

"Kill or Be Killed"

now the basic law of survival in South Africa

MATTHEW NKOANA

A Pan-Africanist Congress reply to **The African Communist**, on unity moves in South Africa

IN THE LAST 18 months or so the question of a united liberation front for the whole of southern Africa and the rest of the dependent African territories has been a dominant theme on African and international rostrums. In pursuit of this goal of unity, numerous articles have been written in various journals, and exploratory talks initiated at high level in the councils of the African Revolution. From this pen came an article in the October 1965 issue of *The New African*, preceded and followed by other articles in *Africa and the World*, in which I have discussed the necessity of an inter-territorial strategy and presented formulae for the unity of the liberation forces of not only South Africa but the rest of dependent Africa. The October article, published to coincide with the 1965 Accra summit conference of the Organisation of African Unity, was happily adopted by the National Executive Committee of the Pan-Africanist Congress (South Africa) as a policy statement and submitted by it to all Heads of State and Government assembled that month in Ghana.

Since then the PAC has never looked back. In October talks were initiated in Accra which resulted in 16 political organisations from all of oppressed Africa setting up a Steering Committee, with the PAC in the chair, to organise a conference for all freedom fighters to work out a plan for concerted and co-ordinated action for liberation. It was all-set for the conference to take place in Accra early this year when the army and police there rebelled against Kwame Nkrumah's Government. With Ghana temporarily put out of the picture, it became necessary to revise plans for the conference. It is to be hoped that next month's summit conference (5-9 November) of the OAU will give much more urgent attention to this very important question. On the South African front, the PAC carried the theme further in August at the United Nations Human Rights Seminar on Apartheid, held in Brazil, where it discussed the possibility of a Provisional Coalition Government for replacing the racist regime, yet certain elements continued to sow the seeds of suspicion and to spread divisive influences in the liberation ranks.

In its first-quarter 1966 issue *The African Communist* devoted a 13-page article to a personal attack on me arising from the unity articles. This followed another 12-page article which was an attack on the PAC and its leaders. The first of the two articles pours cold water on the efforts to unite liberation movements for concerted action against the southern African bastion of white supremacy.* Dubula dismisses the unity efforts of the PAC in this cavalier fashion: "In an endeavour to tap yet other financial resources in Africa and elsewhere lip service is paid to the unity of the liberation forces." But that is not all. Dubula parades a series of baseless charges against the PAC in what appears to be an all-out campaign to perpetuate disunity in South Africa.

With utter disrespect for facts, with unclever twists, distortions and fabrications, Dubula spreads the most divisive confusion amongst South Africa's political organisations. No side in the liberation movement is innocent of provocative utterances which tend to perpetuate bitterness, but nowhere has anyone reached the

level to which Dubula has sunk. There are differences and no one should attempt to gloss them over. These can be discussed calmly, and it is possible in the impelling cause of unity to set them aside if they can't be resolved. But to create the necessary atmosphere in which this can be done it is a compelling duty to stamp out the wild attacks and nail the lies which Dubula is spreading. In this article I propose to deal with the only charge in Dubula's 25-page string of abuse, which contains some grain of truth. I am not concerned with the character assassination campaign which *The African Communist* is directing against me. What is at stake by far transcends all personal considerations.

IN MY EAGERNESS to further the cause of unity, and in the course of a discussion welcoming a shift of policy by Nelson Mandela and Umkonto weSizwe (Spear of the Nation) from the African National Congress' "tradition of non-violence", last year I hastened to publish what was then reported to be Mandela's advice to his followers to join PAC. Although I made a point of stating that this report from Robben Island had not yet been confirmed, I must admit that it was prematurely released, and subsequently reprinted in Asia under circumstances beyond my control. Dubula seized on this to lend some substance to his campaign of abuse against the PAC and myself. But even this simulated passion on his part cannot bear examination. He described the item as "wholly imaginary" and as a "smear against Nelson Mandela, impugning his loyalty to the principles and the organisation to which he has dedicated his life."

I have since ascertained that what Mandela told the men on Robben Island was that it was crucial for the liberation of South Africa for them to co-operate with PAC. This is of course different from saying they should join the PAC, but for the purpose of unity it is just as important.

Dubula may think there are sacred principles involved here which must forever keep the Mandelas and the Sobukwes apart, but that is neither Mandela's view nor mine. I would be the last to smear Nelson Mandela. There are fundamental questions of political strategy and tactical principles over which I have disagreed with him. But that does not detract from my admiration of his courage. Having myself spent three hours, with Sharpeville ringing in my head in 1960, making an indictment of my accusers in court, I know what it takes to muster the necessary courage; that is why I admire the way Mandela faced up to the oppressors at his trials.

*The articles appear significantly under the African pseudonym Sol Dubula, though the paper is published by white South Africans from London. In my January article I associated Michael Harmel with the authorship of the articles. Later I met him by chance and he made to deny responsibility for them. I offered to publish an apology if he could prove his innocence, and asked him to arrange a meeting to discuss the matter further. Though several months have since passed, Mr Harmel has not yet contacted me. However, my offer still stands.

There are also some things he said at the Rivonia trial with which I have no quarrel. For instance, speaking of his political philosophy, he said:

"I have been influenced in my thinking by both West and East. All this has led me to feel that in my search for a political formula, I should be absolutely impartial and objective. I should tie myself to no particular system of society other than of socialism. I should leave myself free to borrow the best from the West and from the East."

Already six years before that, the PAC had declared for Socialism, and became South Africa's first (and only) mass organisation to do so in its basic documents. It opted for a planned State economy to ensure "the most equitable distribution of wealth" and rejected "the economic exploitation of the many for the benefit of the few", in the words of Sobukwe from his inaugural address in 1959.

It was also Sobukwe who first said, in the same address, what Mandela was to say six years later. Sobukwe put it this way (mark the similarity of phraseology): "Borrowing then, the best from the East and the best from the West, we nonetheless retain and maintain our distinctive personality and refuse to be the satraps and stooges of any other power." More important than the phraseology, of course, is the identity of standpoint.

In what way has Mandela's loyalty to principles been impugned? At the risk of boring the reader, I must once more give an example of another way by which Mandela has approximated PAC goals, before discussing the fundamental differences of strategy and methods, departure from which would constitute no disloyalty to principles on the part of Mandela.

In 1959 Sobukwe pointed out that "we are not blind to the fact that the countries which pursue a policy of planned State economy have outstripped, in industrial development, those that follow the path of private enterprise," citing the fact that "China is industrially far ahead of India".

In 1964 Mandela said: "We all accept the need for some form of Socialism to enable our people to catch up with the advanced countries of this world and to overcome their legacy of extreme poverty," citing Gandhi, Nehru, Nkrumah and Nasser as "all who acknowledge this fact," though they were "widely different persons".

For himself he said: "Today I am attracted by the idea of a classless society, an attraction which springs in part from Marxist reading and, in part, from my admiration of the structure and organisation of early African societies in this country. The land, then the main means of production, belonged to the tribe. There were no rich or poor and there was no exploitation."

THIS IS IN PERFECT HARMONY with PAC goals. But Mandela, as part of the ANC leadership, remained bogged down in its theoretical mire with regard to the race question and its place in the ideological liberation scheme of things. Following the lead given to the whole Congress Alliance by the White-led Communist Party of South Africa, he talked of the dangers of "Black domination" and the need to "harmonise class distinctions". As the CPSA saw it, its supreme task of the moment was to teleguide the African liberation movement away from what Mandela calls "Black domination" to what he asserts is a struggle for "full political rights". We have it on the evidence of Bram Fischer, an

old-standing member and a leader of the CPSA and an outstanding lawyer:

"We have never aimed at a despotic system of government. Nor were efforts ever directed to establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat in this country. . . . As I have already indicated we have never put forward socialism as our immediate solution. What we have said is that immediate dangers can be avoided by what we always refer to as a national democratic revolution. . . ."

Like all thinking people in South Africa Bram Fischer, who has also been imprisoned for life, was concerned over the grave injustices that are being meted out to the vast majority of the people of that land, and was especially apprehensive about the state of race relations. He pleaded for abolition of racial discrimination and an extension of political rights as a way of avoiding what he referred to as "immediate dangers." What those dangers are in the opinion of the CPSA will become manifest in the course of this article. It is those "dangers" which have made the CPSA what it is; which have fashioned the role it has played, together with the ANC and the rest of the Alliance, as a long-standing buffer between the oppressed and the oppressors. Mandela put it this way:

"During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against White domination, and I have fought against Black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities."

Now everybody knows that there was *never* any such thing as Black domination in South Africa or anywhere else. Yet it is true that the ANC, the CPSA and some others, including the white Congress of Democrats, the multi-racial Liberal Party, and the nondescript Non-European Unity Movement, have all fought "Black domination". *Black domination* has plagued the South African struggle for many, many wasted years.

The main basis of co-operation among various race groups in the Congress Alliance was the fight against this imaginary enemy, Black domination. The ANC aim to "harmonise class distinctions" was in reality to harmonise relations between the Black dispossessed and the White dispossessors. In this way, totally blinded by their notions of Black domination whilst admittedly opposed to White domination, they have run with the hares and hunted with the hounds. Their sincere but unthinking anti-racialist attitudes, calculated on the part of the CPSA and other white parties, became an antidote against the revolutionary fervour of African Nationalism which they dubbed Black racialism or "Black intransigence equally demented," to use the words of ANC Secretary-General Duma Nokwe.

They paraded these palpably false notions with religious fervour, playing up to the whites who set themselves up as the arbiters of political sophistication amongst the supposedly less advanced Blacks. According to Albert Luthuli, ANC President-General, the African Nationalists were to be condemned as "would-be political-exclusivist dictators". Of the ANC he said:

"It is as opposed to a racial majority masquerading as a democratic majority, as it is opposed to a minority of any kind, racial or otherwise, dominating over others because, for some reason, it seized the full control of the State."

Fears of Black racialism or Black domination held sway because of the theoretical bankruptcy which gripped the Congress Alliance and the

others. Preaching harmony between the oppressed and the oppressors was possible only where superstition reigned in place of objective analysis.

IN *The New African* OF OCTOBER 1965 I dealt with the issue of racialism as it affects the habits and institutions of South Africa. From that analysis one gains a picture of the only conditions in which it might be possible for Black racialism to develop, conditions which prevail in their crudest form only in the classic capitalist society such as that in South Africa today. The economic causes of a deliberately-fostered racialism, like those in South Africa today, have no room in a Socialist democracy. Socialists therefore have no cause to worry about a "racial majority masquerading as a democratic majority," whatever that really means. Where there is no economic motivation racialism cannot develop into a social menace.

As "Marxists", the CPSA should at least be aware of the laws of economic determinism and their bearing on phenomena in the constant interaction of social forces. I am regretfully aware that, from the days when some in the South African labour movement who called themselves "Marxist socialists" corrupted the well-known Marxist slogan to read "Workers of the World unite and fight for a White South Africa", the Socialist cause has never really recovered in White South Africa.

A shift of some kind there has been, as in the CPSA, but never to such an extent as the protagonists considered might endanger the survival of the whites as a political and economic force in South Africa irrespective of their numbers. It was only the intervention of external bodies which prevented even the CPSA from remaining exclusively White in its membership. But it has always remained predominantly White-led, to safeguard the future of the white man and forestall the advent of a South African "Native Republic," socialist or other.

The path taken by South Africa's brand of Communism was a matter of much concern to Leon Trotsky in 1933. In a letter to the Workers' Party of South Africa, even though at a distance and not particularly well informed about South African conditions, Trotsky aptly commented on a thesis which had been forwarded by this Trotskyite party as follows:

"When the thesis says that the slogan of a 'Black Republic' is equally harmful for the revolutionary cause as is the slogan of a 'South Africa for the Whites', then we cannot agree with the form of this statement; whereas in the latter there is the case of supporting complete oppression, in the former there is the case of taking the first steps towards liberation. We must accept with all decisiveness and without any reservation the complete and unconditional right of the Blacks to independence. . . ."

Sobukwe has observed: "Communism, like Christianity, has been unfortunate in its choice of representatives in South Africa." Elsewhere I have written that they were always white first, preoccupied with ways and means of safeguarding their kith and kin against the wrath of African Nationalism on the day of reckoning. If Mandela has now seen through all this and changed, he has proved disloyal to "principles" that are unworthy of being loyal to. Only those who set a premium on African disunity would lament.

As we have seen, at his 1964 Rivonia trial he approximated to a considerable extent, in dealing

with his political philosophy, to the stand Sobukwe and the PAC had taken since its emergence in 1959. Even more remarkable was what he said at his 1962 trial, when he took a similar position to that taken by PAC activists at their own trials since 1960. Here are some examples:

Sobukwe, 1960: "I feel no moral obligation to obey laws made by a white minority. I do not wish to impugn the personal honour and integrity of the Court, but an unjust law cannot be justly applied. . ."

Mandela, 1962: "I want to make it perfectly clear that the remarks I am going to make are not addressed to Your Worship in his personal capacity, nor are they intended to reflect upon the integrity of the Court. . . I consider myself neither legally nor morally bound to obey laws made by a Parliament in which I have no representation."

Sobukwe: "The law under which we are charged is a law made exclusively for the white man, and the officers administering the law are white men. We do not see how justice can be done in these circumstances."

Mandela: "Why is it that in this courtroom I face a white magistrate, confronted by a white prosecutor, and escorted into the dock by a white orderly? Can anyone honestly suggest that in this type of atmosphere the scales of justice are evenly balanced?"

For Mandela, who as lawyer and freedom fighter had previously featured in other political trials in which he had acted within the legal framework, the 1962 case represented a departure. A drastic break with tradition, first initiated but abandoned in 1952, was pioneered and pursued by the PAC from 1960 onwards, when its activists became the accusers rather than the accused as such before the settler courts in many parts of the country, following the Sharpeville events. Will Dubula not recognise this wide measure of common ground? Quite clearly Mandela has moved a long way towards the PAC position, and I submit this is what

pains Dubula. He is only too painfully aware of this progress towards African unity.

AND NOW WE COME to the heart of the matter. What is really eating up Dubula and his ilk and striking terror into the heart of every "White supremacist in South Africa is the mighty post-Sharpeville rise of the PAC, characterised by events which the "communist" Dubula condemns as "the uncontrolled violence of Poqo" and the "liberal" Mary Benson denigrates as "anarchy". Bram Fischer, in what his colleagues describe as "an eloquent defence . . . of the policy and programme of the South African Communist Party", has told of their fears of the growth of the PAC whom he said were "extremists, whose numbers and influence were growing at an alarming rate".

Alarming indeed! To whom? White supremacists and their fellow-travellers, naturally. The mediators between the oppressed and the oppressors could not bear to see the former take up arms. Fischer cited the people's revolts against oppression "in Zeerust and Sekhukhuniland, in Durban and Warmbaths, in Zululand and Pondoland", as a prelude to "violence in its most dangerous form"; and what he described as the "Paarl riots and Bashee River murders" as "precisely that kind of terrorism which we have always fought to prevent".

It is in dealing with the post-Sharpeville armed phase of the struggle that Dubula cannot help but unmask himself. Because White blood has been spilt at Bashee River, Paarl and elsewhere Dubula, whilst condemning these political killings as "irresponsible" and "uncontrolled outbursts of useless violence," spares no word of "White sympathy" for those who were involved: the 58 PAC activists who have been hanged in this period for having been driven by intolerable conditions of tyranny to take up arms. Through no fault of their own, these men have been caught up in a vicious circle of violence and counter-violence and their memory deserves the respect of all decent men who would do honour to those who die honourably, on their feet, facing the greatest odds. But there is not even a single reference to these martyrs of the African Revolution in Dubula's 25-page harangue, except in the most derogatory terms, as shown above.

An act of violence can be demeaned or edified by its motivation. Violence for violence sake must be condemned, but such debauchery is very rare, even in the animal kingdom, where the

struggle for survival is acutest and constant. In its crudest form the law of the jungle can be explained in a simple maxim: kill or be killed. Men are often driven to that level. Certainly they have been driven to that level in South Africa, where thousands know the meaning of slow death through starvation and disease, or instant death as at Sharpeville. The figures of infant mortality tell the rest of this grim story.

All men of whatever colour or political shade who die in the struggle for the cause of freedom must be fittingly remembered. Their heroic names will yet be emblazoned in golden letters on the shrines of *AZANIA*, which is what South Africa is to the mentally emancipated, and will be in the post-Liberation era. Meantime, these names may be found in the columns of past numbers of journals like *The New African* and *Africa and the World*, and they include men of all political shades. But the pages of *The African Communist* are never "soiled" by the names of men who die in the struggle as those 58 PAC men have.

Dubula, through reckless misrepresentation and even downright mutilation of what has been written in the interests of unity, does not serve the cause for which those men, and thousands of others before them throughout the centuries, have died. He frustrates all efforts towards the building up of effective striking power against the White laager. With all charitability, it would be extremely difficult to adjudge Dubula's as anything other than an act of treachery, objectively considered, perpetrated against the patriots who are engaged in a life-and-death struggle for the liberation of South Africa. Being no judge of intentions, however, I can do no more than recommend that for this crime a docket should be opened in the councils of the African Revolution. Meantime, the ANC would do the cause of unity, and therefore the cause of Azanian liberation, a great service by disowning and renouncing Dubula and his ilk, who are stabbing us in the back.

If this year's summit conference of the OAU can bring the freedom fighters together in conclave, the cause of liberation in southern Africa and the other dependent territories will have been served far better by that than by all the resolutions it has adopted since its formation condemning imperialism, for words are not bullets.

†E. A. Brett: *African Attitudes* (SA Institute of Race Relations, Fact Paper No. 14, 1963).

Take a year's subscription—and send FRONTIER to South Africa



Ten issues—20-32 pages of the politics, economics, cultural and social life of modern Africa—by the established writers and artists of and about Africa, and many new voices.

Africa airmail £2, surface mail £1

United States of America, Canada airmail \$7, surface mail \$5

Rest of the world airmail £2 10s, surface mail £1 10s

Students less 25%

Enclosed the sum of

Gransight Holdings Ltd.
60 Paddington Street
London W1

Send one year's subscription to:

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

and also send Frontier for one year to a banned or restricted South African.

[Delete if negative]