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Pan-African Congress on verge of breakup



David Sibeko, the PAC's former director of foreign affairs, was a victim of the plotting and intrigue that has plagued the organization in recent years. He was assassinated in June 1979.

Photo by the Call

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By Munir Umrani

THE Pan Africanist Congress, one of two South African liberation organizations recognized by the Organization of African Unity, is on the verge of disintegration as a result of factionalism, murder, alleged theft, opportunism and diplomatic bungling.

"There are certain developments in the organization at the present time, which if not rectified, will perpetuate the crises which have bedevilled the organization during the past two decades and which have weakened it to a point of disintegration," one source, a "confidential" PAC memo, contends.

Others say the 23-year-old organization's problems are so severe that it is in danger of being de-recognized by the OAU because of the strife and inactivity on the military front.

AN OMINOUS sign, one source said, is the fact that John Pokela, the PAC's chairman, was not invited to the summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Front Line States, held in Maputo, Mozambique, on March 6 and 7.

It was an ominous signal, the source added, because Oliver Tambo, president of the African National Congress (ANC), was invited, along with Sam Nujoma, head of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).

SWAPO is fighting to liberate Namibia from South African colonial domination.

The fact that the Front Line States, in a communique issued on March 7, did not mention the PAC, also has some PAC members worried.

The States pledge "to intensify their material support for the liberation movements of SWAPO of Namibia and (the) ANC of South Africa, so that they can intensify the armed struggle for the attainment of national independence for their peoples."

The Front Line States — Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana and Zimbabwe — provide diplomatic, military, political and moral support for the liberation movements.

WHILE BOTH the ANC and the PAC have had and will continue to have their share of problems, the PAC is such that the ANC may soon get its wish: that is, to be recognized as the sole South African liberation movement.

World Muslim News learned the extent of the PAC's problems from a detailed, 38-page "confidential" PAC memo, which was one of three obtained recently from a source who has closely monitored liberation movements in southern Africa.

The memo, prepared by the PAC's former director of Foreign Affairs and sent "to

all representatives, offices and branches of the PAC," is dated Feb. 17, 1982. An inquiry into how well it was received by PAC leaders revealed that it was ordered suppressed by the Central Committee.

It also was learned that Henry E. Isaacs, who wrote the memo, resigned his positions as a member of the 15 person Central Committee and director of Foreign Affairs on March 31, 1982.

A SOURCE CLOSE to Mr. Isaacs said the 33-year-old lawyer is still a member of the PAC, which officially broke away from the ANC in 1959 over policy differences.

Mr. Isaacs was appointed director of Foreign Affairs and observer representative to the United Nations in October 1979, following the June 1979 murder of David Sibeko, who formerly held the post.

He was succeeded at the U.N. by Gora Ebrahim, also a member of the Central Committee.

Many of the charges outlined in the PAC memo were verified by trustworthy sources.

One event discussed in the document — the murder of Mr. Sibeko — was reported in some newspapers in the United States in June 1979. However, those reports did not discuss in detail what led up to the assassination. Nor does the PAC memo.

But a confidential source acquainted with the people

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involved in the murder provided background information that put the assassination into perspective. The candor of the memo seems to indicate that it was intended solely for internal debate and discussion.

FOR EXAMPLE, it states that "at the moment, factionalism and cliquism are rife within the PAC, at both the leadership and the cadre level.

"It is particularly rife at the level of the leadership where liberalism and mutual political blackmail have resulted in the formation of alliances based on expediency," the memo states.

"As a result, there can be no debate or honest discussion of issues within the Cen-

tral Committee; this in turn debases the concept of democratic centralism and certainly is not conducive to the promotion of democracy within the organization."

A source acquainted with members of the PAC Central Committee, including the memo writer, was asked what the author might have meant by the charge that "mutual political blackmail" was prevalent in the organization.

IT MEANS, the source said, that individuals who "may be equally guilty of dereliction of duty or failure in certain responsibilities" are "fully aware" of each other's negligence, but do not try to correct the problem.

"In other words," the

source added, "I do not criticize you and in return you don't criticize me. And also, in some cases, there is a certain amount of corruption. If two people have been involved in corruption it's impossible for either of them to criticize or reprimand the other."

The memo, written on PAC stationery, also charged that "factionalism and cliquism at the level of the leadership in turn are breeding a great deal of opportunism among the cadres, some of whom believe that in order to secure positions within the organization, they have to align with one or another faction or clique within the leadership."

The author said "where

belly-crawling and bootlicking, plotting and intrigue and opportunism are rife, then mediocrity flourishes since merit and ability, political and ideological clarity are downgraded."

A chilling example of how "factionalism and bootlicking" could lead to plots, intrigue and even murder was covered in the memo, which covered a wide range of troublesome areas for the organization.

IT WAS REVEALED that "a section of the cadres (the rank-and-file) played a very crucial role in the removal of (Potlako) (Kitchener) Leballo (a former PAC chairman, who is now living in exile in Libya), at a time when many of the members of the

Central Committee op-

him with tragic results, as the assassination of David Sibeko, in June 1979, ultimately demonstrated."

Mr. Sibeko died on June 12, 1979 after being shot in the head on June 11. He was a member of a three-man presidential council that had replaced Mr. Leballo. Six persons were arrested, tried and sentenced to prison for the murder.

Vuse Make, a former PAC chairman who deferred to the current chairman, John Pokela, when he arrived at External Headquarters in Dar Es Salaam at the end of January 1981, barely escaped assassination."

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In fact, said a source thoroughly familiar with the assassination, the entire 15-member Central Committee had been marked for assassination by the PAC's military High Command.

The High Command actually planned it, and six militarily trained PAC members carried out the assassination of Mr. Sibeko, the source said, adding that "the aim was that they would eliminate all members of the Central Committee."

Justice Nkonyane, a former commander of the military unit and a member of the High Command, had planned to take over the PAC after the Central Committee was eliminated.

But, according to the

memo he was prevented from staging a coup by members of the rank-and-file who rallied around the leadership "during a period of intense crisis and uncertainty" for the PAC.

Mr. Nkonyane spent more than a year in detention, in Tanzania, during the investigation into the Sibeko assassination and the subsequent trial. He was eventually released.

IRONICALLY, it was Mr. Sibeko who came to Mr. Leballo's aid when, in January 1979, he "was faced with almost unanimous opposition from the Central Committee and the representatives" at a plenary meeting, according to the memo.

Mr. Leballo, according to

the memo, had been identified by the Tanzanian Government "as the cause of the internal strife in the PAC, to the point of warning him of dire consequences should there be a repetition of indiscipline and strife within the organization."

He had become an embarrassment to the Tanzanian Government, sources say.

Mr. Sibeko rescued Mr. Labello "by proposing the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry," made up of Ngila Muendane, Fezile Nhlapo and Mosebjane Malatsi, who "undertook a very expensive and lengthy mission in travelling to various centers to interview members of the PAC, etc. The report was never tabled.

The memo, which

presented guidelines for the operation of the department of foreign affairs, reveals that, "in April 1979, the cadres organized a protest against (Mr.) Leballo at the meeting to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the PAC in Dar-Es-Salaam.

"That demonstration set off a chain of events which culminated in the removal of Leballo at the end of April 1979 as chairman of the Central Committee," the memo states.

It also reveals that "the action of the cadres was supported only by a few members of the Central Committee," the writer of the memo among them.

In fact, the memo indicates that the writer and Edwin Makoti, a Central Commit-

tee member and the Director of Publicity and Information, were accused of "inciting" the cadres because of their close rapport with them.

The late Mr. Sibeko "even proposed an investigation by the Central Committee into the role of the members of the Central Committee in the events at the twentieth anniversary of the PAC in Dar-Es-Salaam," the memo adds, stating, "It was clear who he had in mind."

One source said it is significant that Mr. Sibeko worked to protect a man who had launched a virtual "reign of terror" within the organization, and even allowed members of his private army to assault other

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members of the Central Committee.

During the time leading up to Mr. Leballo's removal, "the entire situation within the organization was characterized by virtual terrorism" in the sense that some PAC members "who owed personal allegiance" to Mr. Leballo "had been armed and were involved in acts of violence and thuggery against those who were regarded as not being loyal to Leballo," the source said.

The source said these PAC members "had engaged in various acts of indiscipline including assaults on certain members of the Central Committee, who Leballo did not want, anyway. The continued existence of the PAC, at that time, was threatened," the source contends.

The memo, in addition to shedding light on the workings of a liberation movement that is fast losing out to

the ANC among the masses in South Africa, also discredits Mr. Sibeko's May 1979 contention that the ouster of Mr. Leballo went smoothly.

Mr. Sibeko is quoted in the May 14, 1979 issue of The Call as stating that "the decision of the extraordinary session of the Central Committee (to elect him, Vuse Make, then administrative secretary; and Elias Ntloedibe, then director of publicity and information to the Presidential Council that replaced Mr. Leballo) enjoys great popularity throughout the ranks of the Pan Africanist Congress and its armed wing, the Azanian People's Liberation Army."

Mr. Sibeko, whom the confidential PAC memo contends had been receiving a personal allowance from a U.S. corporation which has investments in South Africa and which has been very closely associated with

Anglo-American (which in turn is headed by Harry Oppenheimer, the biggest exploiter of black labor in Azania), said the decision was unanimous.

"THE DECISION was arrived at with absolute unanimity," he said. "It was taken with the expressed desire to strengthen all the relevant organs of the PAC for waging of people's war in Azania (South Africa), mobilization of the broad masses of people, as well as the acceleration of the international solidarity work."

The next month Mr. Sibeko was assassinated, and the PAC was thrown into further turmoil.

The controversial memo said "rather than there being direction, organization and cohesion after the traumatic events which culminated in the murder of David Sibeko, the Central Committee under the leadership of Comrade Vus Make was characterized

by indecision, corruption, factionalism and cliquism."

An example of corruption, the report said, was the "total inability of the then Director of Finance, Comrade Erret Radebe, to account for almost a quarter of a million dollars."

The report said the rank-and-file "again played a critical role in preventing the disintegration of the PAC, through their demands for the removal of (Elias Ntloedibe (then Director of Publicity and Information) who had been a complete failure in his tasks and Mantshontsho (then Administrative Secretary) and ultimately, their stated lack of confidence in four members of the Central Committee against whom they had made certain allegations."

"Those allegations are still the subject of investigations by a Commission of Inquiry," the memo states.

A reliable source refused to disclose the nature of the inquiry, but did say that "after the removal of (Mr.) Leballo, and after the assassination of (Mr.) Sibeko the organization still failed to make any significant headway."

"Whereas it was convenient for people to blame all the problems of the organization on (Mr.) Leballo, since he had been removed they no longer had any excuse for that," the source added.

The commission of Enquiry is due to report in May, the source noted. And, the source said, members of the Central Committee who are under investigation are still in their posts.

Pearce Gqobose, who was described as an "old veteran of the PAC, is chairman of the commission. Other members are David Dube, Hamilton Keke, and "a young cadre named Bamba, who serves as secretary.