

PIO PINTO: SON OF AFRICA

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THERE IS MOURNING IN KENYA. One of the bravest of her sons is no more, one of the fighters who helped to win independence for Kenya lies buried under the soil he loved so dearly.

Yes, Pio Pinto was a son of Africa. Elected to Parliament of Kenya, he was loved and respected by vast masses of Kenyan patriots. One of the staunchest leaders of the Kenyan African National Union (KANU)—the party of freedom built by Jomo Kenyatta and Oginga Odinga—Pio had spent many years in British prisons for the cause of Kenya's emancipation.

He died too for Africa: he was shot dead by the agents of imperialism—the imperialism, to vanquish which Pio dedicated his entire life.

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There is mourning in India too. For in Pio's veins ran Indian blood. A Goan by birth, this martyr for Africa's liberation, had his education in Bombay. Pio found no difficulty in identifying himself completely with the African cause: an anti-imperialist fighter for the same cause, wherever he may be. And the African fighters took Pio to their hearts, and with Pio they took to their hearts, the real India, the staunchly anti-imperialist India, the India of our courageous workers and peasants.

Pio was a bridge between India and Africa. Pio, by his every act, demonstrated the oneness of the anti-imperialist battle, the solidarity of Asia and Africa, of India and Africa.

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I am proud that I knew Pio, that I had shaken his hand, that I had sat and listened to him, talked to him, for hours and hours at a time. . . .

Uncompromising Fighter

President Kenyatta has paid Pinto the finest tributes that can be paid to any man. And in his statement of homage to the memory of this son of Kenya, the President has referred to the years Pio suffered in prison 'for his uncompromising line in politics'.

It is indeed this that impressed one most about Pio. And the impression grew with every meeting.

It was in India that I met Pio first. Those were the days of the intensification of the Goan freedom struggle, and I was one of the secretaries of the National Campaign Committee for the Liberation of Goa, Daman and Diu. Pio was here twice during that period if I remember correctly.

How impatient he was for the liberation of his beloved Goa. And I have little doubt that his inspiring words and pledges roused the Goan freedom fighters to regroup themselves, and give that last magnificent push, which compelled the Government of India to act.

The last time I met Pio was in Nairobi, in his own Kenya, in 1963. I had gone as a member of the Indian delegation to the Third Afro Asian Peoples' Solidarity Conference in Moshi (Tanganyika), and we passed through Nairobi on our way to and from Moshi.

Pio was there to greet our delegation when we arrived. He was there to see us off. And in between he was with us, to help us meet the leaders of Kenya, to understand the situation there, the problems, the hopes and aspirations.

Pio was himself part of the Kenya group which attended the Moshi conference, under the leadership of that resolute African patriot Oginga Odinga.

Every time we talked, Pio spoke of the need for solidarity against the imperialists.

Yes, he would say, we are marching forward, more and more countries are becoming independent, but be vigilant, for the imperialists have not yet been liquidated—they are here, striving to come back, to divide us.

Assault on Neo-Colonialism

I know that it was he who was amongst the first in Kenya to launch a fullscale assault on the dangers of neo-colonialism. Not for him the ending of struggle with the ringing of the bells of independence. Not for him any sitting back in his chair, after he became an M.P.

Always a powerful journalist, he organised the KANU press. He brought out a militant journal titled *Pan Africa* and organised the progressive *Pan Africa Publishers*. As throughout his life,

now too there was no compromise. The fight went on. No abandonment of principles, no weakening of resolve.

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And precisely because of this tireless exposure of imperialism, this passionate crusade against neo-colonialism—the imperialists killed Pio Pinto. They shot him dead at point blank range near his home. The cowards who killed, fired in the dark and then ran away.

But Pio's indomitable spirit lives. It lives in the work of the many brave young Africans, who had been inspired by his work, by the enthusiasm for the building of a socialist Africa which he always had.

Pio lives too in the mighty movement of Afro-Asian solidarity, which grows with every day.

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