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## **IMRANN MOOSA**

*Imrann Moosa is an advocate active in AZAPO. The interview took place in his Durban law office on July 11, 1989, and was conducted by Gail Gerhart of Columbia University (USA) who was involved in preparing volume 5 of From Protest to Challenge. The following is a verbatim transcription from tapes.*

... [YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT] NEVILLE ALEXANDER'S SPEECH.

It was a speech called, I think, "Nation and Ethnicity".

I THINK THAT WAS GIVEN AT THE LAUNCH OF THE FIRST NATIONAL FORUM.

Then I am wrong there. There was a speech before that, delivered at an AZAPO congress [in 1983: "The National Situation"]. And I think this for the first time gave Neville a national platform. But of course Neville's origins are deeply within the Fourth International Trotskyist outlook. And AZAPO's views on socialism, like the PAC's before it [*interruption*] [is] developmental; only the word socialism was given. Of course the BCMA developed its own line on that.

But when it came to Azapo the emphasis until that point was basically on the hegemony of the black working class. To move on to a concept like the dictatorship of the black proletariat as the essence of course was something that was strongly influenced by the BCMA, but in tandem with this...

YOU MEAN THE EXTERNAL BC ?

Yes, the external. But in tandem with that you now had Neville being given that platform and slowly but surely winning some kind of following. I do not know exactly what the strength of that following is, within AZAPO and within the black consciousness movement generally. But I think it is a pretty strong following. And without realising, and sometimes realising it, many people have adopted various Trotskyist lines of analysis in common with Neville's. Because in this county of course you've had as many Trotskyists as there are members of either the Unity Movement or CAL [Cape Action League].

NOW PEOPLE USE THIS TERM ALL THE TIME. NO ONE EVER STOPS TO EXPAND ON WHAT THOSE PARTICULAR FEATURES OF TROTSKY'S THOUGHT ARE THAT

MAKES SOMEONE A TROTSKYIST IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT. CAN YOU JUST GIVE ME AN EXPOSITION ON THAT ?

In the South African context essentially it would be either a negation or the distortion of the national question. And Neville's book "One Azania One Nation" of course is a classic of the distortion of the national question. Essentially what Neville says in that book and later amplifies on in *Transformation* — I am sure you have the *Transformation* article — I think it is called "Approaches to the National Question"

He ultimately says that the South African government and the UDF/ANC have a "four nation" thesis, where they see four nations in the context of South Africa. The BCM and the PAC have what he calls a two nation thesis. And only CAL and the Unity Movement before that have the correct thesis, which is one Azania, one Nation. Now "one Azania, one Nation" to start off with is something that the PAC and the BCM have in common, have developed, have popularized in mass struggle. And I think what he is eventually coming to is of the essence of the black consciousness and Pan Africanist outlooks.

The Unity Movement and CAL in fact have a "no nation" thesis. It is in fact not a one Azania, one Nation thesis at all. It is that there are no nations at all. If we look at the Unity Movement's declaration in the 50's, when they talk of the nation where people are people, whether they have big ears or small ears, whether they have long noses or small, whatever texture of hair. Ultimately they define a nation to exclude only criminals and lunatics — and I do not think you can have a nation that excludes those! But, it seems to me Neville has stuck to that approach, even if his hostility to the Unity Movement is equally apparent as is CAL's. Neville has analysed in fact in what is a very interesting article, the history of the Unity Movement in *Azania Worker*. Have you got that analysis?

NO, I DO NOT HAVE THAT. THAT IS THE BCMA ONE ?

No, the *Azanian Worker* is actually a Trotskyist publication.

WHO PUTS IT OUT ?

A group in London. I do not think they actually give themselves a name. I find great difficulty in getting it at all.

IT IS SOLD ON NEWSSTANDS IN LONDON

Ja, but they used to send *Frank Talk* copies, but they stopped unfortunately.

WE HAVE CLASSIFIED IT AS BCMA, BUT I REALIZE THAT'S LOOSE. AZANIA FRONTLINE ?

*Azanian Frontline* is also from the same group. Actually there was a reason why you classified it under BCMA. Apparently there was a clash within the BCMA. When the BCMA was formed it basically did the same thing that AZAPO did later on. It invited everybody. And a lot of Unity Movement and other Trotskyist people in exile gave input at the founding conference of the BCMA in London. And Rose-Innes Phaahla for example became the editor of *Solidarity*. And later on there was a purge of sorts where they no longer were BCMA, and that is where you have *Azanian Worker* and *Azanian Frontline* coming into—

THANKS FOR EXPLAINING THAT, BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING IN THE TEXT OF THE PUBLICATIONS THAT WOULD GIVE A CLUE.

In fact, I do not think that this clash is actually documented. It might be worthwhile interviewing the guys in the BCMA, because I think much of the same history is being repeated in AZAPO. And I have just been to Cape Town this weekend for a BSSP ( Black Students Study Project) conference, where I have met people like Ishmael [Mkhabela] again after a long time. And the information there is that the Neville and all other Trotskyist groups in CAL are forming their own political organization or workers' party, I am not so sure what they are going to call it. But they are launching it officially in this country later this year.

AND IT WILL REPLACE CAL?

Yes, I think so. I think everything will be subsumed under it. With the hostility between the Unity Movement and CAL—

WHAT DID YOU SAY IT WAS GOING TO BE CALLED ?

It could be the Workers Party. What they have said in various documents is that they stand for a workers' party. I do not think they are going to explain it is a workers' party in the Trotskyist mode. But obviously the other feature now of Trotskyism here is that its emphasis is entirely on the development of the labour movement. In fact its emphasis is to completely destroy Lenin's emphasis in "What Is To Be Done." And you've had that in CAL and you have that in the union movement whether you are talking of COSATU or NACTU, or other independent unions. And you have got that in AZAPO as well, where people's entire outlook is actually economic in the extreme.

That is one of the important things that is dealt with in the "Black Solidarity, for a Socialist Azania" article [in latest *Frank Talk* by IM himself]. The article itself caused a lot of ripples, which again is not talked about openly. For example, the AZAPO central committee on receiving this publication banned it for distribution among membership. Now the excuse they had was of course that the *Frank Talk* editorial collective has now gone independent. Now the *Frank Talk* editorial collective's independence was discussed with the central committee in the first place. It was simply a device, one, in helping to get sponsorship as an independent publication, and two, because of AZAPO's banning in homelands like the Transkei. To help with distribution and of course ultimately, three, to allow the editorial collective to develop independent lines and to thoroughly critique and criticize the black consciousness movement. Because the publication itself was never meant to be a mass official organ of AZAPO. It never said that.

WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS ARTICLE ?

It just said *Frank Talk* staff writers. It was actually a group of people. I have been involved in that group. One of the interesting questions of course, everyone in AZAPO wanted to know who wrote the article. But there was no repudiation of the article from AZAPO, so that you may find what I am saying not being admitted to by anybody. Nobody is going to plead guilty.

THE CRITIQUE WAS THAT AZAPO WAS BECOMING TOO WORKERIST ?

No, there was no mention of such things. It was just a critique of workerist lines. AZAPO was mentioned as part of the overall history of popularizing a socialist line within the country. And I think it was mentioned with approval, and there were quotations from various papers delivered at various AZAPO conferences and so on to show that the line of the article was actually in

consonance with AZAPO's policy. Except that at one point we criticised a group that then we just knew as the Azanian Labour Monitoring Group. The Azanian Labour Monitoring Group is responsible for that journal there, the *Azanian Labour Journal*, which has three copies already. Have you seen that one yet ?

I DO NOT KNOW THAT ONE AT ALL. CAN I GET THAT ONE FROM YOU ?

Well, I am trying to sell subscriptions.

LET ME TAKE ONE.

The Labour Monitoring Group had produced a very informative, interesting article on the COSATU congress and their adoption of the Kliptown Charter there. And what they were saying essentially is that there is no white — there is no working class pure and simple at the moment. But the white working class will realise its revolutionary consciousness before we get liberation. And this is what this article critiques. That that is an analysis in never never land, but interestingly, that analysis was put forward by Neville at the AZAPO conference, even before this article came out. And I think that this is maybe why the AZAPO people who are on the central committee feel that it was antagonistic to them. Mind you the authors of the article did not realise that the Labour Monitoring Group at that time was a structure created by AZAPO. Although it also regarded itself as part of the entire black consciousness family. That was discovered later on.

HOW DOES THIS MONITORING GROUP AND HOW DO THE OTHER GROUPINGS WITHIN THE BC LEFT, OR WHATEVER THEY WANT TO BE CALLED, HOW DO THEY RELATE TO THE ACTUAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT?

The Labour Monitoring Group was basically just a structure to analyse developments within the union movement. Most of its members are active either in COSATU or NACTU [National Council of Trade Unions], but it seemed to be a strategy that came out of the labor secretariat. And almost an ad hoc strategy to meet the...

THE LABOR SECRETARIAT OF WHAT ?

The labour secretariat of AZAPO. Whose head is Mandla Seloane[?]. And who is also the author of the various articles. Now just between us, essentially Mandla Seloane is leading the Trotskyist grouping in AZAPO, but he will deny that. And they would deny that, as well as Haroon Patel. But it might be worth interviewing Haroon and Mandla. They are in Johannesburg. Mandla is working in CCAWUSA [Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union] at the moment. Haroon Patel I am not so sure, I think he was elected AZAPO secretary general in 1987. What his present whereabouts are I do not know.

But the line they have been pushing in AZAPO is basically a line of a mass based workers' party, rather than a vanguard party. Again a Trotskyist trait. Maybe we are collecting quite a few characteristics of Trotskyism as it's emerged.

There was a paper delivered at the Durban branch of AZAPO on Trotskyism and black consciousness, which ultimately resolved into a position paper on Trotskyism by the branch. That you won't have I don't think.

COULD I GET ONE ?

You can get that. My position is that I have a lot of documents that I am trying to sort out, probably a lot of documents you would be interested in also. Some of them I can give you now, but the rest is elsewhere and I need to sort out. The position paper is not something I have got immediately at hand, but I can send it to you if you give me an address, and there are other position papers that are due only to be published in this next *Frank Talk*. On black theology I think, on Azanian sportsmen, I don't know if you have seen that one, and on Pan Africanism and black consciousness.

AND THESE ARE POSITION PAPERS BEING EXPRESSED BY.....

A structure called Black Consciousness Movement Durban and District.

THAT IS JUST THE COLLECTIVE THAT BRINGS OUT *FRANK TALK* ?

Ja, It has some of the same people, but not exactly. It is the AZAPO Durban branch previously, which does not and cannot now operate because of the restrictions, and it was decided to come up with the structure called the "Black Consciousness Movement Durban and District". We still have to meet the central committee of AZAPO to sort out problems of status and recognition. But ultimately it works within the black consciousness...

WHAT IS THE SENSE OF STRATEGY AMONGST THOSE PEOPLE WHO BELONG TO THESE GROUPINGS ON THE LEFT? THEY ARE NOT QUITE IN AZAPO, THEY ARE NOT QUITE IN GROUPS AROUND ALEXANDER, AND SO FORTH. HOW DO YOU SEE THE POINTS OF VIEW THAT COME OUT OF THESE VARIOUS PUBLICATIONS ACTUALLY AFFECTING THE MASS STRUGGLE? YOU PRODUCE THESE THINGS FOR AN AUDIENCE. WHO IS THE AUDIENCE FOR WHOM YOU ARE PRODUCING THEM ?

Ultimately this seems to be restricted at the moment to intellectuals. The audience again then becomes bigger than that. Because people have become sensitized to political issues. To a degree not apparent in the last decade say, and it is becoming more a subject of mass discussion throughout the ghettos. And even these nuances of line are actually appreciated. It is actually part of people's overall experience, but it seems not so easily appreciated by the intellectuals themselves. Which I do not think is an uncommon feature.

IF YOU WERE RECRUITING PEOPLE TO COME AND JOIN YOU IN YOUR EFFORTS, WHAT WOULD BE THE TARGET GROUPS FROM WHICH YOU WOULD EXPECT TO RECRUIT NEW BLOOD ?

Essentially it would be black youth and the black working class, as a constituency.

NOT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ?

University students included. In fact in the local area, AZASM [Azanian Students Movement] has a very powerful presence at the Durban Westville University.

AND HOW ARE THEY RELATED TO AZAPO? DO THEY ADOPT A LINE THAT AZAPO DEVISES?

They are what is loosely called in AZAPO circles a "formation" of AZAPO. AZASM was, as you know, formed in 1983 after the AZASO break away and later the formation of SANSCO [SA National Students Congress]. And the great concern in the launch of AZASM was that it also ultimately does not break away. AZASM itself has developed unevenly around the country, rather

as expected. Locally as I say, it's made a lot of impact at Durban Westville in particular. But it seems that its basic impact has been for university students. And that is why it is trying to create two organizations. One for university students and one for high school students. I think a struggle that had already occurred in COSAS [Congress of SA Students for high schools] a long time ago.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPAL ISSUES TO WHICH IT ADDRESSES ITSELF? I AM ASKING YOU BECAUSE I ONLY HAVE A FEW DAYS HERE AND I'M UNLIKELY TO CATCH UP WITH ANY AZASM PEOPLE. WHAT ARE THE SORT OF ISSUES OR PRINCIPAL IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS THAT IT IS TRYING TO POPULARISE ?

I suppose its whole emphasis is encapsulated in its slogan of "Black student- worker solidarity," or "black worker-student solidarity." At the beginning when it was formed, it looked at a strategy of creating tents for the homeless in Soweto and politicizing in that way in tandem with the AZAPO health secretariat and urban and rural development secretariat. And it has also developed a secretariat structure of its own, and later on we saw them collecting data for NUM's [National Union of Mineworkers] ballot on a strike. That was before the schisms with COSATU became very clear. And now on a local basis you have seen them branch out into cultural activities, sport activities. Basically very similar to the AZAPO secretariat structure.

WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT PAC-BC RELATIONS, THE EVOLUTION OF THAT RELATIONSHIP?

I think the evolution has been somewhat disturbed by hegemony, by power struggles. It seems as if the PAC— . The logical successor to the PAC would have been the black consciousness movement, just continuing in the same tradition. Of course, one is not talking about the actual PAC in exile, which has by the time of the launch of the black consciousness movement .....(?) and were the first to condemn the creation of SASO.

But what we are talking about is the development of an ideology and the synthesis of Pan Africanism and black consciousness, and that was best symbolized in what literally became the event that resulted in the launch of AZAPO, which was Sobukwe's [March 1978] funeral, organized completely by the Soweto Action Committee. And by people like Ish Mkhabela and Lybon Mabasa, who later on became instrumental in the formation of AZAPO. And I think there is a lot of historical significance in that. The PAC grouping in the country then, were *completely* within AZAPO. You had people like Quraish Patel who is here at the *Sunday Tribune*. And you had lots of other people who had actually made tremendous input into black consciousness ideology.

But there seem to come a stage in the last two years when it seems, because of external pressure, PAC had to make a difference with the black consciousness movement known, in order to show that it had its own independent organization in the country. Because AZAPO had refused to align itself with any particular organization, not even the BCMA actually. And the PAC was really not happy with that situation. But this also on the ground created a lot problems, because when you are popularizing black consciousness and you are popularizing Pan Africanism, the lines are absolutely indistinguishable on the ground. In fact, a logical process of the synthesis of these ideologies has been disturbed completely.

I will give you the position paper we have come to on that, as a Black Consciousness Movement Durban and District. It might not be the most popular position at the moment, but I think ideologically it says the same thing I have been saying. It says that there is an urgent need for the Azania school to meet and resolve these differences. Before these differences become something like the UDF-AZAPO clash of a few years ago.

And even the UDF ultimately is a development that could be predicted from within the black consciousness movement. Because the entire middle leadership now is clearly from within the black consciousness tradition and have actually nothing in common with the Congress alliance tradition of the 50's, the Freedom Charter tradition, at all.

But AZAPO seemed to have in its development to have this magnificent ability to draw people away as well.

DO YOU MEAN PUT PEOPLE OFF ?

Put people off, maybe. It seems to be something that happened, but maybe that is a too superficial statement also. I think there was a lot of pressure now from the exiled movements, which had literally been revived by black consciousness, by the 1976 uprising, there was a lot of pressure for them to show that they have a following, a visible following, which had been almost checked out numerically in the country.

First it was the ANC, and hence its post '77 development ultimately into the UDF; and then it is now the PAC which is going the same way.

NOW ARE THERE PEOPLE INSIDE THE COUNTRY WHO HAVE NEVER BEEN OUTSIDE WHO STILL SAY "WE ARE LOYAL TO THE PAC THAT WE KNEW IN THE LATE '50'S, SHARPEVILLE ERA", AND WHO WILL NOT GET MIXED UP WITH THESE NEWCOMERS, BC. . . ? AND IF SO, WHAT IS THEIR RATIONALE FOR MAINTAINING THEIR LOYALTY TO THAT HISTORICAL PAC?

Their rationale I don't know, but as for such people existing, yes, they have always been there. I think the issues ultimately become emotional issues. Maybe even a distortion of the original PAC position. I think two things. Basically the influence of so-called Indians within the black consciousness movement for a lot of people is a turn off. The Indian question of course is a complicated question, especially here in Natal. And secondly it is the old idea which some people still hold that foreign ideology is being imported. As much as this was also common in the early black consciousness movement, so that we are just having communists in black face.

SO THE LEFT-LEANING AZAPO IDEOLOGY WOULD BE BRANDED AS A FOREIGN INFLUENCE?

Yes, it is also a turn off. "Scientific socialism".

AND DOES IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH VISIONS OF A POST REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETY? THAT WHITES WOULD LEAVE? I AM CONSTANTLY GETTING A STEREOTYPE OF PAC AS A GROUP THAT STOOD FOR ONLY BLACKS IN AFRICA; AFTER THE TRANSFER OF POWER WHITES WOULD SIMPLY HAVE TO LEAVE, WHICH WAS NEVER THE ORTHODOX OFFICIAL PAC POSITION, BUT WHICH WAS THE POPULAR PAC PERCEPTION.

It seems what has happened is that they are associating that position with BC, rather than with the PAC. What is happening is that the PAC guys inside the country are at pains to point out that whites are now welcome within their ranks and that the definition of African, which at the best of times was a very unclear definition, that this definition actually allows white membership. This both from the outside and the inside. Gora Ebrahim's interview with the *Sowetan* two years ago where he made that clear, and again the development at the NACTU congress. Then Zeph

Mothopeng's statement, when he came out of the Island — was it the Island or a prison? And once again you have it at the NACTU congress, where the word "African" was replaced for the word black, in the NACTU constitution.

WITH WHAT INTERPRETATION?

An interpretation does not quite tally with the original definition of African in any way. But the emphasis is that the Africanists are nonracial and that the BC guys are racists. I think this has been properly documented by the *Weekly Mail*. Patrick Laurence's interviews recently.

I NEVER KNOW TO WHAT EXTENT JOURNALISTS DREAM UP THESE INTERPRETATIONS OR WHETHER THEY REALLY REFLECT—

It is probably instructive to interview the actual PAC guys. I think really their outlook would be very similar to BC, but they are at pains to create a difference, but there is nothing much. It is similar to the UDF actually in its original development. Once again they were at pains to create a difference, and it became loyalty to the Charter tradition ultimately. And yet most guys in the UDF do not take the Charter very seriously when it comes down to it. There seems to be a lot in common between all these traditions, with possibly the sole exception of the Trotskyist tradition, which strangely enough, has been flirting very ostentatiously with the BCM and with PAC in the country.

OVER THE WHOLE LAST TEN YEAR PERIOD ?

Over the last ten years. And I think right now that's going to happen even to a greater extent, with negotiations and national conventions.

WHAT IS YOUR EXPLANATION? IF YOU SEE THAT AS AN INITIATIVE FROM THE SIDE OF ALEXANDER AND INTELLECTUALS IN THE TROTSKYIST TRADITION, WHY WOULD THEY BE FLIRTING WITH THIS MORE MASS BASE?

I think why they would is because they see the potential to influence from their side these organizations, because both organizations did not specify content to the slogan socialism. Even if you talk of "African socialism" with the PAC's launch, or "scientific socialism" in exile. Talk of "black communalism" with the BPC, and "scientific socialism" again with the black consciousness movement post '77. There was not actually much content defined by BC, and it was open for them [Trotskyists] to define this.

Whereas they have always found themselves in conflict with the Charterist tradition with its openly reformist attitudes. On the other side the BCM, PAC side, there seemed to be a lot of demoralization over the past few years amongst cadreship. With the result that people are measuring themselves against the UDF, or ANC tradition, and they would welcome anybody to make up numbers on their side.

This is going to increase right now, because the slogan well popularized in that process is the slogan of "nonsectarianism". Nonsectarianism would be all very well if people were expected not to abandon their entire political outlook and ideology, but in other words if it is just to mean that people should not be knocking each other over the head over these questions— . But it seems to mean more than just that. Because nonsectarianism is actually sectarianism ultimately, because the people who say it want to dominate the particular organization. Because they only propagate this where the texture is open, to change the content of ideology. I think the texture is generally very open, even within the UDF fold. I think they misunderstand that as well.

HAS THE NEW LOOK OF THE SOVIET UNION ALTERED THE IDEOLOGICAL FORMULATIONS OR PRACTICAL SENSE OF POSSIBILITIES? IF YOU DATE IT FROM SAY TWO YEARS AGO, THREE YEARS AGO, WHAT EFFECT DOES IT HAVE ?

I think it has had a tremendous effect. First of all, the ANC/UDF tradition is still battling to grapple with this. But also within the rest of the left as well. You've found an inability to understand it, and ultimately accepting what the bourgeois media propagates, that Gorbachev is really a great man who has made communism acceptable to everybody. Of course there has to be something wrong if communism is acceptable to everybody, including the bourgeoisie, but I think there is overall great confusion, because of *perestroika* [restructuring] and *glasnost* [opening] and everything else.

JUST CONFUSION? NO NEW FORMULATION OF EXPLANATIONS?

There has been a formulation. One of them being to accept holus bolus the ideas of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, and another being to critique it.

TO ACCEPT THEM, MEANING THAT SOCIALISM PERIODICALLY HAS TO BE REFORMED?

Yes, that socialism has to be reformed. This is particularly from the ANC/ UDF school. I think it was clear in Motlana's New Year message. You will find that in the *Post* and Quraish [Patel] would be the best guy to get it for you. *Post Natal*.

WHAT YEAR? 1989?

Yes, this year. The other formulation, I suppose you can get that in the new *Frank Talk* whenever it's coming out, in an article called "Gorbachev, Soul of Capital Personified."

YOU DO HAVE THAT IN DRAFT FORM ?

I do have it in draft form. Actually I do have it right here. I could give it to you.

I THINK THIS IS THE MOST UNDERRATED NEW FACTOR IN THE TOTAL EQUATION. EVERYBODY IS TRYING TO COME TO TERMS WITH IT IN EXILE. BUT I DON'T GET A SENSE INTERNALLY THAT THERE IS A LOT OF ADJUSTING TAKING PLACE.

When you say underrated, a lot of people are trying their best to ignore it as well. I think that is the general attitude.

BUT THEY CAN'T. THEY KNOW THEY HAVE TO MAKE SOME ADJUSTMENT.

They know they can't, especially with resolution 435 and the Namibian developments, making it all the more imminent and all the more clear.

THESE THING HAVE VERY PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS.

Certainly they have. But there seems to have been in the last few years in particular a complete lack of open debate within the movement as a whole.

BECAUSE THE EMERGENCY MAKES IT SO MUCH MORE DIFFICULT?

No, the emergency does not make things all that difficult. In fact you can have organizations with new names operating and so on. I think even before the emergency you had this lack of open discussion. I think it is because of the overall cliquism which has developed. There has been a multiplicity of organizations and they have been jealously guarding what they stand for, and there has been clashes within organizations, all of them. And people do not seem to actually have faith in their lines, to discuss them openly, to be quite honest. Also maybe ultimately it is overall a bad political line, because they do not feel the masses of people can understand these things. Which I think the masses of people understand better than they do. In the end.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO A MASS PERSON WHO SAYS "WHY DON'T ALL THESE GROUPS GET TOGETHER AND WHY DON'T THE UDF GROUPINGS AND THE BC GROUPINGS FORM A WORKING UNITED FRONT?" WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE ACTUAL OBSTACLES REALISTICALLY, NOT JUST IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS DIFFERING. WHAT WOULD ULTIMATELY STAND IN THE WAY OF AN ALLIANCE IF THERE WERE REAL POSSIBILITIES OF VICTORY THROUGH SUCH AN ALLIANCE?

Realistically, and even to a mass person as you have put it, the problem would be with what has happened since 1982 between AZAPO and the UDF and especially from the Kennedy demonstrations in 1985 and Tembisa action through to Port Elizabeth, where you had outright war between UDF and AZAPO and this was followed almost in every center of the country. You had an onslaught that has not stopped. June 16, this year Muntu Myeza was hauled down. The UDF had actually focused on BC to be actually physically liquidated.

WHERE DID THAT IDEA COME FROM? CAN IT BE LOCATED IN THE UDF?

I think it comes from an idea within the ANC outside really and later on transferred through UDF inside, that they are just about to smell power and they need to present to the world that they are the sole and authentic anointed representatives of the black people in the country. And because BC was the most vocal opposition, they became first target. The others were not important actually, because of the way they operate as well, like the Unity Movement, CAL, I think that was underestimating the real strength. But BC was visible, it was there, it was easy to attack. It had meetings which were open and, just from a very practical point of view, it does not make sense and can't be done — for cadres who actually had their children burnt down in their houses, to now regard UDF people as being...

SO THERE IS A KIND OF GRUDGE FACTOR THAT CAN'T BE OVERCOME ?

I think the factors of cause relate ultimately to ideological factors, but also there is also just a raw struggle for power. And that makes it difficult for anything to happen, and the total inefficiency of leadership actually on both sides, except that the aggressor was actually the UDF at all points. But leadership actually to hold their membership in check.

INEFFICIENCY IN THAT SENSE, NOT HAVING CONTROL OVER THE—

In fact it would actually be wrong to equate the BC guys there with the UDF, because I think BC membership has been very disciplined in that regard. If there were any attacks at all it was basically from positions of defending life and property and sometimes families. But this has not even stopped this year. Very recently in Howick here in Natal UDF simply moved into the area and they found BC cadres were not in the township, so that they actually attacked their families. And this kind of thing has been happening for many years, so on the ground it becomes very difficult if not impossible.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME, AS SOMEONE MUCH MORE STEEPED IN THE SOCIOLOGY OR HISTORY OF THIS COUNTRY — ONE CAN ONLY SPECULATE AS AN OUTSIDER — THERE MUST BE SOME TRADITION OF FEUDING. I MEAN SOME CULTURES HAVE IT AND SOME DON'T, SOMETHING WHERE ONCE A THING GETS GOING THAT BECOMES A TIT FOR TAT PHENOMENON REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE ORIGINAL BASIS OF THE THING WAS.

Something like the hundred years war? Where everyone forgot the issues which....

IN NORTHERN ISLAND OR WHATEVER. I MEAN I KNOW THE MSINGA DISTRICT DISPUTES OVER LAND AND SO FORTH, AND IT GOES ON ACROSS GENERATIONS. IS THERE ANYTHING ANY ELEMENT IN THIS TIT FOR TAT THING GOING ON, OR IS IT REALLY BASED ON A KNOWLEDGE OF A SENSE OF ISSUES AND IDEOLOGY.

I think even as far as many cadres would be concerned on both sides, it would be knowledgeable, I think, in the main centers; yes, PE [Port Elizabeth] and Soweto being those centers. But I think a lot of what has happened in Natal is part of the overall development, a very complicated development here in Pietermaritzburg and Durban, where you basically have Inkatha versus AZAPO and Inkatha versus UDF, and mostly UDF versus AZAPO. Although the media chooses to simplify this to Inkatha versus UDF. And I do not think the organization AZAPO would want to add that OK, we are also being killed in this process — why don't you mention us? But in this area, those factors you mention could well play a part as well.

SOMEONE IN JOHANNESBURG THE OTHER DAY WAS EXPOUNDING THE THEORY TO ME THAT ALL OF THIS PIETERMARITZBURG FIGHTING REALLY HAS VERY LITTLE TO DO WITH POLITICAL, CURRENT POLITICS. THAT IT IS A TRADITIONAL FEUD THAT HAS JUST GONE ON FOR DECADES AND NOW SORT OF HAS GOTTEN OUT OF HAND AND BEEN TRANSPOSED INTO THIS CURRENT THING. THAT YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND IT WITHOUT THAT BACKGROUND.

Definitely not, I don't think so. What it actually is is a clash between an older generation and a newer generation. You found the older generation associating itself with Inkatha's policies. And you find the youngsters basically being either associated with UDF or AZAPO. Then the clash between UDF and AZAPO itself is based more on ideological factors. I don't think it has much to do with the entire cultural make up and so on. Or the tradition of feuding in Msinga, because if you look at the history....

NO, NO, NOT MSINGA, BUT LIKE MSINGA IN THE PIETERMARITZBURG AREA.

Msinga is not all that far from the area, but what is important about Msinga's history as well [is] it was fueled by the white settlers largely. I remember doing a [legal] case very recently where there was a white guy who was selling guns, there were gun runners as well. I am doing a case next month which deals with the entire razing down of a whole township in Durban called location number five. There were few Zulus in this area, but mostly so-called Pondos. And it was the overall Pondo/Zulu clash of 1985, but it is the police actually that we are alleging, and I think we are proving, because the case has already started last year. Not just provoked it, but did the actual burning of the houses. So the level of interference is great. Recently you had the creation of Joint Management Committees all throughout the country. It is a very complicated structure which militarizes the country. These structures concentrate on these kind of—

WHIPPING IT UP.

Ja. More intellectually maybe.

[Interruption] . . .

JUST TO REPEAT THAT — IN 1980 WHEN IMRANN TRIED TO FORM OR GET COSAS STARTED IN NATAL, HE WAS TOLD THAT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS HAD AFFILIATED WITH AZASO. HE WENT TO AN AZASO CONGRESS IN WILGESPRUIT IN 1980 AND HE FOUND THAT AZASO WAS CONVERTING ITSELF INTO A PROTO-CHARTERIST GROUP AT THAT TIME.

The emphasis at the conference was to infuse the ideas of nonracialism and destroy the emphasis on black consciousness in the AZASO constitution and policy. As I said, I found myself in conflict with all the people in all the commissions as well as in plenary session, where I had to defend BC. And what was said from reports from various universities, was every African campus in the country, Ngoye, Turfloop, Fort Hare, supported BC and supported the AZAPO constitution as it was. And the only two campuses which opposed that were UDW and University of the Western Cape, which found they had to emphasise more the ideas of class analysis and they very arrogantly said that BC had not developed these ideas of class analysis.

And even from my limited knowledge I had to say, look it seems as if you are missing a whole development which has already occurred and is actually occurring in AZAPO. To a more refined and developed degree than in which it is occurring here. And of course I found myself very unpopular in this grouping, but still I did not have direct contact with AZAPO. And still in terms of a mass level thing this has not translated itself. The guys in the executive and from the campuses which were quite happy with BC. Almost all the African campuses, in fact all, were quite prepared to sit back as well and say let us take these Charterist winds into account, as they put it.

The only campus from here which supported the class analysis factor and had a large group of Africans in it was the medical school campus, but even they did find themselves not quite at ease with the kind of analyses which have been propagated by UDW in particular. Because UDW was posited on the NIC's line completely. After this conference and together with my colleagues in Durban, all of them being the strongest Charterists to be found in this grouping, we went to the home of one Curtis Nkondo. And Reveal Nkondo was actually part of that executive you know, of AZASO at the time. (Of AZASO. He had been, of course, elected the first leader of AZAPO.) No, that was Curtis, Curtis is the father, Reveal is the son. The son was in the AZASO executive. By that time he was no longer in AZAPO, of course.

The first question he asked us was, "Has the name changed? Do you still have that Azania in the name?" I was quite shocked, sitting with an open mouth there. And they said no, we thought it strategic to leave the name as Azania, because you know Azania is associated with the South African government, so that they will not ban an organization so easily. Which even at the conference it caused, (it was said also at the conference), and even the medical school guys stood up to oppose this.

THEY WANTED TO CHANGE THE NAME OR TO KEEP IT ?

Everyone agreed to keep the name, but when the statement was made that Azania is associated with the South African government, even they who saw themselves as Charterist in outlook opposed it. But that line came from the UDW guys also, from the SRC here. From the Natal Indian Congress, those guys. And then a debate followed in Curtis's home where he strongly

opposed the existence of a Natal Indian Congress. The guys from this area, SRC guys, defended the existence of a Natal Indian Congress. For traditional reasons, actually. I think I got some insight there that even though the person had been expelled from AZAPO and wanted to see its destruction at all cost, he remained very BC at heart.

I do not know if that is still true of Curtis who made a statement later on that he does not understand what is black consciousness, there is green consciousness and so on. But now we are talking about December 1980. When he was still basically suffering from the effects of being suspended first and then expelled by national council as a whole. If you remember then there was a supportive action by AZASO and COSAS which shared the AZAPO office at that point, saying, look we are not going to sit in this office anymore, we are moving to the MWASA [Media Workers of SA] office, and our demand is that Curtis Nkondo's expulsion be lifted. Because although there were reasons given for his suspension the real reason is that he supports the [Freedom] Charter [i.e., the ANC]. Obviously the executive that was elected which was suppose to uphold BC in AZASO was very strongly Charterist already.

SO THEY WERE MOVING OUT.

Ja. they were moving out. In fact follow that up in a congress in 1981 and at that congress they adopted a constitution which had been drafted at the secret conference. I did not go to that one.

AND YOU SAID EARLIER THEY USED A PARTICULAR PHRASE OR WORD IN THAT CONSTITUTION.

Nonracialism, in the existing constitution, what was said was BC is the weapon to mobilize and they replace BC with nonracialism. That was what happened in 1980. So I found myself still in the next year chairperson of the Black Student Society. But although there was an attempt to work with all the campuses here, the UDW campus and the medical school campus, later on the tensions of, or outlook — and theirs basically became unbearable — this was within 1981, and it was impossible to work together. And they found themselves working together closer with NUSAS and the SRC which earlier in the year '81 they did not want to do at all. But by '82, Joe Phaahla actually accompanied me to the 1980 congress, actually finding himself comfortable enough to speak at the NUSAS conference, and therefore break the whole [anti-NUSAS trend] which Biko started and the whole attitude to NUSAS.

HE IS NOW A UDF PERSON ?

Ja, he is UDF. Well I would say he was already UDF by then. He was one of those who were given the scholarship, that Craig Williamson link-thing, or what was it?

WAS IT TO STUDY ABROAD?

No, it was not to study abroad. They were also given money in the country. I think that is where his association with that kind of outlook came in. The Charterist outlook. And I remembered we organized a COSAS conference here at the Gandhi settlement and Joe was very influential in spreading ideas basically of the Charter there. And we went to raise money for this conference. I actually did a lot of the leg work. From people like Paul David of the NIC who said COSAS is okay, as long as it is not AZAPO. So part of myself felt increasingly uncomfortable in these ranks,

BUT NOW COSAS WAS A HIGH SCHOOL THING ?

Yes, high school

SO YOU ARE NOT REALLY INVOLVED IN COSAS ?

No, I am, because COSAS becomes a high school only thing in December of 1980, and two weeks later I attended an AZASO conference. Now the decision was taken at the COSAS conference that the University students must go to AZASO. But before then COSAS was like AZASM today, open to everybody. So I was virtually kicked out of COSAS membership, but did nothing to do that. It was a very sensible decision. It had nothing to do with ideology at all. It was that university students wasted the time of the organization by discussing intellectual issues. I think one of them being ideology and that became very true of the AZASO conference which I attended two weeks later. The spirit was completely different.

WHEREAS THE HIGH SCHOOL ORIENTATION WAS WHAT?

It was more action-oriented actually. And as a result, COSAS became really a recruiting ground for Umkhonto we Sizwe. You would see a COSAS national executive and a local executive today and tomorrow they would be outside the country. And [pro-PAC] AZANYU I think has had a similar development basically. But that is what COSAS really was about. Therefore they also had every reason to kick out the university students who were very wary about crossing the border and leaving the country and things like that.

JUST BECAUSE THEY WERE OLDER AND WISER.

Ja, and becoming more comfortable maybe, but you found the COSAS guys basically saying, look we have no time for these intellectuals. There was a clash. Something like the clash which SAYRCO [SA Youth Revolutionary Council of Tsietzi Mashinini and Khotso Seatlholo] had ultimately with the BCMA, I think.

SAYRCO ?

What do they call themselves now, South African Youth Revolutionary Council? Ja, they also had an attitude problem with the older and wiser BCMA.

A GENERATIONAL THING. AND EVEN LOOK AT THE PEOPLE IN SASM IN THE SEVENTIES, SAYING THOSE SASO STUDENTS TRYING TO MANIPULATE AND DICTATE TO US AS HIGH SCHOOLERS, AS IT WERE, ONLY FIVE OR SIX YEARS OLDER.

Yes, that is true. So you had the same clash within COSAS. I think in this year's congress you have the same thing in AZASM. It repeats itself, because there is an interim committee formed in AZASM just for high school students and ultimately it is going to form itself in a high school organization.

BUT IT HAS NOT YET DONE THAT ?

It has not yet done that, which is for practical reasons, money being the biggest one...

WHAT IS THE ACTUAL STRENGTH OF AZASM ON THE GROUND SO TO SPEAK? IS IT A VIABLE ONGOING ENTERPRISE ?

Hard to determine that. Ja, in a lot of parts of the country.

WHAT ARE ITS MAIN BASE AND STRONGEST THEORISTS.

At the university campus I think its strongest presence will still be at Durban Westville, at high schools particularly in the KaNgwane homeland as well as in Qwa Qwa. That would be the strongest basis it has. I think you might be told.

WHY THOSE TWO AREAS ?

I do not know. Well, of course, Qwa Qwa was developed very strongly from here, from Natal. You also found a very strong presence in Pietermaritzburg of AZASM, Pietermaritzburg, Grey Town Area. A lot of deaths as a result of the clashes as well as well as detentions. AZASM clashing with Inkatha first and later with the UDF. I think there was a Sobantu Youth Organization, SOYO, I think which they clashed with and are still clashing with.

IS AZASM MORE INTELLECTUALLY ORIENTED OR ARE THEY MORE ACTION ORIENTED?

AZASM. I would say you find the domination of the university students being tremendous. The high school students are something like the old COSAS, action orientated, and a little bit different from COSAS in that they do have an ideology and that they do have an appreciation of ideology. I think that would be the difference. I would remember in COSAS, I remember very, very strongly, it was Wantu Zenzile who was the president of COSAS. Wantu went into exile soon after that, Wantu's brother could well have been president of AZAPO, but he was, what was his name? Sonwabo Ngxale, but he was butchered really by UDF in 1986, in Port Elizabeth. It was really a faction of the UDF which butchered him and apparently because he helped another faction, a faction which was seen to be more socialist within the P. E. UDF.

So it becomes very complicated the fact that Sonwabo clashes with his brother Wantu at an ideological level, shows the extent to which families are divided. As well as Tiego Moseneke who led AZASO and his brother who was PAC. What I was going to say though about Wantu was he was chairing this meeting of COSAS, and there was an accusation coming from Port Elizabeth that Indians and coloureds are bourgeois, not — They said Indians and coloureds have sold them out in the boycotts, because they went back to school, whereas the boycotts continued. This was actually the gospel truth because here, in Durban, in Cape Town, and in the Port Elizabeth area, but the more organized, the actual boycotts started with so call Indian and Coloured schools to start off with, but the African schools remained longer on boycott.

It was at that point that I spoke about blackness and the definition of black and at a COSAS conference I was given a standing ovation, I did not understand it, for clarifying this issue, particularly by the Soweto branch of COSAS.

YOU WERE DENYING THAT THERE WAS ANY SELLING OUT GOING ON AND WHATEVER.

I was saying that the organization was not very properly organized in those areas to communicate and make sure— . Because you know you had a very organized structure in the Western Cape, in the committee of '81. And the African schools were not properly represented. Now the fault must be two way then. Both the organization COSAS, as well as the schools in question, were just not doing their job properly. That is really what happened. It is the same thing that happened in Durban. But in fact there was no selling out and it was accepted that— And then the reason why I made the definition of black was because Wantu said look, it is very easy to explain all this:

Indians and coloureds are just bourgeois. So it was that. That was when the clarification became necessary, but it also illustrated to me the extent to which COSAS had actually no ideological input at all. And those cadres have definitely joined Umkhonto. And I think Umkhonto is full of people like that.

THAT HAVE NO PARTICULAR PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATION AT ALL.

And I think their orientation itself would be closer to BC, simply based on their experiences.

TO BC, BUT MAYBE HOSTILE TO COLOUREDS AND INDIANS AS SOMEHOW—

Well, hostile to BCM as well. You know you can have people who are very BC in their outlook, but are hostile completely to AZAPO to the extent of liquidating AZAPO people. That is how complicated the set-up is here.

IS IT BECAUSE THEY SEE AZAPO AS NON-AFRICAN?

No, it is because they see AZAPO to be non-ANC and a threat to the ANC. And the ANC is the true organization of the African people or the black people.

SO IN THAT SENSE THEY ARE BC NATIONALISTIC. BUT HOSTILE TO AZAPO AS—

As “CIA linked” or various other rumors. But that is a very common feeling. I think it is acknowledged by the ANC that this is a very common feeling.

THIS NOTION THAT YOU CAN BE IN THE ANC AND BE A BC PERSON AND IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS A BC PERSON, CAN YOU GIVE ME MORE ANECDOTAL OR OTHER EVIDENCE THAT WOULD EXPAND THAT POINT ?

I cannot give you very much more from my own experience, except a lot of information which gets through from ANC camps. First of all you've had people obviously now occupying the middle leadership of the ANC as much as the middle leadership of the UDF, who are absolutely the products of the BCM. Including the leadership of SASO, SASM and so on. UDF also had a similar development, and of course at this early stage, there was a guy who became the first person of the AZAPO branch here in Durban, Ramesh Govinder, who went over to the ANC. He left the country eventually. He went over and was told by people whom he knew in SASO, BPC and so on, maybe he started this whole tradition of pilgrimages to Lusaka.

YOU MEAN HE WENT AND THEN HE CAME BACK ?

Ja, and of course, now he is gone. Basically the ANC is not hostile to AZAPO at that stage, this was in 1981. The ANC is not hostile to AZAPO, it regards BC positively, and it does not need to see further evidence in that it sees that so and so was in BC, he is a political commissar, the person whom he was meeting, so and so is a military commander, the whole middle leadership is BC. They were not saying that the whole middle leadership was BC, but the whole middle leadership *is* BC. Otherwise you had this statement that we referred to earlier, which says BC is welcome within the ranks of the ANC.

And then you've had various rumors, of BC people being killed in the ANC camps. Which I do not have the evidence for, but you have heard it all over the place and it was repeated by this girl who is now demented you know, Nokonono Kave, when she gave evidence [before the Denton hearings in the US Congress]. I represented AZAPO at the Goniwe inquest recently and I met her

there recently. And I met her there, she said that she wanted to go into the witness box and give evidence and expose these ANC people who are responsible for the death of so many. And I said to her thanks, but we cannot use you. Because in any event it was an inquest that did not allow for any evidence at all. But she is definitely quite demented. You cannot give much credibility, as you say, but a lot of the experiences she relates were repeated by cadres. I don't know, if you ever get in touch with the AZAPO office in Johannesburg, I've got a feeling that they can give you data about this. Particularly in the last year or two. There were also rumors of a blood bath in the ANC camps in Lusaka I think; anyhow it was in Southern Africa.

I THINK THOSE THINGS ARE RARELY IDEOLOGICAL. I THINK THEY HAVE TO DO WITH MUCH MORE MUNDANE GRIEVANCES.

Often, and I also think there has been elimination of BC people at some point. I think at that point it was ideological. To me this is at best rumor at this point. I have not been able to verify on my own. I must say I have not tried very hard to do that, but I think that there are people who have more details.

DO YOU HAVE A COPY OF THE OUTCOME OF THE GONIWE INQUEST ?

The outcome was in one line really.

SO THERE WAS NO REPORT THAT SET OUT THE FINDINGS?

Well, I do have a rough note of what the magistrate found. And what the magistrate found was that he could not really say who was responsible for the killing. Which I think one knew all the way along, that you were not going to be able to pin this down.

WERE THERE ANY DOCUMENTARY EXHIBITS BROUGHT IN THAT INQUEST?

There was an article which I thought was very badly written, because it misrepresented what happened. It is the *Weekly Mail* article on the Goniwe inquest. And there was a letter I think from an the AZAPO chairperson clarifying certain issues in that article. I have a file on all the evidence in the Goniwe inquest, all the evidence is in a form of statements. It is a whole big file and really the oral evidence was a useless exercise, because it really repeated all this, which is in all these statements. It was more a publicity stunt this one, to be honest.

AND THE WITNESSES WERE MOSTLY SECURITY?

You see what happens here, you have, let's see. You have 97 statements, which the police investigated, there were police and so on.

PEOPLE COMING FORWARD AND SAYING WE HAVE EVIDENCE TO GIVE ?

No, these are all the people, all the leads that were followed by the police. Police themselves came to the conclusion that look, they could not trace who were responsible, obviously, and they collected all this data. What happened was that the family, on the advice of the Legal Resources Centre, demanded a public hearing for this. Which I thought was not necessary, but of course I was not the families' advocate at all. In fact I had to be called in to defend AZAPO simply because the magistrate then chooses from the statement what he wanted to hear.

HE MIGHT HAVE TRIED TO PIN IT ON AZAPO.

That was what he did, because every witness he called related to that aspect, that AZAPO could have done it. And if you remember, way back when Goniwe and others were killed, the security police actually issued a public statement that AZAPO is responsible. And you know we came back to that.

AND IT DID OCCUR AT THE HEIGHT OF THE CLASHES.

Yes it did, and that was the only real link in court. It was worth nothing, but in an inquest it is not like an ordinary court room, you can bring any evidence, including hearsay evidence, and that is what they had. From people who were actually Black Sash people in Grahamstown. All this evidence was a pretty useless exercise really, because the magistrates and the advocates knew what the findings were going to be eventually. . . .

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