

WITH THE PAC IN EXILE

Vusi Shange

It is not possible to round out the story of resistance in South Africa without including a chapter (at least) on the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). *Searchlight South Africa* has carried several articles in which there is reference to this movement but they are fragmentary and reflect our inability to get first hand documentary accounts.

Formed in 1958, in opposition to the ANC, both on ideological grounds and as protest against the anti-democratic practices of the ANC, the PAC called an anti-pass campaign in 1960. Poorly organized and without adequate preparation, the campaign was a miserable failure. However, the shooting by the police at Sharpeville (in the southern Transvaal) and Langa (near Cape Town) created a nation-wide storm. A pass burning campaign led by Albert Lithuli, president of the ANC, and a national stay-at-home led to the banning of the ANC and the PAC. After violent skirmishes involving the PAC's military wing, 'Poqo', in 1962-63, the organisation all but disappeared. It experienced a temporary revival after the brutal crushing of the 1976 students' revolt, but this was quickly dissipated.

While many PAC leaders went to jail in 1960 some went into exile where, in 1962, they tried to build a resistance army. The PAC leadership was torn apart by personal rivalries, complaints that there was no democracy in the exile movement and by accusations of theft. Some of this is told in Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945* (Longman, 1983). What has not been told openly is the story of in-fighting and assassinations. One book, written by Henry Isaacs (a member of the PAC leadership in exile), was ready for sale when leading members of the PAC threatened the publishers with libel action. Consequently the book was pulped. We have read typescripts of some of the chapters and found that, if true, the atrocities inside the ANC were a mere tea party by comparison. However it has not been possible to find independent verification of the account, many of which were reported at second hand by Isaacs.

This is a story that needs examination, but the PAC leaders have resolutely refused to offer an account. What is obvious (whatever our opinion of guerilla warfare) is that the PAC never built an army, did not engage in any significant fighting with government troops, and substituted slogans like: 'One settler, one bullet' for any action.

In a rare example of what happened to one of its cadres, Vusi Shange wrote an account of his 13 years in exile from 1977 until 1990. It appeared in the anonymously published exile newsletter, *Fighting the Crazy War*, Vol 2, No 5, 1990. Written as an 'open letter to my comrades in exile', Shange's main interest was not to relate the events within the PAC but to draw attention to the nature of the ANC and its history of abuses. There is no reason to doubt its authenticity. We reprint the introductory passage

An Open Letter

I LEFT SOUTH AFRICA on April 30, 1977. I lived in Zola North in Soweto. After the 1976 Soweto uprising I decided to go out to join a liberation movement. I knew of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). I looked for someone to take me out. I knew of someone living nearby. I didn't know of the political differences between the ANC and the PAC. I wanted to leave. I could feel that we as a black community didn't have any rights in comparison with the white community. I wanted to come and fight the regime to have the same rights. My actions were not politically inspired but I saw that other people including the Coloureds and the Indians were better off. But I thought that the land belongs to us also.

I contacted this people [sic] in the Students Representative Council (SRC) in a black school. Eventually I met someone in Zola to take us out. They came and collected us. Richard Mthembu took us to Dube [in Soweto - ed] where we contacted other people (four women/ten men) and left for Swaziland. We travelled by Hi-Ace combi. We left ten o'clock in the morning.

We crossed the border by foot at Piet Retief near the Swaziland border. We got transport on the other side of the border to Manzini. There we realised we were with the PAC. We were told we would go to Tanzania, have military training, then come back to fight the SA regime. I heard that the leader of PAC in Tanzania was working for the Coca-Cola company.

With the PAC

We left for Tanzania in May 1977. We travelled by Mozambican airline. We were a group of more than seventy. While we were waiting for military training the chairman of the Central Committee of the PAC, Potlako Leballo, visited us time and time again. We had meetings on Sundays. I realised that things were wrong - we received only promises of military training. Eventually a few went for training, but this represented only a fraction of the 200 waiting to be trained. I also started to see differences between leaders of the PAC.

The commander of the army, Ndandala [Ntantala] and PAC chairman, Leballo, were the only persons talking to us. No one was interested to fight at all. The situation became critical when a group of 30 trained cadres came back from China and were joined by a group trained in Libya. They heard they were not going back to fight. Both groups were dissatisfied and wanted to see the leadership. They went to Dar es Salaam and met Leballo who convinced them he was the only person qualified to lead the liberation struggle. But the group under Ndandala was the only group progressing. Themba Maphalala at that stage was talking against Leballo and was the only person to do this. Subsequently there was a shift against Leballo on the question why so little people were military trained. We demanded that Leballo must come and explain, but there was no progress.

After the meeting Themba told us people wanted to go home to South Africa and fight. For example in the Matundas camp people who arrived during the sixties were still just sitting there. He asked them why? They replied that they did not want to show differences between them and Leballo, but the majority supported Ndandala.

We decided that we will on our own infiltrate South Africa from Tanzania. We left some evening late in 1978. After three days we realised that we were moving around in circles. I didn't have any military training nor any weapons. Only a knife. We also became ill and decided to go back. But our group was divided. Themba, Ernest and Johnia decided to continue. Richard (who took me out of the country), Sipiwé and I decided to go back to camp.

Tribalism

Back in Dar es Salaam Ndandala's group surrounded all houses of Leballo's supporters. Because Ndandala was Xhosa and Leballo a Sotho man it became apparent that tribal affiliations caused all the trouble and prevented us from fighting inside South Africa. Fighting erupted between the two groups

and the Tanzanian army was called in to disperse them. Some were locked up and some were sentenced to two years imprisonment.

Eventually a conference to unite the two groups was held at Arusha. We, the rank and file members, were given seven days to come back and change our minds. We wanted to form a third force because we were given a mandate by the people in South Africa. But the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was against this. The governments of Tanzania and Mozambique were willing to support and train us to prepare to go and fight inside SA. They saw that internal problems and especially tribal affiliations hampered both the ANC and PAC. Ndandala's group, however, landed up as refugees under the auspices of the UN.

I thus left the PAC and joined the ANC in about 1979 in Tanzania. I was taken to a residence used for people going to school. But I didn't want to go to school and instead wanted military training. I was angry at the regime and knew now that the PAC consisted of useless people . . .

Shange states that he left the PAC in Tanzania, because of disillusionment at the ineffectiveness of the military wing in the mid-1970s. This was a time of severe conflict within the organisation, which led to the murder in Tanzania of the leading PAC figure, David Sibeko.

Shange's autobiographical account, which is one of a series of personal histories in this undercover journal, goes on to describe his subsequent disillusionment with conditions in Umkhonto we Sizwe, his participation in the mutiny in Angola in 1984 and his subsequent five years in the ANC prison camp, Quatro. When Quatro prison was closed in late 1988, he and other inmates were freed and transferred by the ANC to its camp at Dakawa in Tanzania. After suppression of elected exile organisations at Dakawa by the National Executive Committee of the ANC in December 1989, Shange fled Tanzania with a group of fellow members critical of conditions in the ANC, and fearful for their own safety. The individuals in this group were imprisoned in Malawi in the early months of 1990. They were transferred by South African state security forces to South Africa, where they were released in May 1990. A member of this group, Siphon Phungulwa, was murdered in a political assassination in the Transkei the following month, after leaving the ANC offices in Umtata.

In 1990 Shange and his colleagues from the group that was imprisoned in Malawi formed the Returned Exiles Coordinating Committee (Recoc), which has received support from organisations close to the South African state. Shange himself has been a prominent spokesperson for Recoc within South Africa.

Shange's account of his later experiences in the ANC confirms the information and interpretation in Bandile Ketelo et al, 'A Miscarriage of Democracy: The ANC Security Department in the 1984 Mutiny in Umkhonto we Sizwe', *Searchlight South Africa*, No 5 (July 1990). Shange is referred to in that article as 'one of the commanders of the guerrillas in the mutiny at Viana camp in February 1984. (p 47)

From Shange's account, the inability of the PAC to make use of its advantages in recruiting young people after the 1976 students' revolt is striking. He describes the exiled leaders of the PAC during the late 1970s as 'useless people'. While not in the least analytical, Shange's account of stagnation and divisions in the PAC in Tanzania is interesting for its account of the effect of the troubles in the PAC on eager, young militants. A number of his fellow exiles in the PAC left the organisation and joined the ANC with him in 1979.

Accounts such as the above have become increasingly important with the emergence of Azania People's Liberation Army (Apla) in recent months. Embarking apparently on a round of indiscriminate shootings, together with the resurgence of the slogan, 'one settler, one bullet', this cannot lead to any meaningful change. This is little more than 'ethnic cleansing', a sentiment which we have no hesitation in roundly condemning.