analysts indicated that the PAC had adopted what D Hlophe from the University of Durban-Westville termed as 'a response election campaign'. Here Hlophe lambasted the PAC for responding to the promises made by the ANC and using that for its electioneering campaigns.⁵²

At the core of the issue bedevilling the PAC leadership was the call by some regions to transform the organisation from a small movement threatened by extinction into a powerful alternative to the ANC. This proved to be unsuccessful. This level of thinking and operation within the PAC was shown in the organisation's branches. The Bushbuckridge branch of the PAC was particularly vocal in its call for the removal of the 'old guards' under the leadership of C Makwetu. This branch passed a vote of no-confidence in the national leadership and accused it of lacking a clear policy that would appeal to the electorate. The leadership was also accused of spending more time reacting and responding to the promises made to the electorate by the ANC rather than being innovative and convincing when targeting the electorate.⁵³ P de Lille dismissed these allegations as

⁴⁷ **Sowetan**, 21 February 1994.

⁴⁸ The organisation structure of the PAC (internal) was: Vice-President, Clarence Makwetu; Secretary-General, Benny Alexander; Assistant General-Secretary, Philemon Tefu; National Organizer, Walter Tshikila; Secretaries: Publicity, Benny Funani Ntoele; Finance, Mike Matsobane; Foreign Affairs, Patricia de Lille; Political Affairs, Mpolose Manqangwana; Economic Affairs, Bantubonke Nduna; Relief Projects and Pensions, Bathembu Lugulwana; Projects and Development, Joyce Sedibe; Sports and Recreation, Lesley Ntuli; Culture and Youth, Mpolosi Morokong; Legal Affairs, Phillip Dlamini; Health, Nana Doabi; Labour, Manene Samela; Education, Mahlubi Mbondazayo; Research and Ideological Studies, Jafta Masemola.

⁴⁹ The organisation structure of the PAC (external) was: President, Zeph Mothopeng; Chairperson, Johnson Mlambo; Administration Secretary, Joe Mkhwanazi; Secretaries: Women's affairs, Elizabeth Sibeko; Foreign Affairs, Gora Ebrahim; Welfare, Nomvo Booi; Defence, Sabelo Phama; Finance, Joe Moabi; Economic Affairs, Mfanase Kaya Gqobose; Education, Elias Mfaza; Labour, Lesoana Makhanda; Information Direction, Walter Toboti.

⁵⁰ B Alexander, "Africanism states its claim", **Work in Progress**, No. 64, January 1990, p. 30.

⁵¹ **City Press**, 23 January 1994.

⁵² Personal collection. Telephonic interview with Mr D Hlophe, political scientist, University of Durban-Westville, 1 February 2000.

⁵³ **Sowetan**, 25 January 1994.

lies. She referred to this group as a 'bunch' of tribalists and racists bent on undermining the organisation.⁵⁴

Without doubt, the PAC's final total vote in the South African liberation election of 1994 was an unmitigated disaster and reflected negatively on the leadership of the organisation. It also besmirched the profile of this once proud organisation.⁵⁵ The poor showing surprised many observers of the election who felt that, even though opinion polls had not picked it up, the PAC had a substantial core of support within the black community as a hangover from their role in the liberation struggle of the 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁶ Most political analysts and historians did not expect such a poor showing from an organisation that had such a strong liberation tradition as the PAC.

The third argument was the issue of finances which was put forth by the PAC's leadership as having heavily contributed to its poor performance in the election. The PAC, like the ANC, had, during the exile period, depended heavily on financial support from sympathetic governments and solidarity groups from different parts of the world. Towards the election, most sources of funding dried up for the PAC. This meant that the PAC had to look somewhere else for financial sustenance. The first obvious source of generating income was its own membership. This in itself could not sustain the organisation because a practice of members paying subscription had never been fully developed within the PAC and a culture of dependence on outside support was entrenched.⁵⁷

On the eve of the election, the PAC appeared to be at sixes and sevens. It was clear that the organisation lacked direction in its organisational structures. The organisation's list of candidates was full of surprises, especially the inclusion of whites. This strategy by the PAC came as a surprise to both the white and black electorate. According to D Pressly, a political correspondent of the **Sowetan** newspaper, the PAC surprised many people by nominating a white law professor of the University of Pretoria, Dean Basson, as a candidate for the PWV regional assembly. Basson appeared sixth on the list of 100 candidates.⁵⁸

The Basson saga was not the only reason for raised eyebrows in the way the PAC compiled its candidate lists. Confusion and surprises became common. A Williams of Uitenhage indicated that he was included in the PAC's election list for the

⁵⁴**Ibid.**⁵⁵ Reynolds, pp. 198-9.⁵⁶**Ibid.**⁵⁷ **City Press**, 4 February 1996.⁵⁸**Sowetan**, 14 February 1994.

provincial government without his consent.⁵⁹ Another victim of the PAC's confusion regarding lists was V Mpehlo, an inspector of schools in the Port Elizabeth area, who found his name on the PAC list after having being interviewed by a journalist from the **Eastern Province Herald**.⁶⁰

The above-mentioned inability of the PAC to put its house in order before the election confirmed the lack of direction from the organisation's leadership. The denial of the candidates who appeared on the lists was negative publicity for the PAC. Adding more fuel to the fire was its Eastern Cape regional chairperson, K Tsotsobe. Instead of addressing the mistake made by the PAC, he publicly announced that all the people who claimed to have been listed on the candidates' lists without their consent, should withdraw their names.⁶¹ This 'don't care' attitude portrayed by Tsotsobe had negative implications for the image and profile of the PAC before the election.

4. AZANIAN PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION'S ANTI-ELECTION CAMPAIGN

At the Cape Town strategic planning session in which the organisation consolidated its anti-election campaign, AZAPO's president Mosala stated: "AZAPO will not participate in the April 27 election. This organisation will still remain a national liberation movement even beyond April 27. The Azanian Liberation Army (AZANLA) is expected to maintain the armed struggle after the election. FW De Klerk and his cohorts have been able to successfully renegotiate the continuation of white power. For AZAPO, there is no option but to openly fight white power which is hiding behind the supposed election for a so-called New South Africa. We believe there are millions of people outside our organisation who share these ideals and whose expectations will not be met the day after the election. We will try to conscientise our people to the realisation that this election is an empty one."⁶²

This hard and unbending statement by Mosala was welcomed by thunderous applause from the supporters of the organisation. On the other hand, it was lambasted by some political parties, including the ANC. The ANC viewed his statement as inflammatory and believed it had the potential to perpetrate violence and political intolerance among the supporters of both the ANC and AZAPO. According to the ANC, this statement by the leadership of AZAPO conveying an anti-election message, showed that the organisation was willing to continue

⁵⁹ **Eastern Province Herald**, 23 February 1994.

⁶⁰ **Ibid.**

⁶¹ **Ibid.**

⁶² **Saturday Star**, 22 January 1994.

spelling out its ambiguous plea for people to be against the elections. It was also clear to the ANC that AZAPO was far from leaving its protest politics behind, even on the eve of the election. The anti-election demonstrations were sometimes met with opposition in other areas. As other political parties intensified their election campaigns in Meadowlands, AZAPO members were informed that they would be 'dealt with' if they pursued their anti-election campaign in the area. The meeting in Meadowlands was hijacked by ANC members trying to destabilise AZAPO's activities in the area.⁶³ This, however, showed political intolerance on the side of the ANC. Permission for other parties to use the community hall in the area which had been claimed by the ANC as a base for its electioneering campaigns was repeatedly denied on the pretext that giving the hall to other parties might cause violence in the area.⁶⁴ This political intolerance in itself gave the ANC the upper hand over other political parties. Obviously, the local structures and the patterns of defence established within communities like Meadowlands did not dissolve when South Africa's transition started. Hence, when the election campaigns first commenced, numerous complaints by AZAPO and the PAC in places like the West Rand that their canvassers and organisers were routinely harassed and at times attacked, poured in.⁶⁵

The situation and conditions in AZAPO differed from those of the PAC. AZAPO steadfastly refused to be drawn into the negotiation process, believing it to be flawed. This organisation never agreed to have talks with the view of participating in the elections. What AZAPO neglected to do and failed to take into account about its future in the politics of South Africa was the massive support that this first democratic election elicited from the vast majority of the populace.⁶⁶ AZAPO was of the opinion that white South Africans could not understand what liberation meant without first having been under the razor of Black Consciousness. This statement qualified the philosophy of AZAPO that the politics of race still determined the socio-economic structure of society and that could not be altered or transcended simply by strategising with whites on how the election should be conducted and when that process should take place. The organisation believed that liberation from the whites should begin with recognition of the social, economic and political gulfs between black and white. Justifying the above statement in his article, "Avoiding the reform trap", published in **The Indicator**, S Moodley of AZAPO stated: "I saw a limited role for whites in the ranks of black organisations. The only part they could play in the theatre of struggle is within their own

⁶³ Gotz and Shaw, p. 225.

⁶⁴ **Ibid.**

⁶⁵ **Ibid.**

⁶⁶ S Cooper, "The PAC and Azapo", in Reynolds, p. 118.

communities, to prepare them for change, eliminate their feelings of superiority and psychologically heal themselves to accept black people as their equals."⁶⁷

The leadership of AZAPO did not believe that the negotiations would ultimately lead to the election and when the election came, the organisation was ill-prepared to join the race. The dawn of the election period found this organisation disorganised and facing financial constraints. According to Sekola Sello, a political correspondent of **City Press**, disagreements within the organisation's leadership compelled it to embark on an anti-election campaign.⁶⁸ It was against this background that the organisation continued to propagate boycotting the campaign.

In analysing the political journey AZAPO hoped to travel in order to realise its objectives, it became evident to the authors that it could be a dangerous mistake to take AZAPO's public political pronouncements literally without carefully studying the motivation behind them. It is clear that AZAPO must be understood as a movement that wanted both political and economic power but did not have a principled way of attaining it.

The decision by AZAPO to embark on the anti-election campaign was the second major stance to be taken by this organisation. AZAPO was the first radical group to stage an open boycott against the election. Its major anti-election statement was that black people were falsely made to believe that their liberation was vested in the proposed election and that the organisation was prepared to do everything in its powers to stop people from voting. This threat by AZAPO was not directed merely at the white political parties, but at the democratic process itself.⁶⁹ For the majority of this organisation's supporters, the April 1994 election was not a guarantee of a black majority government without the help of the people. This thinking of AZAPO was undoubtedly in contrast with the principles of democracy and democratisation as a desired process by the majority of the South African electorate. One should, however, understand this stance by AZAPO who had the perception that the NP government wanted to be a 'player and a referee' in the negotiation process. This attitude tended to bear negative results for the organisation because it did not attain the expected support with its anti-election campaign. This was in fact counter-productive to what the organisation envisaged prior to and after the election.

Without doubt, AZAPO's call on black voters to boycott the polls seemed to be the wrong advice to follow - particularly by an organisation of AZAPO's stature. In essence, this stance was generally rejected by an electorate which had waited for

⁶⁷ S Moodley, "Avoiding the reform trap", **The Indicator**, 1990.

⁶⁸ **City Press**, 12 March 1995.

⁶⁹ **Business Day**, 20 December 1993; **Sowetan**, 25 January 1994.

many years to exercise its fundamental right to vote. This showed that the organisation failed to read both the political situation and the mood of the country's black majority correctly. During the election period, many black majorities which AZAPO claimed to be its constituency, were weary of the escalating violence in the 'hot spots' in the country and viewed the anti-election stance as suicidal. One would agree with them that taking the route propagated by AZAPO would have worsened violence in the country. Prior to the election, the majority of black people desired peace. This was, however, not considered by AZAPO when it called for an anti-election campaign, hence the small response.

AZAPO's stance on an anti-election campaign was based on the assumption made by the ANC that the April 1994 election would mean the elimination of poverty, landlessness, homelessness and the creation of a South African society in which individuals would develop according to their potential. AZAPO's leadership continued to propagate its rhetoric statement that the ANC had sold black people out. This was mainly evident in the responses given by the leadership of the organisation in many of its interviews on this matter. According to S Cooper, the realisation of the ability of the majority of the people in South Africa to identify their own needs and aspirations was misunderstood by many members of AZAPO, especially those who forecast massive voter illiteracy. They mistook a lack of formal education for the inability to choose and understand the political dynamics of South Africa. Cooper further indicated that having the policy was of no use if one did not have the ability and capacity, even the inclination, to relate effectively to the masses.⁷⁰ Reacting to AZAPO's stance, Cooper stated that when one is used to interaction within a close knit circle of minds in general agreement; one can easily be seduced into believing that times are favourable to one's thinking and that those who do not agree, suffer from a lack of clarity in vision and understanding.⁷¹ The above description by Cooper characterises the mood that prevailed in AZAPO's circles before the April 1994 election.

V Bavuma, a political reporter of the **Sowetan**, concurred with Cooper and was critical of AZAPO's stance on the anti-election campaign. He indicated that AZAPO's bid for the people to respond to its campaign had failed to win the hearts and minds of the electorate. Lambasting this organisation, he stated: "When it comes to strict armchair politicking, AZAPO's officials are likely to succeed. With their eloquent discourses on the country's political problems, they should be attracting many blacks with ease. AZAPO should abandon its stance of playing politics of refusal at this time."⁷²

⁷⁰ Cooper, p. 119.

⁷¹ **Ibid.**, pp. 118-9.

⁷² **Sowetan**, 5 March 1994.

Although the political analysts dubbed the 1994 violence as a conflict between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the left-wing groups also contributed to the escalating violence prior to the election. In KwaThema, for example, where AZAPO held one of its anti-election campaign demonstrations, a year old conflict between the Pan Africanist Student Organisation (PASO), and a loose alliance of the ANC aligned Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) erupted into renewed violence. In this feud, PASO was assisted by AZAPO's student wing, the Azanian Student Movement (AZASM).⁷³ More than ten youths were reportedly killed in the ensuing battles in this township from the beginning of 1994, with the strength of PASO and AZASM periodically being boosted by an influx of new members from nearby Thokoza and Katlehong townships.⁷⁴

Another area which experienced violent acts led by AZAPO was Bekkersdal. Until the early 1990s, AZAPO was unquestionably the dominant organisation in this township. After the unbanning, the ANC's activists from Bekkersdal area sought to establish a presence in the vicinity by introducing members from a new informal settlement known as Mandela Park. Initially the settlement was not aligned to any political party but the efforts of the emergent ANC clearly antagonised the AZAPO establishment. Searching for ways to increase its power against its opponent, it called upon IFP supporters from the East Rand to have joint rallies and to defend itself against the ANC's attacks.⁷⁵

AZAPO's reliance on the armed struggle also worked against it. Talks of an armed struggle were in contrast to the prevailing national mood of a serious desire for reconciliation and peace. It was also interesting to note that people who adhered to and appealed for war made up a small percentage. AZAPO's continuation of the armed struggle therefore became a bitter pill for the majority of black voters to swallow. The appeal for an armed struggle in the 1990s discouraged some members of the organisation from aligning themselves with this stance.⁷⁶

This was, however, in contrast with what some of the political parties were engaged in. By this time, many political parties were preparing themselves for the upcoming election.⁷⁷ One striking feature of AZAPO's anti-election campaign was the fact that in promoting this campaign, the ANC became the main target and was accused of having sold out the black masses.⁷⁸ In its many meetings to promote its

⁷³ **Sowetan**, 25 March 1994. See also **PWV Observer Reports**, Vol. 4, p. 153.

⁷⁴ **Ibid.**

⁷⁵ Gotz and Shaw, pp. 220-1.

⁷⁶ Johnson and Schlemmer, p. 225.

⁷⁷ **Sowetan**, 24 January 1994.

⁷⁸ **Ibid.**

campaign, the ANC's slogan of 'A better life for all' was replaced by 'Better hell for all under the ANC led government'.⁷⁹ Apart from the Cape Town meeting, AZAPO's national organiser, F Mafongosi, indicated that the organisation planned to hold countrywide rallies and workshops to intensify its anti-election campaign. These rallies were addressed by senior members of the organisation.⁸⁰ In a bid to call on people to boycott the election, anti-election pamphlets were distributed at the rallies. One message in the pamphlet read: "Black people, do you want to have your land back? The Kempton Park agreement denies you your land. Show your happiness! Do not vote in the sham election of April 1994. You have a democratic right not to vote. Join AZAPO or BCMA in a boycott of the forthcoming election."⁸¹ Other pamphlets and placards read: "Black people don't vote for your landlessness, squatting, unemployment, poverty, backwardness, and criminalisation of the struggle against apartheid colonialism."⁸²

The anti-election rallies which the organisation embarked upon included a demonstration with anti-election placards against the NP government's chief negotiator, R Meyer, at the Eldorado Park Civic Centre in January 1994. Other demonstrations took place at the Pietersburg Workers' Centre, the Zamdela Community Hall in Sasolburg, Njoli Square in the Eastern Cape and the Pholang Secondary School in KwaThema(Springs). All the above-mentioned demonstrations were planned for Saturday 22 January 1994. Apart from the distribution of pamphlets and holding rallies, door-to-door campaigns were held countrywide to try and persuade people of the futility of voting.⁸³

An issue that intensified AZAPO's feeling on boycotting the election was the stipulation of Clause 63B of the New Election Act. The Act stipulated that "any person, who otherwise influences the process or outcome of elections, shall be guilty of an offence". According to P Kepadisa of AZAPO, his organisation was concerned that the New Electoral Act could be used by the NP government to suppress AZAPO's anti-election campaign. He viewed this clause as an attempt to silence his organisation which he believed was making strides in influencing the people with its anti-election campaign.⁸⁴ One, however, does not understand how this clause could have been counter-productive to AZAPO's campaign. According to the authors, this clause was in fact protecting the very same organisation against ill-treatment.

⁷⁹**Ibid.**⁸⁰ **Saturday Star**, 22 January 1994.⁸¹ **AZAPO's anti-election pamphlet.**⁸² **Ibid.**⁸³ **Sowetan**, 21 January 1994.⁸⁴ **Saturday Star**, 22 January 1994.

Another reason that led to this stance by AZAPO was the unresolved tension between the internal AZAPO leaders and its exiled wing represented by the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania (BCMA). It should be noted that for an extended period, AZAPO could not provide an alternative programme that could bring it to the centre of politics. This led to its inconsistent stance prior to the election.

Although AZAPO wanted its anti-election stance to be heard by the majority of black South Africans, this organisation also experienced leadership squabbles which to a certain extent had an impact on its success. This in itself weakened the anti-election campaign. The relationship between the leadership of AZAPO and the leadership of the BCMA, formerly based in exile, was not harmonious. In fact, leadership positions within the organisation were a contested terrain and the former exile leadership was accused of hijacking positions.⁸⁵ AZAPO strategically displayed an almost anti-organisational romanticism. The way it advanced its plea for support for an anti-election campaign showed that its target was not to advance the organisation, but rather to advance the cause of revolution. AZAPO never tackled issues directly affecting the black masses it claimed to be representing, but rather believed in a programme of conscientisation of the people about their 'blackness'. The pre-occupation with skin colour to determine one's future contributed to the lack of adherence to AZAPO's call for people to boycott the election.⁸⁶ The organisation insisted that the issue of colour remained central in addressing the legacy of racial oppression and exploitation but this could not be achieved in the South African context as the election went ahead in April 1994 with or without AZAPO's participation.

5. CONCLUSION

J Mlambo was quoted by S Cooper as calling media reports on the 11th of May 1994 of serious dissatisfaction within the PAC over the leadership's steering of the election campaign 'a concoction of rumours'. In fact there was certainly surprise in many circles at the PAC's dismal performance. When the final results of the election were announced on the 6th of May 1994, the PAC had won 1, 25 per cent of the vote. The leaders of this organisation had overrated themselves considerably and had expected to win a much larger portion of the vote. Although there were those who believed that their organisation could surprise critics, as far back as early 1993 the PAC was not expected to get more than 6 per cent.⁸⁷ The lack of adequate

⁸⁵ Personal collection. Telephonic interview with Mr D Hlophe, political scientist, University of Durban-Westville, 1 February 2000.

⁸⁶ F van Zyl Slabbert, *The quest for democracy: South Africa in transition* (London, 1994), pp. 48-9.

⁸⁷ Human Resources Research Council polls, February 1993.

funding does not, however, provide a full explanation for its poor performance in the election. The organisation's problem was rooted in its history and its perceptions of the political transition that had begun in the early 1990s. The organisation dented its image by initially scorning the negotiation process and then joining later.

Like the PAC, AZAPO argued that the political settlement produced at the Kempton Park negotiations was a farce. Believing that nothing of substance would result from the 1994 election, it did not take part. There is no doubt that AZAPO was needed in the negotiations and the country's political arena. The new democracy that was envisaged for South Africa desperately needed vigorous debate, which both the PAC and AZAPO could have offered. A question many researchers often ask is, if the NP government had acceded to all the demands of the PAC, would it have performed better or worse? Was AZAPO really against the election or was it afraid of performing dismally in the election because voters would think that the election platform would have helped every party to prove its worth?