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“FROM THE FRINGES TO FOSSILS”: THE PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS OF AZANIA AND THE NEGOTIATED TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1990–1994

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Abstract

*Using archival materials and internal Pan African Congress (PAC) documentation, this article examines the dilemma of the PAC during the transitional negotiations. The new re-alignment of interest groups and political forces which occurred from the time of the release from prison of Nelson Mandela, up to and also after the April 1994 democratic elections, resulted in a complete alteration of the political playing fields; something which created problems for organisations like the PAC which was stuck on the radical traditions of the liberation struggle. The 1988 PAC document, released from the Dar-es-Salaam office of the organisation in Tanzania and titled, *Some considerations in respect of the so-called dialogue with white ruled South Africa through its government, is the source of a strategic miscalculation as it advocated iron-clad views regarding the way in which a negotiated settlement should be handled, should it emerge. Moderate positions in support of a negotiated settlement were later, from 1991, articulated, but these views appealed only to the “elites” within the movement. The leadership of the PAC was in a difficult position as it had to keep the balance between the radical demands of its grassroots support and the “elite” insistence to give negotiations a chance, taking into account the international pressure and the changed global landscape in the balance of forces.**

Keywords: Pan Africanist Congress (PAC); transitional negotiations; exile; liberation movements; exile leadership; negotiated settlement; armed struggle; land question; national liberation.

Slutelwoorde: Pan Africanist Congress (PAC); oorgangsame-sprekings; ballingskap; vryheidsbewegings; ballingskapleiers; onderhandelde skikking; gewapende stryd; grondvraagstuk; nasionale bevryding.

1. INTRODUCTION

The state of former liberation movements which are now small opposition parties inside and outside the South African Parliament, particularly the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)

and the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), has been debated in scholarly writings, but without depth and focus.¹ The debate about the state and conditions for opposition parties, including former liberation movements, was intense in the run-up to the April 2009 and 2014 elections. The split within the African National Congress (ANC), which led to the formation of the Congress of the People (COPE) and the emergence of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) with all the attempts to appropriate ideological elements of both Pan-Africanism and Black Consciousness, has sparked debates in former liberation movements and an interest in the conditions and prospects for a credible and mass-based African opposition in South Africa besides the Democratic Alliance (DA). But none of these examined in-depth the vicissitudes and crippling effects of the period 1990-1994, the period of transitional negotiations, on former liberation movements. This article focuses on the PAC for reasons elaborated below. It examines in detail the conduct of the PAC during the period of transitional negotiations from 1990-1994 in order to understand how the PAC misconceived transitional politics and, eventually, marginalised itself. Hence, by the time elections were held in April 1994, the view that the PAC was a serious alternative to the rival ANC had dissipated. The PAC lost dismally in the 1994 elections. From then onwards, the PAC's performance moved from bad to worse and, ever since 1994, split after split occurred in the organisation. It moved from the "fringes" to "fossils", and no longer plays a key role in national politics. The first split, in March 2003, led to the formation of the Independent Democrats (ID), led by Patricia de Lille. After that, the PAC Deputy President, Temba Godi, split in 2008 to form the African People's Convention (APC) and in 2009 Tami Ka Plaatjie split to form the Pan Africanist Movement (PAM).

During the 1994 elections the PAC scored 1,25% national support, constituted by 56 891 votes, and the organisation managed to get five seats in the National Assembly. AZAPO did not participate in the 1994 elections due to the fact that the elections were the outcome of a negotiated settlement, which the organisation strongly opposed. It started participating in elections in 1999 and only scored 0,17%, equal to 27 257 votes nationally. PAC support dropped in 1999 to 113 125 votes or 0,71%. In 2004 the PAC received 0,73%, constituted by 113 512 votes, whereas AZAPO only received 0,25%. In the 2009 elections the performance of the PAC was even more dismal as it went down to 0,27% with AZAPO at 0,22% and both organisations each had one seat in the National Assembly (IEC; Hoeane 2009:58). The performance of these two former liberation movements is not only dismal during elections, but even after elections they are hardly visible or heard in the public spaces of political debate.

The reason why this article singles out the PAC for examination is that, having emerged from the ANC in 1959, it went down a similar path as the ANC

1 See, for instance, Hoeane 2009. Although a good discussion, it skirts the surface of key issues.

during the exile years. This included the establishment of military camps, mostly in southern African countries; mobilisation of support from the international anti-apartheid movement; and recognition by the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as the authentic voice of the people of South Africa, equal to the ANC. The PAC, like the ANC, has a long history of internal underground struggle and had a number of its "elders" in the Robben Island Prison. What makes it even more imperative to singularly focus on the PAC is that, before it was banned in 1960, "the PAC's growth was impressive" and by December 1959, hardly a year after it was formed in April 1959, it had established 153 branches and had 31 000 members (Motlhabi 1984; Hoeane 2009:59). The strength of the PAC was its ideology which articulated the "raw" frustration and anger of ordinary black people. The ideology of the PAC, grounded in African nationalism, resonated with the views of many South Africans and one would have expected the PAC to have significant support after it was unbanned in 1990 and, therefore, to enjoy substantial support in the 1994 elections. But the organisation enjoyed marginal support in the 1994 elections and from then it slowly moved from the "fringes" to "fossils".

2. BACKGROUND: PAC – FORMATION, BANISHMENT AND EXILE

The formation of the PAC was a long, drawn-out process. It began with ideological debates within the ANC, particularly within the ANC Youth League (ANCYL). This led to the emergence of an "Africanist faction" within the ANC. This faction gradually consolidated itself and eventually launched as its official formation the Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa on 6 April 1959 in Orlando Township, Johannesburg. It was only in 1968, when the organisation was in exile, that it adopted the name "Azania" instead of South Africa, and then called itself the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania.

From the day the PAC was founded, there was a passionate pledge by its founders, among other things, to "unite and rally the African people into one national front on the basis of African nationalism" to overthrow white domination in order to establish and maintain "the right of self-determination of African people for a unitary, non-racial democracy" (Karis and Gerhart 1997:537). An unfolding programme of action which would lead to "total independence" in 1963, as was decided at the All-African People's Congress in Ghana in 1958, was implemented by the PAC in 1960, and this resulted in the banishment of the organisation and exile. This put the PAC and the South African struggle for liberation on the map of world politics.

In exile, the PAC went through four leadership periods (i.e. different chairmanships): the Leballo period (1962–1979), the period of Vusumzi Make (1981–1985), and the periods of John Nyathi Pokela (1981–1985) and that of

Johnson Mlambo (1985–1990). The various leadership periods had a significant impact on the PAC in terms of defining the stature or profile, capacity and overall strength of the organisation. The PAC emerged from the four exile leadership periods weakened, and incapable of comprehending and adjusting to the dynamic landscape of the politics of national liberation in South Africa (Kondlo 2005). The periods of Zephania Motopeng and Clarence Makwethu's leadership did not help, as there was little time to solve longstanding internal problems, and the imperative was to respond to the agenda of negotiations and to compete for popular support.

3. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERIOD OF TRANSITIONAL NEGOTIATIONS, 1990–1994

The period 1990-1994 was the most politically dramatic and an uncertain period of time in South Africa, with layer upon layer of developments. This is because, "the politics of interregnum" set in and held the country for almost four years. The "old" took time to die and the "new" was taking too long to be born (Fikeni 2009:4). The new re-alignment of interest groups and political forces which occurred from the time of the release from prison of Nelson Mandela up to, as well as after the April 1994 democratic elections, resulted in a complete alteration of political playing fields; something which created problems for organisations like the PAC. The PAC was stuck on the radical traditions of the liberation struggle. New developments created a situation which appeared like a strategic cul-de-sac. The question was what to "give-up" and what to take-on, as negotiations are about give-and-take. The different liberation movements handled the situation in different ways; hence the varying degrees of successes and failures. The ANC itself, despite the fact that its strategic trust and orientation in the liberation struggle was always based on the possible resolution of the liberation struggle through a negotiated compromise, was also caught off-guard by the swift moves of FW de Klerk, the last President of apartheid South Africa, during this period. As Dale Mckinely (1997:104) puts it, "the ANC might have been at the apex of its international and domestic moral authority, but in the harsh world of realpolitik", it appeared as if it was in a weak position. De Klerk, on the other hand, "had a strong hand and his first play was to call the ANC's bluff". Thereafter De Klerk kept the strategic upper hand in orienting the direction of change.

The ANC was the first to release a blue-print for a negotiated settlement through the adoption of the Harare Declaration in August 1989. In September 1989, the PAC, "distanced itself from the Harare Declaration, adopted by the OAU as position paper on resolving conflict in South Africa" (SAIRR 1990:741). This was the beginning of a long journey of diametrically opposed views between the PAC and the ANC from 1990 to the end of 1993. The ANC started as early as 1989 to prepare the psyche of its constituency and to present negotiations, not

only as a "new terrain of struggle", but as a position which could not be reversed. The ANC leadership abandoned an insurrectionary approach to people's power and negotiations were paraded as the only realistic option.

The other critical player, second to the ANC, but fairly unknown to the National Party (NP) government, was the PAC. All the government knew – based on research by scholars in South Africa – was that the PAC was still recovering from its turbulent past in the late 1980s, but it was not clear whether the PAC was in a weaker position than the ANC in terms of popular support and international connections. Ideologically, the PAC was still strong and had a more radical African nationalist ideological agenda than the ANC. But as an organisation, the PAC was not viable. It lacked resources in terms of strategic leadership and was recovering from the 17 years of internal strife under the leadership of Poltaka Leballo. The rescue mission by PAC Chairperson, John Nyathi Pokela, between the years 1981–1985 could not do much to improve the situation within the organisation. His successor, Johnson Mlambo, geared the organisation for "war", through his "home-returning" programme which hardly materialised. While the PAC was preparing for war, the world was preparing for peace. The international context was changing in the direction of peaceful relations as exemplified by the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, which began on 15 May 1988 and was finally executed in February 1989. The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 is another widely known development in Eastern Europe which symbolised the end of the Cold War struggle between the superpowers. In the light of these development, one can argue that the PAC was strategically "out of step" with changes in the political arena.

The address by De Klerk to Parliament on 2 February 1990, in which he announced the unbanning of all liberation movements, as well as the release of Nelson Mandela, set the tone and defined the character of the transitional period. De Klerk's address expressed, "both the apartheid state's and capital's desire to seize the strategic initiative of a process which could lead to deracialised capitalism" (Mckinely 1997:103). This created an awkward situation for exile South African liberation movements. De Klerk went further to set the parameters of the post-apartheid dispensation in South Africa. He indicated in his speech that the new South Africa will have, "a new democratic constitution, universal franchise, no domination, equality before an independent judiciary; protection of minorities as well as individual rights, freedom of religion, a sound economy based on proven economic principles and private enterprise, dynamic programmes directed at better education, health services, housing and social conditions for all" (SAIRR 1990:xii).

These parameters formed the bedrock of discussions during the negotiations and informed the scope of national policy in the new dispensation. This was a challenge to the PAC. Bent on revolutionary change, the PAC was not prepared to negotiate and to settle for what was less than "revolutionary"

national liberation. This is where it failed and, as a result, lost the support of the masses in the run-up to the 1994 elections.

4. THE PAC ON THE EVE OF THE UNBANNING OF LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The question that is hardly examined in the debate about former liberation movements is whether the PAC, in particular, was aware of the looming negotiations which could lead to the unbanning of liberation movements. If it was, how did it prepare for negotiations?

Available evidence shows that the PAC was fully aware of the possibilities of a negotiated settlement and the unbanning of liberation movements, but did not expect the timing to be so soon and the pace so swift. In 1988, the PAC office in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, produced a document titled, *Some considerations in respect of the so-called dialogue with white ruled South Africa through its government*. The document begins by indicating that there was, "much talk in the air". As the document indicates, the talk, "concerns the possibility of a dialogue between the government of white-ruled South Africa and the African National Congress. The talk of such talk was heralded by Mr Oliver Tambo in East Africa. Tambo's tune was picked up by the honourable Mr Pik Botha somewhere in Germany where he sang the tune, saying that if the African National Congress dropped its armed struggle programme, the South African government would be prepared to unban the ANC, and all ANC exiles would be free to return to South Africa and talk 'peace, perfect peace'. The refrain of the Oliver Tambo–Pik Botha song was picked-up by the liberal press of South Africa, and orchestrated by the sanctified mouthpiece of the 'verligte' Afrikaner volk. 'De Beeld' and the glamorous group joined, in a chorus of singular unanimity, sang the praises of Dialogue" (PAC 1988:2). The document discloses the rhetorical perspective of the PAC on the prospects of a negotiated settlement in the late 1980s. It proceeds to say that, "in all this the PAC was excluded. Perhaps it was thought that the PAC lacked a choir uniform beautiful enough to entitle it to join the 'great' chorus. In all the circumstances it is clear that the PAC is ignorant of all these talks about talks. In other words, the PAC knows nothing about anything" (PAC 1988:3).

The document criticizes, "some black states which stand in fear of white South Africa's military machine, and which stand trembling before the United States colossus which threatens to starve them out unless they crawled on their bellies and licked the boots of Reagan. Some of these black states are among the so-called front-line states and they dread the spectre of indirect involvement in an armed struggle by way of PAC's passing of men and weapons through their countries to reach the hot spot – that is to say fascist, racist white South Africa. These states might confront the PAC to find out what [the] PAC meant to do about

armed struggle in face of the rampant talks of peace and reconciliation between the government of white-ruled South Africa and the African National Congress" (PAC 1988:3). This was correct, because two years later, in December 1990 after preliminary negotiations had started, the PAC was advised by the OAU to stop "the war-talk", to talk peace and to give negotiations a chance (*Daily Dispatch* 1990b). In fact, a year later the ZANU-PF government in Zimbabwe (a long-time ally of the PAC), issued a statement in which it stopped the PAC from issuing statements on violence from its territory (*Daily Dispatch* 1992b). But, in the same vein the OAU, whilst encouraging negotiated transition, did not respond to the request of the South African government to stop all material support for the PAC and its military wing, the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA), following the submissions made to the Goldstone Commission of enquiry into the location of APLA camps, arms, ammunition and operations in January 1993 (*Daily Dispatch* 1993a).

The PAC document also raises questions about the possibility that, at some point, the PAC could be approached directly by the ANC and the National Party (NP) government with the request to join the negotiations or to declare categorically its position on the "dialogue". It indicates that the, "PAC as an organization which is not in the dialogue exercise and which has been discounted completely in regard to any rapprochement between the ANC and the Nationalist Party fascist government is fully entitled to keep its peace, and refuse to answer any questions put by the parties (the ANC and the NP white government) that declared to the whole world that they were prepared to go into Dialogue on terms that were kept secret from the world" (PAC 1988:5). Regarding the community of African states, the document suggested that the PAC, "is entitled to enquire of such states how they are concerned in the issue of Dialogue between the African National Congress and the South African white state; and also enquire of them whether or not they are running before they were chased?" (PAC 1988:4).

According to the document, issues that were to inform the PAC's engagement with the ANC and the NP government, if it decides to respond to their invitation to participate in the negotiations, were to include the terms of reference and the "agenda of talks"; whether talks were to be about the dismantlement of the apartheid state and the resolution of the national question on a democratic basis; whether talks would include the inauguration of a new order, "in which democratic power will be placed irrevocably in the hands of the people of Azania, on the basis of one man, one vote", irrespective of race, colour or creed; "whether or not the wealth of Azania and fruits of the labour of people of Azania – especially the ruthlessly oppressed and exploited Black African millions – will be fully controlled by the people and exploited for equal benefit of all the people on a democratic basis" (PAC1988:6). The substance of the key arguments in the document constituted the PAC's position on negotiations at a meeting of the PAC Central Committee in Dar-es-Salaam, which was held from

18 to 24 September 1989. At the meeting, “it was resolved that negotiations at this formative stage of our struggle will not usher in desired goals of the struggle – namely, the restoration of the usurped land and fundamental rights of self-determination and the full exercise of the fundamental principle of one person, one vote for a one chamber parliament in a unitary state. The Central Committee also reiterated the call for intensified sanctions and all forms of international pressures to isolate the apartheid regime” (PAC 1989:1).

The PAC position disclosed that it was unable to comprehend the, “hidden contours of the twilight zone of the interregnum” where the negotiations were not about a government negotiating its surrender because it was defeated by a victorious liberation movement. Instead, negotiations were about “forging a new nation” on the broadest possible basis of consent (Marais 2006:86).

5. THE PAC’S RESPONSE TO THE UNBANNING OF LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

The PAC immediately responded to the unbanning of liberation movements by saying that, “the unbanning of the ANC, PAC and SACP has no meaning to them” and they called for, “the struggle to be intensified in all fronts” (*Star* 1990; SAIRR 1990:741). The spokesman of the PAC in exile, Cutter Seleka, said, “we have not, for the past 30 years, recognised the banning of our organizations and therefore Friday’s announcement means nothing to us. We make a clarion call to our people to intensify the struggle on all fronts. We also urge members of the international community to be always vigilant to President de Klerk, George Bush and Margaret Thatcher’s manipulations, so as not to withdraw the weapon of sanctions” (SAIRR 1990:741). He proceeded to state that the PAC’s demand was the return of land to its rightful owners and the establishment of a socialist order. The President of the PAC, Zephania Mothopeng, also responded saying, “as far as we are concerned we do not recognise this government and therefore do not recognise the banning of the PAC. It is meaningless. There might be activities which can be undertaken overtly now, but effectively the unbanning will make little difference to our program” (*Weekly Mail* 1990a) In the same interview, Mothopeng also indicated that it was up to PAC individuals in exile to decide whether to return to South Africa or not. “There are some people who are now stranded, old or sick and nothing should stop them if they want to come” (*Weekly Mail* 1990a). Mothopeng was consistent with his pre-1990 position that the negotiated settlement in South Africa will eventually create, “an elite which would effectively exclude the African worker” (SAIRR 1990:741; *Sowetan* 1989). These views disclose both firm suspicions of the agenda of transitional negotiations on the one hand and, on the other, an organisational state of “unreadiness” to enter into a political deal outside the originally conceived strategies of a “nationalist” revolution. De Klerk’s swift political moves during this period also

caused suspicion and caught the PAC off-guard. Besides that, the leadership of the PAC had not developed flexible policy positions to anticipate possible future scenarios that could emerge as a result of the liberation struggle. A negotiated settlement, even if from a position of weakness, is one of the scenarios an organisation with serious strategic capabilities would have anticipated, especially given the power vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. The statements of the PAC leadership during this period also show that the organisation was stuck in the rhetoric of national liberation ideology, despite clear shifts in the position of many international role-players to seek solution through dialogue.

Responses by the PAC to the February 2 speech of De Klerk were not homogenous; similar to PAC positions on the question of a negotiated settlement in South Africa. The speech by Barney Desai, a PAC exile who returned to South Africa soon after the unbanning of the PAC in February 1990, in Bloemfontein at a special Congress of the Pan Africanist Movement (an internal organ of the exiled PAC, which merged with the PAC to form "PAC – Internal"), shows a fluidity of positions and interpretations of the situation of unbanning and planned negotiations in South Africa. Desai argued that, "the press informs us that the PAC rejects negotiations. This is a blatant lie because no other than President Mothopeng is on record as stating in Harare that the PAC was prepared to discuss with interested parties the establishment of a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution on the basis of one person one vote" (*Argus* 1990a). He went on to say, "I wish to caution my brothers and sisters that the slogan of 'one-settler one-bullet' is not consistent with our stated aims. No mature liberation movement has ever had as its stated policy an intention to drive the white people into the sea" (*Argus* 1990a).

This was a sign of underlying contradictions, simmering tensions and emerging political positions on unbanning and political negotiations in the PAC. There was an emerging political centre within the PAC, constituted mostly by intellectuals and elites, who saw in the unbanning and political negotiations limited space to advance the positive aspirations of the liberation struggle. The "centre" faction in the PAC was numerically insignificant as compared to the radical "left" majority, but commanded strong influence; hence the PAC moved closer to multi-party negotiations in 1993. What Barney Desai's speech also demonstrates, is that the political centre within the PAC was also worried about the "war rhetoric" and militant slogans which defined the "populism" of the PAC after 1990.

6. THE PAC AND THE NEGOTIATED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT

The ambiguity of the PAC's responses to the question of a negotiated political settlement in South Africa and its strategy to intensify APLA military attacks at a time when transitional negotiations had started, contributed to a dented public image and eventual loss of support for the PAC. The organisation cast itself as unreasonable – several invitations to participate in multi-party negotiations, coming from the NP government, the ANC and church organisations, were not heeded to by its leadership on the basis of what appeared to be elusive ideological arguments. The PAC lost an opportunity to put its own ideological stamp at the “foundational moment” of liberal democracy in South Africa. When it joined the negotiations in 1994, the PAC had lost significant ground since the overall agenda of the negotiation process had already been defined by the ANC and the NP government.

The PAC's position on a negotiated political settlement in South Africa was summarised by Patricia de Lille, Executive Committee member of the PAC, internal, at a press conference in Gugulethu Township in Cape Town on 13 March 1990. She said, “the PAC still stands by its decision three decades ago that freedom can be won only through the armed struggle because there is nowhere in history where the oppressors have negotiated themselves out of power” (*Muslim Views* 1990). The PAC's official letter to the OAU, dated 13 March 1990, gives more flesh to the position De Lille outlined (*Front File* 1990). The letter, however, does not convey the impression that the PAC was opposed to negotiations, but states what the PAC wanted to see happen before it negotiated. These include, “the elections – one person, one vote in a common voter's roll – of a constituent assembly that will be empowered to draw-up South Africa's post-apartheid constitution” (*Front File* 1990).

Secondly, the PAC indicated in the letter that the removal of the five political pillars of apartheid are not negotiable, i.e. the Population Registration Act (1950); Land Acts (1913 and 1936); the Bantu Education Act (1953); the South African Constitution Act (1983; establishing the Tri-cameral Parliament); and the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act (1959), as well as other legislation relating to the black homelands. Lastly, but very importantly, the PAC indicated that the important leverage of the armed struggle and sanctions must not be compromised or abandoned (*Front File* 1990).

The public utterances of the PAC President, Mothopeng, were creating confusion around the PAC's position on negotiations. The interview he had with *City Press* on 10 June 1990 did more harm to the integrity of the PAC. Mothopeng argued that, from the time the PAC was established, “it never recognised the government, so the question of negotiations does not arise. The question is one of the repossession of our land from foreign colonial oppressors.

It has nothing to do with negotiations" (*City Press* 1990a). This portrayed the PAC as a confused organisation.

Opposition to the dominant political views indicated above emanated from young intellectuals in the PAC. They provided a "source" of new strategic thinking in the PAC after it was unbanned in 1990. Through their writing skills, publications, debates and lobbying, young intellectuals within the PAC eventually influenced the PAC to join the negotiations in 1994. Some did this literally risking their lives, as militancy and unguided radicalism was slowly becoming a very serious problem in the PAC. Benny Alexander, PAC Secretary General, also referred to this phenomenon in the PAC. In December 1991 he said that the PAC has, "a lost generation of angry, aimless youth who cannot get a job, and because of that they have a tremendous sense of recklessness, and because of that you find they are all coming to the PAC" (*Daily Dispatch* 1991c).

The discussion paper, *Negotiations in South Africa*, written by Vuyisile Dlova early in 1990 while he was still lecturing at Brunel University in England is a good example of the new thinking or dissenting voices of young intellectuals in the PAC. The paper debates the question whether, "any liberation movement can opt out" of negotiations, "and hope to play a central role in the running of the country in the foreseeable future" (Dlova 1990:1). Dlova challenged the key PAC viewpoint that, "any negotiations, given the military position between the dispossessed African majority and the White government would be a contention between a master and a slave" (Dlova 1990:1). He argued that the history of guerrilla warfare in situations of national liberation has taught people that most guerrilla victories, "have come about not when guerrillas assumed military superiority but when their opponents lost the stamina to fight. While the military position of the SA government looks impregnable, South Africa has lost all hope to win peace through military muscle in South Africa" (Dlova 1990:1). Dlova also emphasised that the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the United States of America is an important factor, and it also meant that the resolution of the South African problem was a superpower priority. "These factors combined, offset military advantage and also favour Africans" (Dlova 1990:1).

The discussion paper further cautioned that the PAC might find itself isolated should other liberation movements and black organisations decide to proceed. The PAC may not have, "sufficient military and political clout to frustrate the process of negotiations, and seize power in the foreseeable future" (Dlova 1990:1). The last section of the discussion document deals with "what needs to be done" and goes on to advice that the PAC needs to reverse its unrealistic stand on negotiations. The organisation should use the opportunity offered by De Klerk to raise its concerns. Dlova also advised the PAC not to set preconditions for negotiations, except for those necessary to start the process, like the release of political prisoners and the return of exiles. On the issue of the

suspension of the armed struggle, the document advised the PAC to debate it in the negotiations forum.

The document influenced changing views and attitudes, especially within the ranks of the leadership of the PAC towards negotiations. From June 1990, attitudes towards negotiations in the PAC were beginning to change. On 11 June 1990, the Secretary-General of the PAC, Benny Alexander, unveiled an economic policy document developed by Siphoshe Shabalala, titled, *The economic policy of the PAC: An exploratory, diagnostic and contingency exposition*. At this forum he confessed that the PAC had, "failed to overthrow the South African state through revolutionary means. The most important thing to consider, with respect to the political dispensation taking place in occupied Azania, is that whatever will be the outcome of a negotiated political accord the Africans sooner or later will be the beneficiaries" (*Argus* 1990b). The document itself argued that the political change which had taken place in the country since 2 February 1990, "was irreversible, and this was one of the strengths of the liberation movement" (*Argus* 1990b). But the "Mothopeng factor", i.e. the populist position of the PAC President, Zeph Mothopeng, remained a constraint to the change in the PAC's position on negotiations.

The signing of the Pretoria Minute on 6 August 1990 between the ANC and the De Klerk government entrenched negative views in the dominant factions of the PAC towards negotiations. The ANC's decision to suspend the armed struggle after the Pretoria Minute caused confusion and discontent; firstly, within Umkhonto we Sizwe (the ANC guerrilla wing) and secondly, amongst the broad support-base of the ANC. The impression was emerging that De Klerk was calling the tune in the negotiated transition. Hence, the PAC President announced that, "the PAC position for talks remains a firm, principled commitment by the government to the following: majority rule, redistribution of the country's resources and a constituent assembly based on one-person, one-vote on a common voters' roll" (*City Press* 1990b). The impression created by the Pretoria Minute was that PAC exiles and political prisoners would be denied indemnity until the organisation joined the ANC in suspending the armed struggle. This added to the PAC's reservations and rejection of negotiations. Mothopeng argued that he was aware of the fact that, "PAC prisoners would be disadvantaged" (*Daily Mail* 1990). He went on to say, "as the PAC was not party to yesterday's talks, we are not bound by its decisions. We will continue with the struggle in all fronts, including the armed struggle, and our membership is prepared to pay the ultimate sacrifice for what we believe is morally right, even if it means going to the gallows" (*Daily Mail* 1990).

According to Mothopeng, the ceasefire agreement entered into by the ANC was not in line with the preconditions set by the OAU's Harare Declaration. The ANC suspended the armed struggle unilaterally in the interest of moving as speedily as possible towards a negotiated peaceful political settlement. However,

this did not only cause consternation within the ANC, but put the organisation in a corner as the wave of covert state-sponsored violence – the “third force” – suddenly engulfed Johannesburg’s black townships. The Institute for Black Research (1993) indicates that, in a period of ten days, over 500 people died. The limited benefit of the ceasefire compromise made by the ANC was to get the apartheid state to agree to release political prisoners not later than 30 April 1991 and to review security legislation. But the government was not in a hurry to comply with or meet any conditions of the agreements; there was a serious gap between what the De Klerk government promised on the one hand, and what it did on the other.

During the period of suspension of talks, the PAC continued to attack the idea of a negotiated transition to democracy. The radicals within the PAC felt vindicated by political developments, which led to the suspension of negotiations. At this point, mid-October 1990, Mothopeng died after a long illness. His deputy, Clarence Makwethu, was elected President of the PAC at the December Conference of the PAC. He inherited and led a deeply-divided PAC; divided firstly, by the turbulent history of exile; secondly by participation in negotiations and thirdly by the coming 1994 election, as some members still felt the PAC should position itself as a “revolutionary movement” outside parliamentary politics.

During the mass protests and marches led by the ANC in 1991, the PAC was not as visible as the ANC. The ANC marches during the “revolutionary zig-zag” period (Mckinely 1997:111), which lasted until the formal announcement of the meeting of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in December 1991, played an important role in shaping public perceptions of the numerical strength and popularity of the organisation. The PAC, on the other hand, did not utilise the opportunities created by these incidents to its advantage. This was the time to publicly display its numerical strength and to mould and influence popular perceptions. It is this weakness which contributed to the organisation’s loss of support. The PAC failed to capitalise on disenchantment with the ANC’s decision to suspend the armed struggle, the subsequent increase in state-sponsored violence in the townships and the arrogance displayed by De Klerk’s government, to broaden its constituency and to, “swing the mood among people along the anti-negotiations path” (*Weekly Mail* 1990b). It missed the game of displaying the much needed public attributes; the attributes of an organisation that belongs to “all”, an organisation that can visibly deploy its military and leadership resources to the defence of the “people”. This was the populist language which framed the dominant discourse during the transition period.

The PAC eventually participated in preparatory talks to plan the meeting of CODESA on 20 and 21 December 1991. Numerous influences and pressures on the PAC were beginning to show results, especially following the meeting of the Patriotic Front, led by former liberation movements, i.e. the ANC, PAC and

AZAPO in October 1991. The eight-hour long preparatory meeting of CODESA involved representatives from 20 political parties, as well as government and homeland leaders. On the advice of Zach De Beer, leader of the Democratic Party, two judges were requested to chair the meeting. They were Justice PJ Schabert and Justice Ismail Mohammed. The decision at the preparatory meeting was that CODESA would discuss a free political climate, general constitutional principles, a transitional authority, the TVBC states (i.e. the future of Transkei, Venda, Bophuthatswana and Ciskei homelands), the road to international involvement (following years of international isolation) and time-frames for the implementation of CODESA decisions (*Daily Dispatch* 1991a). Even at the preparatory meeting the PAC contribution often came across as rhetorical and unconstructive. The PAC demanded a “neutral” venue and a neutral chairman for the negotiations; something which was opposed by the other parties.

As a compromise, to accommodate PAC concerns, the meeting agreed that occasional meetings of CODESA could take place at venues outside the country. Most importantly, it was agreed at the meeting that a mechanism should be established to grant indemnity to exiled PAC members to allow them to return to South Africa for CODESA sessions. The meeting also agreed to involve the UN, the OAU, the Commonwealth, the European Community, the Non-Aligned Movement and heads of diplomatic missions as observers to CODESA proceedings. Towards the end of the session, the PAC staged a “walk-out”; an incident which invited scathing attacks on the organisation. These came mainly from the ANC’s Secretary General, Cyril Ramaphosa. He told the media briefing that the Minister of Justice in the apartheid government, Kobie Coetsee, had removed the veil over the PAC’s secret meetings with the South African government. On this basis, Ramaphosa labelled the behaviour of the PAC as, “dishonest, destructive and manipulative” (*Daily Dispatch* 1991b). The PAC did not deny the secret talks with government. It does not matter how lightly the PAC regarded the utterances by Cyril Ramaphosa, the fact of the matter is that they contributed to a tarnished public image of the PAC.

At the 3rd Annual Congress of the PAC in April 1992, Clarence Makwethu, the President of the PAC, indicated that the organisation was not opposed to negotiations, but demanded that they should occur, “at a neutral venue and under a neutral chairman” (*Daily Dispatch* 1991b). Eventually, the PAC delegation and the South African government met at a “neutral” venue, outside CODESA. The meeting took place in Abuja, Nigeria. Following the Abuja meeting, the PAC appeared to have dropped its insistence to only negotiate the transfer of political power and raised instead prospects of a restructured negotiations forum other than CODESA. During the months of July to August 1992, reports abounded about the PAC’s shift “from the bullet to the ballot”. Of course, the shift did not herald the PAC’s suspension of the armed struggle, but its decision to join negotiations. Dikgang Moseneke, PAC Deputy President, struggled to justify and

explain the situation when the PAC re-joined the negotiations in June 1993. He argued that they did not think CODESA, "the vehicle that had been created for brokering an agreement was suited for the job. Our staying outside gave us the obvious benefit of not having to deal with any flak that came out of the faltering of negotiations. It also allowed us to reflect much, much more on the process and what we wanted out of it. In fact, it just helped the PAC to grow and gave us the time to build up structures" (*Daily Dispatch* 1992a). Even though there was no conclusive empirical test of how much support the PAC enjoyed at that point, Moseneke argued that, "the PAC has grown phenomenally. We have restructured the organization right from head office to the ground level. We are trying to deal with the perennial criticism that we are weak on the ground – we don't accept that but we are taking the criticism seriously" (*Daily Dispatch* 1992a).

7. PREPARING FOR WAR DURING THE TIME OF PEACEFUL TALKS: THE PAC AND THE ARMED STRUGGLE DURING TRANSITIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

Whilst negotiations between government and the ANC stalled towards the end of 1990 following security force sponsored violence in the townships, the PAC, through its military wing APLA, increased military attacks on "soft" and "hard" targets within the country. Between February 1991 and December 1992 there were about 48 incidents of APLA attacks reported and recorded by the police in South Africa (SAP 1993). The *Daily Dispatch* (1993d) indicated that between February 1991 and October 1993, the PAC, through its military wing, APLA, was responsible for 54 "terror" attacks in the country. The Goldstone Commission of Enquiry was established by the government to investigate the location and activities of APLA, and the focus was on the alleged APLA camps in the Transkei. The Transkei was under military rule, led by Gen. Bantu Holomisa, now leader of a political party called the United Democratic Movement (UDM). The preliminary findings of the Goldstone Commission of Enquiry into APLA activities confirmed the presence and activities of APLA in the Transkei; something which was rejected by Gen. Holomisa. Instead he set up his own commission of enquiry into APLA activities which included in its terms of reference investigation into cross-border raids into the Transkei by Afrikaner right-wing movements, such as the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (*Daily Dispatch* 1993a). The apartheid government, in retaliation, raided what it asserted were APLA bases and this resulted in the murder of five teenagers in a house in Northcrest in Umtata, Transkei, on 7 October 1992. The youths were sleeping and were unarmed. They were not even members of the PAC, except for the parents of the twin-brothers, Sadat and Samora Mpendulo, both 16 years of age. The other three were friends of the twins who had come to sleep over at the house. Their names were Thando Mthembu (19 years old), Sandiso Yose (12 years old) and

Mzwandile Mfeya (12 years old). At a press conference in Umtata, two members of the PAC National Executive Committee, Dr Peter Mayende and Mahlubi Mbandazayo, confirmed that the house in which the youths were killed was never used by APLA and that there were no arms or APLA documents in it (*Daily Dispatch* 1993c).

The incident led to a temporary display of unity among liberation movements. They were all outraged by the actions of De Klerk's security forces and were unanimous in their condemnation of state sanctioned killings. This further reinforced the PAC's reluctance to enter into a unilateral ceasefire, and it consequently insisted instead on a mutual cessation of hostilities. The PAC's position on the continuation of the armed struggle, as was demonstrated by increased APLA attacks during this period, did not count much in its favour. Criticism from the religious fraternity, especially Christian churches and organisations which are influential community structures, abounded. The Presbyterian Church of South Africa called on the PAC and APLA to abandon violence and to re-enter negotiations. PAC violent activities in King Williams Town and Queenstown (both in the Eastern Cape) evoked condemning responses from clerics. Church leaders, among them Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu and the South African Council of Churches, especially after the attack on St James Church in Cape Town's suburb of Kenilworth in July 1993 (SA History s.a.), indicated concern about the activities of APLA and urged for a meeting with the PAC and APLA. They cautioned about possible retaliatory actions by white right-wing extremists groups which could hurt the very African people the PAC sought to liberate.

The PAC continued with military activity and vacillated on its position regarding participation in negotiations. It was in and out of the negotiations process. It returned to the negotiating table in June 1993, but it left negotiations towards the end of the year and finally returned early in 1994, just before the elections. During this time, the organisation was losing credibility, as it appeared to lack strategic leadership.

Among the issues of great concern and debate at the negotiations was the PAC's refusal to suspend the armed struggle. Jackie Seroke defended the PAC's position on the suspension of the armed struggle. He argued that the PAC was willing to accept the declaration on cessation or suspension of hostilities in principle, but the implementation would need to be discussed. The militant rhetoric of the PAC was being nourished, not by local mass struggles, but by the PAC group that was still in exile. In this group, the leader of APLA, Sabelo Phama, the PAC's Secretary for Defence, was key. Phama announced in January 1993 that he had toured South Africa and had been in Soweto and Cape Town, and had met with APLA members in Ntaba kaNdoda in the former Ciskei, and also went to Transkei. He indicated that APLA would intensify attacks

on "soft and hard targets". He named 1993 "the year of the Storm" and 1994 "the year of the Great Offensive" (*Daily Dispatch* 1993b).

The role of the Zimbabwean government in facilitating the negotiations for the cessation of hostilities between APLA and the South African government was useful during this period. It was the intervention of Zimbabwe which led to the final cessation of hostilities between APLA and the South African government. On 2 November 1993, Mwanamohachi, Zimbabwean Minister of Defence, facilitated the first talks between APLA and representatives of the South African government in Harare. The final meeting was held in South Africa on 6 November 1993. The PAC and the South African government formally agreed on "a moratorium on violence" (*Daily Dispatch* 1993e). In June 1994 the integration of APLA into the new South African National Defence Force (SANDF), many of whose members were already back in South Africa following the 1994 elections and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as President, was planned at a political level. Following successful negotiations on the integration of liberation movement armies into the new SANDF, APLA held its last parade on 31 July 1994 and it then dissolved as an army. This coincided with the PAC announcement of its transformation into a political party (*Daily Dispatch* 1994a).

8. CONCLUSION

The transitional period is the one which damaged the PAC. It was the most difficult period for all liberation movements as they had to maintain a delicate balance between revolutionary orientation and pragmatic strategies of dealing with a negotiated solution to national liberation. The PAC's narrow commitment to armed struggle and revolutionary seizure of power contributed to their loss of support. Inside South Africa, a situation of unstable equilibrium in the balance of forces had arisen. Liberation movements could not overthrow the apartheid government and the latter could not put an end to the liberation struggle.

The PAC was faced with a difficult choice: the choice to continue with its pre-planned revolutionary agenda, which would mean ignoring political developments inside the country or participating in negotiations, and slowly manoeuvring its own space within the process. The organisation failed on both – it could not stand firmly against negotiations or participate wholeheartedly in the process. Its military rhetoric was also out of step with the general mood in the country, namely to give peace a chance. The PAC lost support as it failed to identify itself with the birth of the new dispensation.

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