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Pan Africanist Congress of Azania

Observer Mission to the United Nations

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211 East 43rd Street
Suite #703
New York, NY 10017
Tel. (212) 966-7378

PRESS RELEASE:

March 31, 1982.

I have today resigned my positions as member of the Central Committee and Director of Foreign Affairs of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania. My resignation, which is with immediate effect, is the culmination of irreconcilable differences between other members of the Central Committee and myself over policy, procedure and the general direction of the liberation movement.

The internecine strife and the disarray within the Organisation have reached a level of such absurdity that I have lost confidence in the ability of the Central Committee to raise the level of performance of the Organisation inside Azania (South Africa) and internationally so as to achieve the publicly-stated objectives of national liberation and self-determination for the oppressed and exploited masses of Azania.

I shall, however, remain within the ranks of the national liberation movement and continue to make a contribution towards the struggle against apartheid-colonialism.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all members of the diplomatic corps, the press corps, representatives of national liberation movements, the United Nations specialised agencies and liberation support organisations for the support and co-operation extended to the PAC during my tenure as Observer Representative to the United Nations.

H. E. Isaacs
Henry E. Isaacs
625 Main Street, #232
Roosevelt Island
New York, NY 10044
Telephone: (212) 355-2075

liberation movements

MAY 12

South Africa

PAC in disarray

The recent resignation of Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) leader Henry Isaacs as the organization's foreign affairs minister and observer at the UN has brought to the surface growing questions about the movement's political viability.

Isaacs resigned after refusing an order recalling him to the Tanzanian headquarters of the faction-ridden group. PAC is one of two South African liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the UN; the more broadly supported African National Congress (ANC) is the other.

In his resignation letter Isaacs stated that "the internecine strife and disarray within the organization have reached a level of such absurdity that I have lost confidence in the ability of the central committee to raise the level of performance inside Azania [South Africa] and internationally so as to achieve the publicly stated objectives of national liberation. . . ."

Isaacs will be replaced at the UN observer post by Ahmed Gora Ebrahim, a member of the central committee who has been stationed in Dar es Salaam, the Tanzanian capital.

While evidence of continuing conflict within the PAC did not surprise informed U.S. supporters of Southern Africa's liberation movements, many were taken aback, nonetheless, by Isaacs's sharp denunciation of the organization. "The language in his statement blew my mind," commented one U.S. activist who has worked closely with Isaacs. "That's a hell of a statement," remarked Elombe Brath of the Patrice Lumumba Coalition, a solidarity group based in New York's Black community. "His letter substantiates what other people have been saying about the PAC."

In a "confidential" internal memo written six weeks prior to his March 31 resignation, Isaacs charged that "factionalism and cliquism" as well as financial corruption have weakened PAC to the "point of disintegration."

Isaacs also maintains that PAC leaders failed to develop an adequate response to the ANC's growing influence inside South Africa and abroad. "I argued," he told the Guardian last week, "that the growing media publicity of the ANC could not be dismissed as liberal propaganda. We needed a positive response to political developments inside the country," he added. "And in the absence of a viable alternative, the ANC was likely to enhance its prestige."

PAC FOUNDED IN 1959

The PAC was formed as a split-off from the ANC in 1959. Led by Robert Sobukwe, PAC challenged the ANC's policy of accepting white and Indian members. PAC leaders also criticized ANC's cooperation with the South African Communist Party.

In its early years, PAC proclaimed that it had an "antitotalitarian" and "democratic" approach—policies it claimed distinguished it from the ANC. By the late 1960s, however, PAC leaders were attacking the ANC as "reformist" and insufficiently revolutionary. At the same time, PAC increasingly identified itself with China's political line.

In recent years, PAC's political outlook has become somewhat obscure. The organization's representatives have continued to argue that ANC's military operations should focus more on killing white South Africans, rather than on "armed propaganda" attacks on targets such as economic facilities and police and military installations. However, critics and even supporters of PAC note that it has been almost completely inactive militarily; while ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, has significantly expanded its operations.

Both the ANC and the PAC were outlawed in 1960 during a massive government crackdown following the Sharpeville Massacre. When the PAC chairman Sobukwe was imprisoned, leadership of the organization in exile was assumed by Potlako Leballo.

According to observers in New York, PAC's present internal problems are an outgrowth of the conflict that culminated in Leballo's ouster from the organization in 1979. Leballo was expelled after being accused of complicity in the murder of rival PAC leader David Sibeko, who had been recalled from his UN post in New York to help lead the organization in Dar es Salaam.

Leballo was eventually replaced as PAC chairman in February 1981, by John Pokela, who had just been released from a 13-year term in South Africa's notorious Robben Island prison.

The ousted Leballo still commands considerable support within the organization, however, according to widespread reports. Indeed, Leballo has claimed that PAC guerrillas loyal to his leadership on several occasions have broken out of their camps in Tanzania to attack Pokela's office in Dar es Salaam.

Inside South Africa, meanwhile, ANC has been waging an increasingly effective campaign of opposition against the apartheid regime. Moreover, sabotage attacks by Umkhonto we Sizwe have occurred with in-

creasing frequency since 1980, and there have been growing displays of open support for the banned movement.

As a reflection of the ANC's growing vigor and influence inside South Africa, a number of Southern Africa's frontline states—such as Mozambique, Angola and Zambia—have been lobbying quietly in recent months for the OAU to throw its support exclusively behind the ANC.

According to ANC officials, a frontline summit on March 6-7 in Maputo, Mozambique amounted to a virtual sole endorsement of their movement. This was indicated, they stated, when for the first time, ANC leader Oliver Tambo was invited to participate in all the summit's sessions. PAC spokesman Ike Mafolo, however, claims that Tambo's presence at the Maputo summit was engineered by Mozambique, which is not friendly to PAC. Mafolo says that PAC retains support from Tanzania and the ZANU government in Zimbabwe. The issue is likely to be raised at the August OAU summit in Tripoli, Libya.

In the U.S., the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the Namibian liberation movement, and ANC decided in April not to share a public platform with PAC. The joint SWAPO-ANC position posed a problem to some U.S. support organizations which have been reluctant to take sides in the dispute between the two South African movements.

Elombe Brath of the Patrice Lumumba Coalition recalls that his organization had traditionally been close to the PAC.

But Brath told the Guardian his organization decided in April to support ANC exclusively: "Our position at that point was not based on a derecognition of PAC, but a recognition of ANC as the viable liberation movement. The ANC has become the leading liberation movement in South Africa," Brath added. "This is incontestable and this shows up in PAC's frustration."

JAMES KHATAMI

The Guardian
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opinion and analysis

SOUTH AFRICA'S PAC: ALIVE AND WELL

Following is an Opinion by Gora Ebrahim, representative of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa), written in reply to a Guardian article on his organization. In that article, the author discussed the resignation of a leading figure in the PAC and noted that the incident "has brought to the surface growing questions about the movement's political ability."

In order to engender informed discussion and debate in the U.S. antiapartheid movement of the important questions raised in both the original article and the reply, we will next week carry an additional piece that takes issue with many of Ebrahim's conclusions and provides further insights into the history and stands of the PAC and the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC).

By GORA EBRAHIM

As a person who has just come to the U.S. to assume my responsibilities as head of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania to the UN, I was indeed surprised to read in your issue of May 12, 1982, an article by James Khatami entitled "PAC in disarray." The said article contains glaring inaccuracies.

The writer claims that the "PAC challenged the ANC policy of accepting white Indian members" and implies that it was one of the major reasons why the PAC "split off from the ANC." This statement reveals that the writer is not conversant even with the basic issues of our politics. The ANC, in 1959, never accepted white, Indian or so-called coloreds as members. The ANC, however, was a member, and still is, of the Congress Alliance. The Congress Alliance, which in 1955 adopted the Freedom Charter, composed of the African National Congress of South Africa, the South African Colored People's Congress, the South African Indian Congress and the Congress of Democrats (for whites only). An additional member of the Congress Alliance was the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). In political parlance this setup was described as "multiracial." This was the political setup when the PAC was founded in 1959; how on earth could the PAC then have "challenged the ANC's policy of accepting white and Indian members?"

What in fact the PAC challenged was ethnic compartmentalization of those forces opposed to the fascist-colonialist regime in apartheid South Africa. The PAC was the first national organization that opened its doors to all Azanians and was the first to define that anyone who owes his only allegiance to Africa and accepts African

majority rule is an African. In other words the PAC opposed "multiracialism" and advocated nonracialism. This political position of the PAC was enshrined in the basic documents of the PAC which were adopted at its inaugural conference.

The second contention of Khatami is that "in recent years, PAC's political outlook has become somewhat obscure." The political outlook of the PAC, be it on the question of the principal contradiction in South Africa, the nature of the struggle, the methods to be employed, the issues of race and racism, etc., has been most consistent and in keeping with objective realities.

To illustrate concretely: In the South African context, what is the principal contradiction? Is it to end fascist-colonialism or is it a struggle for civil rights? This basic question, as far as the PAC is concerned, was resolved in 1949 when the ANC Youth League (the alma mater of the majority of PAC leaders) prepared, presented and got the ANC Conference to adopt the Program of Action and which, for the first time, called for self-determination. The Africanists maintained, and still maintain, that only the indigenous majority, after regaining their usurped land, can guarantee the welfare and security of all Azanians. This is what has happened in the rest of independent Africa.

Those who six years later drew up the "Freedom Charter" attempted to obscure this fundamental question. They negated the just call for self-determination by claiming in the opening lines of the "Freedom Charter" that "South Africa belongs to all those who live in it. . . ." If the starting point is that "South Africa belongs to all those who live in it," then the first political question that arises is: what is the principal contradiction? It can only be that of racism and a lack of democracy. Such a view, needless to say, is deliberately designed to obscure the issues.

ONLY 11 MONTHS LEGAL

A political organization, moreover, is formed to challenge the status-quo. This challenge can either be effective or ineffective. If a regime decides to proscribe a political organization it is because it considers that organization a very real threat to the regime's continued existence. The PAC remained a legal organization in apartheid South Africa for only 11 months. The PAC was banned because it planned and executed the March 21, 1960 Positive Action Campaign which culminated in the Massacre of Sharpeville. Perhaps Khatami could explain why the South African racist authorities did not consider the ANC a serious threat from 1912 to 1960 so as to ban it, rather than noting in his story that "by the late 1960s, how-

ever, the PAC leaders were attacking the ANC as 'reformist' and insufficiently revolutionary."

Also the PAC was the first to question "nonviolence" as a viable means of struggle in the Azanian context. Following the Sharpeville Massacre our late president Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe said: "Until now we were prepared to die for our freedom, from now we must be prepared to kill for it as well." Thereafter, the PAC formed POQO, its military wing. But after Sharpeville the president of the ANC, Chief Albert Luthuli went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize!

The article, moreover, gives the impression that the PAC regards the killing of whites as its primary objective by misrepresenting statements made by PAC representatives. The armed struggle is a means to achieve political objectives and what type of armed struggle is to be employed depends on the political objectives desired. If the political aim is the calling of a national convention in order to draw up a "democratic constitution" then the violence will have to be "selective." If, on the other hand, the political objective is the complete overthrow of the fascist-colonial system then the violence must be directed not at the manifestations of that inhuman and diabolical system but the pillars of that state. The philosophy behind the "selective violence" approach is that one should destroy the gun and not the person behind the gun. The PAC view is that we have no quarrel with the gun but with the man behind the gun!!!

Khatami goes on to claim that the "PAC has been almost completely inactive militarily." Here I presume what he means is that we have not attacked any installations or police or military personnel inside the country. It is true we have not "hit the headlines" as it were, but that does not mean the PAC is completely inactive. It is not PAC policy to set itself up in competition with other political organizations in the country. We have our own policy and own objectives and we shall pursue them in our own way. For instance, we did not make any noise when our internal leadership meticulously worked and carried out the [1976] Soweto uprising.

Another important point I would like to clarify is the story that the frontline state summit, meeting in Maputo from March 6 to 7, gave "virtual sole endorsement" to the ANC. I personally met the ministers of foreign affairs of Zimbabwe and Tanzania and they have told me that the PAC can publicly state that the so-called "Maputo Communiqué" in no way reflects the position of their respective governments and that it was not a position paper. The Government of

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Botswana holds the same view.

However, going through the whole article the only reason Khatami gives for his claim that the PAC is in "disarray" is the resignation of Henry Isaacs as director of foreign affairs of the PAC and statements made to him by comrade Elombe Brath [of the U.S. solidarity group, the Patrice Lumumba Coalition]. First and foremost to assume because one person has resigned therefore the organization is in disarray is to display a blatant lack of political maturity. The fact is that almost all the people who for one reason or the other had left the PAC have returned to its fold following the assumption of leadership by comrade John Nyati Pokela. Today there are no factions in the PAC and the fact that no other person, either in the leadership or in the rank and file, has joined Isaacs proves that he was not a leader of a "faction."

As for brother Elombe Brath, it is indeed regrettable that his organization, which traditionally had been close to the PAC, decided in April "to support exclusively the ANC." However, that is his organization's sovereign and democratic right. But what I would like to point out here is that he, like many others, has made the cardinal mistake to believe that the PAC is in the U.S. The problems the PAC has been having with individuals in the U.S. may be symptomatic of the problems within the PAC, but it certainly is not totally reflective of the organization. My only public appeal to him would be to look at the PAC as a whole and see that the PAC is inside Azania.

The last point which I wish to make is about the embarrassment caused to certain organizations by the decision of ANC and SWAPO [the Namibian liberation movement] not to share the same platform with the PAC. This is, to say the least, petty. They share the same platform with us at the UN and before the Nonaligned Group and at the OAU. We share the same country, the same enemy and the same laws. If two people either in Azania or Namibia decide to pick up stones and hurl them at the enemies, should we say "No, you have no permission to do that because you don't have the authority from this or that authentic organization?"

Whether an organization is "authentic" or the "leading" one, only the people inside the country can give the final verdict. Zimbabwe was a classical case. Although certain quarters regarded ZAPU of Joshua Nkomo as the "authentic" movement in Zimbabwe, the people of Zimbabwe gave the final verdict—it was the ZANU of Prime Minister Robert Gabriel Mugabe. The ZANU and the PAC have been sister organizations and this was reaffirmed when I visited Zimbabwe in April 1982.