

The PAC's Internal Underground Activities, 1960–1980

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By Thami ka Plaatjie

Introduction

The key underground activities of the PAC, mainly insurgent activities of Poqo, occurred after two major aboveground actions: the March 1960 anti-pass campaign that ended with the Sharpeville massacre; and the march on parliament in Cape Town at the end of the same month. Leadership conflicts, however, became a feature of PAC politics that was to affect the organisation virtually throughout its existence. This chapter begins by examining how leadership conflicts affected the activities of the PAC inside the country in the 1960s.

For a large part of the 1960s the PAC was in disarray, with a considerable number of its leaders and members sentenced to short terms of imprisonment for their actions during the anti-pass campaign. Consequently, it was only in 1961 that the leaders who had escaped imprisonment and those who had been released from prison were able to regroup. This set in motion plans for the underground activity of Poqo. A brief analysis of Poqo activities is included, with emphasis on activity after the series of arrests in 1963.

In the 1970s an attempt was made, largely by PAC members released from prison in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to revive the internal underground. Zephania Mothopeng, John Ganya, Mark Shinnars and others played a leading role in establishing contact with the external mission of the PAC, recruiting new members to the PAC, establishing underground cells, and sending recruits outside the country.

Leadership conflicts

The PAC's leadership conflicts stemmed from a variety of sources, such as the political marginalisation of certain individuals, competition for political positions, and ideological differences. The PAC was dogged by internal strife that to a great extent sidetracked it from its declared objective of liberating the African people of South Africa. As a result of these conflicts, which never died out completely in the organisation, the PAC became its own worst enemy.

The formation of the PAC in 1959 created expectations, on the part of its leaders, that it would eclipse the ANC in South African black politics. Though the founding conference made no mention of the ANC, the PAC based its policies and political programme on outdoing the ANC. This desire to eclipse the ANC was an outcome of the PAC break from the ANC and some kind of political competition was inevitable. The PAC set a high target for its membership drive of 100 000 members by 30 June 1959¹ – an unrealistic target on the part of the PAC founders. PAC leader Potlako Leballo admitted in August 1959 that this target had not been met. Thus, the ability to attract members to the PAC became a critical feature of leadership. Africanists who commanded a large following became very influential and could satisfy their personal ambitions and claims to power. To a great extent, therefore, leadership conflicts in the PAC were caused by competition for power and influence. The case of Josias Madzunya is illustrative, and the manner in which it affected the PAC's only serious aboveground activity before its banning deserves attention.

Josias Madzunya believed that the leading role he had played in various popular struggles in the 1950s, such as the Alexandra bus boycott, entitled him to a senior position in the PAC at its formation. He was encouraged in this belief by the media, which touted him in the run-up to the founding conference as a leading candidate for president. When Madzunya failed to achieve any leadership position, the *Bantu World* commented: 'Although Josias Madzunya, the father of the Africanist Movement, saw years of work end up in triumph with the founding of the Pan Africanist Congress at the national conference in Orlando this weekend, he has not got a seat in the PAC cabinet.'² More blatantly, *Contact* magazine suggested that Madzunya had been dropped: 'The major surprise of the executive elections was the "dropping" of Mr Josias Madzunya, the Alexandra Township black-bearded, overcoated fire-eater. Mr Madzunya polled just over half the number of votes received by Mr Elliot Mfana for the post of national organiser.'³ One Afrikaans newspaper saw the exclusion of Madzunya from the first national executive as the work of communists who wanted to usurp Madzunya's organisation, Peter Raboroko recalls.⁴

These sentiments, coupled with the role that Madzunya had played in the Alexandra bus boycott and African politics in general, raised some doubt about the PAC in the minds of his most ardent supporters. He enjoyed mass appeal, particularly among the 'uneducated' Africans who were impressed by his frequent outbursts and bluntness. John Ganya recalls how impressed he was 'by the fiery speeches of Madzunya because he unashamedly made it known that we were oppressed by the

1 Benjamin Pogrand, *How Can Man Die Better: The Life of Robert Sobukwe* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1990), 89, 108.

2 *The Bantu World*, 11 April 1959, 1. Johannesburg Library, Microfilm no. 25. Emphasis added. See also G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 182. The first PAC National Executive included Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe as president, P.K. Leballo as secretary-general, and Zephania Mothopeng, Peter Molotsi, S. T. Ngendane, Peter Raboroko, N.D. Nyaoase, A.B. Ngcobo, H.S. Ngcobo, H.Hlatswayo, E.A. Mfana, N.N. Mahomo, C.J. Fazzie, M.G. Maboza and Z.B. Molete.

3 *Contact*, vol. 2 (8), 18 April 1959, 1.

4 Discussion between P.R.N. Raboroko, Z.B. Molete and G.M. Gerhart, 25 September 1969, Nairobi, 7. I am grateful to Gail Gerhart for giving me access to this document.

white man in this country'.⁵ Madzunya appealed particularly to the youth, especially when he publicly challenged Verwoerd and called for the liberation of the African people from white rule.⁶

Although many leading Africanists in the 1950s saw Madzunya as a key person in the PAC for mobilising the masses, he had a number of detractors among them. At the time he belonged to a controversial alliance of people who were united only by their opposition towards, and abhorrence of, the ANC. This alliance included P.Q. Vundla of the Moral Rearmament movement, and P. Tsele, a member of the Liberal Party and a supporter (as was Vundla) of the notorious advisory boards.⁷ In addition, because Madzunya had once been a member of the Communist Party, this made him somewhat suspicious in the eyes of the Africanists.⁸ Another reason was the difference in education between Madzunya and many leading Africanists. The PAC's first president, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, commented on Madzunya's lack of formal education: 'Madzunya was not an educated man. He probably didn't grasp the full import of our philosophy. His thinking was rather "primitive".⁹ Sobukwe recounts: 'He wanted to put spears and shields in our flag. He didn't trust the middle-class educated people like the rest of us. He said such people would never be able to suffer and sacrifice.'¹⁰

Madzunya's suspicion of intellectuals was deep-seated and conditioned his political conduct and orientation. He was an embarrassing caricature to many of them and always wore an overcoat, even in very hot weather. This impressed the ordinary African masses and the youth who saw his public conduct differently.¹¹ Madzunya's suspicion of the educated leadership made him virtually an outsider in the internal politics of the Africanist movement. He did his cause little good when he told his followers on the eve of the anti-pass campaign that Sobukwe and his followers had failed to organise Orlando, where the people were intellectuals like Sobukwe who only sat in their houses drinking tea.¹² Madzunya thus equated being an intellectual with cowardice.

In the mid 1950s, the Africanists were beginning to coalesce into a close-knit and identifiable group. Structures such as the Inner-Core and the Bureau of African Nationalism served to consolidate the activities of the Africanists.¹³ Madzunya was

5 Interview with John Ganya conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie, 1 September 1999, Soweto.

6 Interview with Johnson Mlambo conducted by Brown Maaba, 30 September 2001, Daveyton, SADET Oral History Project.

7 Discussion between P.R.N. Raboroko, Z.B. Molete and G.M. Gerhart, 1. See Sobukwe's views on this group that he called 'odd' in his interview with G.M. Gerhart, 8 - 9 August 1970, Kimberley, 7. I am indebted to Gail Gerhart for giving me access to the interview with Sobukwe. The text of the interview is not *verbatim* because Sobukwe was a banned person and could not be quoted. However, this interview represents the author's recollection of the discussion she had with Sobukwe and was transcribed by her soon after the discussion.

8 Discussion between P.R.N. Raboroko, Z.B. Molete and G.M. Gerhart, 6.

9 Interview with R.M. Sobukwe conducted by G.M. Gerhart, 7.

10 Ibid.

11 Discussion between P.R.N. Raboroko, Z.B. Molete and G.M. Gerhart, 5.

12 Regina vs Sobukwe and 22 others, trial transcript. Quoted in Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), 205.

13 Interview with P.H. Molotsi conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie, 16 March 2003, Kroonstad.

peripheral to these activities and this contributed to his eventual failure to obtain a position in the first PAC executive. Although the Africanists used him, Sobukwe recalled, 'to draw the fire of the enemy and to test our strength',¹⁴ they saw him as unsuited to lead the new organisation and incapable of projecting the image and national impression that they wanted to create. Madzunya even lost the election to the position for which he was most suited, the post of national organiser, to Elliot Mfaha, a virtual unknown. This was particularly humiliating. He reacted by disassociating himself from the PAC's 1960 anti-pass campaign and withdrew his huge Alexandra branch.¹⁵ He told Benjamin Pogrand that not enough preparation had been done for the campaign.¹⁶ The withdrawal of the Alexandra branch accounts, at least in part, for the poor performance of the PAC in the Johannesburg area. Only 200 men joined Robert Sobukwe when he marched to the Orlando police station to court arrest on 21 March 1960.¹⁷ By contrast, 4 000 men marched from Boipatong and Bophelong to the police station in Vanderbiljpark; 10 000 men in Evaton demanded to be arrested; and between 5 000 and 7 000 people took part in the campaign in Sharpeville.¹⁸ The important role that Madzunya played in the organisation was recognised by some members who argued unsuccessfully for his inclusion in the executive after the arrest of Sobukwe and the banning of the PAC.¹⁹

The banning of the PAC on 8 April 1960 pushed the organisation underground, however, and with most of its leaders in prison, it struggled to stay afloat or make any impression on the national political scene until the formation of Poqo in 1961. Thereafter, the key underground activities of the organisation were those of Poqo. Conflicts between leaders inside the country were to have a particularly adverse effect on the activities of the military wing of the PAC, particularly the differences between Clarence Makwethu, the secretary of the Langa branch of the PAC, and Christopher Mlokothe, the chairperson of the Western Cape PAC regional executive.²⁰ Their conflict profoundly affected the organisation in the PAC's strongest region, where it enjoyed considerable support, particularly among migrant workers who lived in the single-sex flats of Langa and Nyanga.²¹ Because the Western Cape drew the largest and most militant support for the PAC, major problems in the region inevitably had a deleterious effect on the organisation as a whole in other PAC regions. Furthermore, the conflict resulted in sharp divisions, not only in the region, but also on Robben Island.

The conflict between Makwethu and Mlokothe was not based on the struggle for leadership as such. The roots of this conflict lay in the differing class base of their support. Mlokothe drew his support from an educated grouping within the PAC. This group

14 Interview with R.M. Sobukwe conducted by G.M. Gerhart, 7.

15 Lodge, *Black Politics*, 205. See also Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 236.

16 Pogrand, *How Can Man Die Better*, 125.

17 *Ibid.*, 2.

18 *Ibid.*, 132.

19 Interview with John Ganya.

20 *Ibid.*

21 For more information see Lodge, *Black Politics*, chapters 7 and 8.

fraternised with the Cape's white liberals, particularly during the anti-pass campaign. On the other hand, Makwethu drew his support from the radical element that was dominated by the men who resided in the bachelor flats in Langa and Nyanga. Most of these people were migrant labourers from the Eastern Cape. They were in close contact with the radical members of the Pondoland and Thembuland communities that were leading resistance in their villages. These differences in class support within the PAC in the Western Cape became the basis for suspicion, tension and internal rivalry.

The conflict came to a head during the anti-pass campaign in 1960. The national executive of the PAC had issued an instruction to its members to abide by the principle of 'No bail, no fine and no defence'. Participants in the campaign would court arrest and fill the apartheid jails. In the Western Cape, Mlokothi, Phillip Kgosana, Mgweba, Mampe and Abel Matross were arrested for their participation in the campaign. Instead of abiding by the directive from the National Executive, however, they applied for bail.²² For the rank and file, the contravention of the directive by Mlokothi in particular as a regional leader was seen as betrayal. Moreover, the campaign had provided an opportunity for leaders to prove their commitment and dedication by adhering to the PAC motto of 'service, suffering and sacrifice', a test the leaders failed miserably.²³ It is not clear why they decided to apply for bail, particularly because this occurred at a time that long prison sentences for political activities were not yet the norm.

After the arrests Sokhanyile was appointed acting regional leader, Makwethu regional chairperson and T.M. Ntantala deputy chairperson.²⁴ Makwethu, supported by Wellington Tshongayi and the radical membership, challenged Mlokothi for betraying the PAC's 'No bail, no fine and no defence' principle. The conflict degenerated into name calling and mudslinging. The Mlokothi faction was called the 'Makatanga' and the Makwethu faction the 'Balubas', after the opposing groups in the Congo civil war.²⁵ (The Makatanga were a separatist group under Moïse Tshombe, and were regarded as reactionaries, while the Balubas were the progressive forces led by Patrice Lumumba.²⁶)

The conflict in the PAC's powerful Western Cape region also led to divisions in the PAC nationally with, for example, the Transkei region and the influential Border region (both in the eastern part of the Cape Province) supporting Makwethu. The PAC members on Robben Island were also divided, with some supporting Makwethu and others supporting Mlokothi, as was the PAC leadership at national level. Zephania Mothopeng, a member of the NEC and secretary for legal affairs, is alleged to have sided with Makwethu, while the PAC's acting president, Potlako Leballo, sided with Mlokothi.²⁷

22 Interview with John Ganya.

23 Ibid.

24 W. Mazambane, 'Tribute to Late ex-APLA Chief, the Gallant "T. M." Ntantala', *Azanian Combat*, issue no. 13, 1991, 13.

25 Interview with Johnson Mlambo; Tom Lodge, 'Insurrectionism in South Africa: The Pan Africanist Congress and the Poqo Movement, 1959-1965', D. Phil. thesis, University of York, Centre for South African Studies, April 1984, 193.

26 Interview with Johnson Mlambo.

27 Interview with John Ganya.

Lodge sees the conflict between the two PAC regional leaders as ‘the struggle for the dominance of the underground movement in early 1961 between the upper and lower echelons of leadership’.²⁸ As we have suggested, it was a class struggle between the radicals, who were drawn mainly from the ranks of the illiterate migrant workers, and the educated, who were viewed as liberals. It was also a struggle for leadership in the strongest PAC region.

When Makwethu and Mlokothi were sentenced to serve prison terms on Robben Island in 1963, the unresolved conflict spilled over to the island. Attempts by a member of the national executive, Selby Ngendane, to reconcile the warring factions when he arrived on the island in December 1963 failed. His intervention, in fact, exacerbated matters. Makwethu was opposed to any arrangement that would enable the Makatanga to be integrated into the PAC and to hold any office in the organisation. His desires won favour within the organisation because he had a much larger support group on the island than Mlokothi.²⁹ Ngendane subsequently sided with Makwethu against Mlokothi. There are reports that the conflict was felt among exiles in faraway Lesotho, where there were PAC killings, allegedly instigated by Ntantala, against PAC members accused of belonging to the Mlokothi faction. Johnson Mlambo confirms that there were killings on both sides.³⁰ Ngendane’s intervention eventually led to Mlokothi losing the leadership of the Western Cape region to Makwethu, although Makwethu and Ngendane soon fell out too, which caused further divisions among the PAC prisoners.³¹

A former PAC prisoner on Robben Island, Enoch Ngomezulu, gave testimony at the Bethal Treason Trial in the late 1970s that provides some insight into the strife within the organisation: ‘On Robben Island there was a group of members of [the] PAC from the Cape Province under Mhlamli Makwethu and these members referred to themselves as members of Poqo, and Selby Ngendane refused to recognise that name as another name of PAC.’³² Another former PAC prisoner on Robben Island, Silas Ntengo, who also testified at the Bethal trial, described how Ngendane’s rejection of Poqo members as members of the PAC caused a great deal of controversy and tension on the island.³³ One indication of the divisions caused by Ngendane was the creation of an alternative coordinating committee by Makwethu’s supporters in 1965.³⁴ The coordinating committee took upon itself the duty of organising PAC activities on Robben Island in opposition to all the committees that were set up by Ngendane.³⁵

28 Lodge, ‘Insurrectionism in South Africa’, 193.

29 Interview with Johnson Mlambo.

30 Interview with John Ganya. See also Bernard Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania – Africanist Political Movements in Lesotho and Azania: The Origins and History of the Basutoland Congress Party and the Pan Africanist Congress*, vols 1 and 2 (University of Azania, 1985), 113.

31 Interview with Johnson Mlambo.

32 National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, (hereafter National Archives) Supreme Court of South Africa, Transvaal Provincial Division, criminal case 193/79, *S v. Zephania Mothopeng, John Ganya, Mark Shinnars, Bennie Ntolele, Hamilton Keke and others* (Bethal Treason Trial), testimony of Enoch Ngomezulu, 265. The 18 accused in this trial were brought before the judge on the 5 December 1977, but the case was remanded until January 1978.

33 *Ibid.*, testimony of Silas Ntengo, 2382.

34 *Ibid.*, testimony of Enoch Ngomezulu, 268.

35 *Ibid.*

The arrival of Mothopeng on Robben Island in June 1964 helped to heal the rift between Ngendane and the Makwethu group, after he had been given a detailed report by Ngendane about the state of affairs. He visited most of the cells where PAC members were held and encouraged them to work with Ngendane's committee. He joined Ngendane in giving political and history lectures about the PAC. After Mothopeng was sent to the isolation cells in 1965, however, members of the regional executive committee on Robben Island met and suspended Ngendane from the NEC. They then formed the coordinating committee comprising Silas Ntengo, Joe Gwabeni, Nicolaas Mapipa and Gladwell Mbali.³⁶ There were occasional assaults on those members who refused to accept the leadership of the coordinating committee.

Ngendane was transferred to the isolation cells in 1966. The arrival on the island of John Nyathi Pokela in 1967 brought about a measure of stability within the PAC. Pokela had been kidnapped from Lesotho by the South African Police and had been charged with a host of offences, which included attempting to kill white people, conspiring to derail the Blue Train, recruiting people for military training, and gathering information about police stations, aerodromes, military camps, etc, with the aim of bringing about industrial, social and economic chaos in South Africa.³⁷ He was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment. He had been regional leader of the PAC in the Aliwal North district and, at the time of his arrest, was a member of the Presidential Council of the PAC and head of the PAC's military operations. On the island, Pokela convened a meeting of the two conflicting committees and united them by forming an administrative committee.³⁸

The Makwethu/Mlokothi conflict adversely affected the PAC in the Western Cape, and the split in the region took a long time to resolve. Some of the PAC leaders at national level did not help matters by taking sides. The morale of the regional membership in the PAC underground sunk considerably and remained so for most of the decade.

Poqo

The Sharpeville massacre and the subsequent banning of the ANC and PAC led to an upsurge in armed resistance to the apartheid government. A number of radical organisations that propagated the use of arms and violence began to take centre stage in the resistance politics of South Africa. One such organisation was the ANC-aligned Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK).³⁹ Other smaller organisations had also taken the decision to use violence as a means of attaining their political goals. Although they operated

36 *Ibid.*, 266–7.

37 W. Mazambane, 'The Famous Court Hearing, Nyathi Pokela was a military strategist as early as the 60s', *Azanian Combat*, issue no. 5, 1987, 17.

38 *S v. Zephania Mothopeng, John Ganya, Mark Shinnars, Bennie Ntolele and Hamilton Keke and others*, testimony of Enoch Ngomezulu, 269.

39 Refer to Bernard Magubane and others, 'The Turn to Armed Struggle', in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970*, South African Democracy Education Trust (hereafter SADET) (eds) (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 53–146.

on a small scale, they are worth mentioning in order to avoid the often-unintended conclusion that the ANC and the PAC were the only organisations to have used armed resistance in South Africa. One such organisation was the African Resistance Movement (ARM), which started out as the National Committee for Liberation (NCL) under the leadership of Monty Berman.⁴⁰ It comprised white middle-class people – and a small number of blacks – and its aim was to use sabotage in its armed struggle and to provide assistance to both the ANC and the PAC in the fight for liberation. The members could not have numbered more than 50. The National Liberation Front, also called the Yu Chi Chan Club (YCCC), was created by the Trotskyist Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) that was led by Dr Neville Alexander. This organisation was also geared towards military confrontation.⁴¹ NEUM established the African People's Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA) as its military wing.⁴²

The two studies of Poqo in volume 1 of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* deal quite adequately with the history of the organisation from its formation to its virtual demise in 1963. A brief summary will suffice here.⁴³

The emergence of the PAC's military wing, Poqo, can be directly linked to the evolving discontentment in South Africa that followed the banning of the PAC and the ANC. Specific factors accounted for participation in the organisation in different parts of the country. For example, many young African males in the Western Cape joined Poqo because the 'radical rhetoric and anti-white sentiments of the PAC had a definite appeal for people living under conditions dictated by the increasingly stricter application of influx control' in the region.⁴⁴ The majority of Poqo recruits there, migrant labourers, were subjected to the most stringent application of influx control in the country because of the Western Cape Coloured Labour Preference Policy, which gave first choice in employment to 'coloureds'. This, coupled with the inhuman conditions in the single-sex hostels, became the source of discontent and thus constituted the basis for radical political organisation and mobilisation.

In the Transkei, the activities of the All African Convention (AAC) were critical in the fermentation of a climate of revolt. The arrest of I.B. Tabata for his role and that of the organisation in the protest against the culling of cattle and the Rehabilitation Scheme in the Mount Ayliff area added to the radicalisation of the local population. In this resistance the locals armed themselves and moved to the nearest hills to waylay

40 Refer to Magnus Gunther, 'The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM)', in *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 209–56; A. Du Toit, 'Fragile Defiance: the African Resistance Movement', in I. Liebenberg, F. Lortan, B. Nel and G. van der Westhuizen, (eds), *The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa* (Pretoria: HAUM, 1994), 97.

41 T.G. Karis and G.M. Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990*, vol. 5 *Nadir and Resurgence* (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 1997), 31.

42 Refer to Robin Kayser and Mohamed Adhikari, 'Land and Liberty! The African People's Democratic Union of South Africa', in *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 319ff; and F. Buntman, 'Resistance on Robben Island', in Harriet Deacon (ed), *The Island, A History of Robben Island, 1488-1990* (Belville and Cape Town: Mayibuye Books and David Philip, 1996), 97.

43 Brown Bavusile Maaba, 'The PAC's War Against the State', in *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 257–98; and Sello Mathabatha, 'The PAC and Poqo in Pretoria', *The Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 299–318.

44 Maaba, *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 267.

the police.⁴⁵ The 1953 Bantu Authorities Act exacerbated tensions when illegitimate chiefs such as Chief K.D. Matanzima emerged as willing puppets.⁴⁶ Opposition to the Bantu Authorities Act and other forms of apartheid intrusion into the countryside led to the Pondoland and Thembuland revolts in the early 1960s.⁴⁷ The radicalisation of these rural communities was vital for recruitment to the PAC's military wing.

In other parts of the country, such as the Vaal region and the Pretoria area (both PAC strongholds in the 1960s), the radical rhetoric of the PAC appealed to African youth who were discontented with the oppressive and restrictive nature of apartheid rule over blacks.

Mfanasekhaya Gqobose recalls early PAC efforts, after its banning, to recruit for its military wing. 'We recruited the youth, lectured them politically,' he says. 'And then the next thing, of course, was sending people outside the country to go and train. We had told ourselves that all this time we had been obeying these [white] people ... Now this time we are going to hit back at them.'⁴⁸

Robert Sobukwe, as the leader of the PAC, had anticipated a protracted battle with the apartheid regime when he decided to despatch Peter Molotsi, the PAC Secretary for Pan African Affairs, out of the country to mobilise political support.⁴⁹ Molotsi left the day before the start of the PAC's anti-pass campaign (also known as the Positive Action Campaign) and the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960.⁵⁰ This anticipation of the fierce battle with the regime also led Sobukwe to request John Nyathi Pokela, his trusted lieutenant, not to stand for any political office in case the need arose for him to constitute the second and subsequent layers of leadership.⁵¹

Sobukwe's foresight paid off when the apartheid regime banned the PAC, together with the ANC, on 8 April 1960. In the aftermath of the banning, a decision was taken to revive the Africanist Task Force,⁵² a para-military structure formed just prior to the anti-pass campaign and the forerunner of Poqo.⁵³ It was originally conceived as a contingency PAC structure that was supposed to function in the event of the immobilisation of the PAC leadership.⁵⁴ It was also intended to assist in the organisation and conduct of the anti-pass campaign by providing protection to PAC members and

45 Colin Bundy, 'Land and Liberation: Popular Rural and National Liberation Movements in South Africa, 1920-1960', in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London and New York, Longman, 1987), 274.

46 Interview with Mfanasekhaya Gqobose conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie, 25 May 2004, Port Elizabeth SADET Oral History Project.

47 Refer to Sukude Matoti and Lungisile Ntsebeza, 'Rural Resistance in Mpondoland and Thembuland, 1960-1963', in *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 177-208.

48 Interview with Mfanasekhaya Gqobose conducted by Brown Maaba on 18 August 2001, New Brighton, SADET Oral History Project.

49 Interview with Peter Molotsi conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie.

50 Interview with Peter Molotsi conducted by Brown Maaba, 7 January 2001, Kroonstad, SADET Oral History Project.

51 Interview with M. Gqobose.

52 Interview with P.H. Molotsi conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie.

53 T.M. Ntantala, 'The Commemoration of Sharpeville', in *Azania News*, vol. 22, no. 5, 1986, 8. See also interview with John Ganya.

54 'Poqo Remembered: The Truth about the Early PAC Army', *Azanian Combat*, issue no. 3, 1987, 13. See also interview with Peter Molotsi conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie.

local leaders. The task force was charged with encouraging and, to a certain extent, compelling PAC members and local leaders to participate in the anti-pass campaign.⁵⁵ Gqobose describes the metamorphosis of the task force into an embryonic military structure and the origin of the term 'Poqo':

This particular group of youthful PAC members grew and was particularly active after the Sharpeville massacre in one form or another, but certainly less passive or non-combatant [than] it was before the Sharpeville massacre ... The term Poqo then came into being or use. Its first use was in the Western Cape Region ... when in February 1960 Sobukwe, Leballo, Ngendane and Howard Ngcobo, members of the PAC National Executive Committee, attended the last rally before March 1960. Sobukwe and Leballo addressed the rally. There Comrade Bula, a member of the Cape Flats Branch, as a praise singer went up and down the gathering chanting as follows: *Thetha nyana we Sizwe. Uzakuweva amaAfrika Poqo* ('Speak son of the soil. Listen to what veritable Africans are saying').⁵⁶

Mgxashe, while ascribing the term to Bula, gives a different account of its emergence:

The word Poqo emerged for the first time in February 1960 at a PAC rally addressed by Sobukwe and some of his colleagues at Bhunga Square, in Langa, Cape Town, during their tour of the Cape. Sobukwe had asked people attending the rally to translate Pan Africanist Congress into Xhosa. Several translations were produced and amongst them were *Umbutho wama Afrika Geqe*, which meant the organisation of Africans who stand alone, and someone suggested *Umbutho wama Afrika nqo*, the organisation of Africans who do not beat about the bush. Sobukwe, who [had] taught in the Department of African Languages at Wits University in Johannesburg, was not quite happy with the two proposals and the riddle went on. The most appropriate translation was suggested by Mr Allan Bula, an illiterate man from the PAC branch in Kessington outside Langa. This was *Umbutho wama Afrika Poqo*. Sobukwe gave his nod and he wrote back to the PAC Western regional executive and called Bula an educated man.⁵⁷

The National Working Committee of the PAC issued a directive to Pokela to revive the task force.⁵⁸ Its revival in 1961 prepared the ground for the formation of Poqo. Initially, a youth unit (known as *Lutsha*) was established in the Western Cape as a military and defence structure, and was based on a cell system of five to ten members with a cell leader.⁵⁹ The cell system was introduced to protect members of the cell.

55 M.P. Qgobose's letter to Bekumdeni Simelane, 21 September 2001, 3.

56 Loc. cit.

57 Interview with Ace Mgxashe cited in Mampunye, *Memoirs and Reflections of Freedom Fighters*, vol 1, unpublished manuscript, 67.

58 University of Fort Hare (hereafter UFH), National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre, R. Daniels, 'Message of Paarl POQO Record is Indisputable', in *Azanian Combat*, 11-20.

59 Maaba, *The Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 263.

None of the ordinary individual cell members knew the members of other cells, or their activities.⁶⁰

Poqo, unlike MK and the ARM, directed its activities at the white population in general. Tom Lodge categorises Poqo activities between 1962 and 1963 as defensive murders of policemen and suspected informers; killing of whites who were chosen indiscriminately; assassination of Bantustan puppets and chiefs, which had an explicit terrorist aim; and preparations for a general uprising scheduled for April 1963.⁶¹ From its first actions at the end of 1962 until the state clampdown on Poqo after a planned countrywide revolt in April 1963, Poqo members participated in acts of sabotage and attacks on whites, resulting in the murders of scores of white people.⁶² In consequence, many of its cadres were arrested for murder and executed.

The consequences of Poqo activities were devastating for the PAC and its underground operations. The Report of the Snyman Commission, established by the government to do in-depth research into the spate of killing of white people, mostly in the Eastern and Western Cape, exposed the brutal nature of Poqo activities. This, coupled with PAC leader Potlako Leballo's statement in March 1963 that Poqo was synonymous with the PAC, was a major setback for the PAC. Because of the brutal nature of Poqo activities that resulted in the murder of a number of innocent white people, including women and children, the state responded with equally determined brutality to assure its white constituency of its ability to quell the violence and to deal effectively with the so-called *swart gevaar* ('black danger'). Brown Maaba writes that: 'Imprisonment and, above all, the execution of a whole layer of cadres, left the organisation rudderless.'⁶³

The spate of mass arrests began in 1963 and continued until 1969. By June 1963, a total of 3 246 PAC members had been arrested nationally and 124 had been found guilty of murder.⁶⁴ In April 1966, thirty Poqo members held in the Gamkaspooort prison were accused of sabotage and conspiracy to murder warders. On 28 June 1966, seven Poqo men were sentenced in the Port Elizabeth court for conspiring to blow up municipal buildings and railway bridges. Another group of four men were sentenced to five years for receiving military training in Lesotho and for leaving the country unlawfully.⁶⁵ In 1968 twelve members of Poqo were put on trial for planning to attack the police station, a power station and a post office in Victoria West.⁶⁶ In 1969 Poqo activists operating in Graaff-Reinet in the western part of the Cape Province and the Mount Coke areas in the eastern part were sentenced for coordinating Poqo activities under the guise of a religious organisation.⁶⁷ More disastrously, about 42

60 See also Matthew Nkoana, *Crises in the Revolution: A Special Report on the Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa* (London: Mafube, 1969), 2-3. See also interview with Peter Molotsi conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie.

61 See Lodge, *Black Politics*, 246. These views on Poqo are shared by a number of PAC members. See interview with John Ganya.

62 See chapters by Maaba and Mathabatha, *The Road to Democracy*, vol. 1.

63 Maaba, *The Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 297.

64 *Ibid.*, 295.

65 *Ibid.*

66 Lodge, *Black Politics*, 255.

67 Nkoana, *Crises in the Revolution*, 54.

Poqo members were executed at Pretoria Central Prison between 1963 and 1968.⁶⁸ According to some estimates, 61 of the 101 people executed for political crimes in the 1960s were affiliated to the PAC.⁶⁹

Criticism of Poqo emerged within the organisation. Lakaje was not impressed by the 'heroic' acts of Poqo:

The PAC (at the time of the Poqo attacks) was a loose uncoordinated organisation that seemed to be moving forward purely on the impetus of emotions, enthusiasm and largely confusion ... There was no carefully planned out programme and everyone seemed to have engaged in rash action, if such actions would crown the participants as brave, staunch and daring members in the eyes of the Party.⁷⁰

Peter Molotsi's more considered analysis is that the liberation movements in South Africa had no experience of guerrilla warfare. There was desperation and willingness, however, among the people, who had suffered for so many years under white oppression, to become their own liberators through the use of violence.⁷¹ Maaba concludes: 'The recklessness of the leadership and its lack of understanding of the nature of the South African state meant that it would take years before the PAC could regroup and become a force that the apartheid regime had to reckon with.'⁷²

What made a bad situation worse was the impetuous leadership of the PAC by Potlako Leballo from Lesotho. After his release from prison in 1962, he took over the leadership of the PAC as acting president. He became central to most of the PAC conflicts from 1964. It is illuminating, for the purpose of this discussion, to have a brief look at some perceptions of Leballo, whose hold on the leadership of the PAC extended from 1962 to 1979.

There are contested and unverifiable claims about Leballo's participation in World War II.⁷³ What is certain is that he was a teacher by profession and was expelled from teaching for his role in the 1952 Defiance Campaign. He spoke his mind and this outspokenness endeared him to most members of the Africanist group and the youth in general. His combativeness came to the fore at the time that the Africanists were becoming convinced that the communists' hold over the ANC was becoming strong because the ANC leadership was immobilised during the Treason Trial. Leballo disrupted numerous ANC meetings and the Africanists greeted his disruptions with excitement. ZB Molete recalls Leballo's predilection for confrontation:

There was a minister of education who was going to open a school ... And Sobukwe warned Leballo not to go there, you see. So Leballo says to me,

68 PAC's programme for the unveiling of the Poqo Heroes Monument 1 August, 1992, Mamelodi.

69 Madeleine Fullard, 'State repression in the 1960s', in *Road to Democracy*, vol. 1, 382.

70 Charles Lakaje, Unpublished autobiographical notes, Nairobi, Kenya, February 1970, 34.

71 Interview with Peter Molotsi conducted by Thami ka Platjje.

72 Maaba, 'The PAC's War against the State', 297.

73 See Bernard Leeman, *A Man who Hurried to Meet his Destiny*; this view is contradicted by Raboroko, who doubts that Leballo ever participated in the war.

we should go. He was there and heckled the minister. He says: 'You are not going to speak here! You must go and speak to the white children in town.' And the police rushed in ... and there was a big row there. The minister got into his car and left and the people started feasting. You see this type of thing impressed the people.⁷⁴

The Africanists capitalised on these actions and used them to mobilise the people because they gave the impression that the PAC was more radical than the ANC. The downside of such actions, however, was that they benefited the PAC only when it was playing an oppositional role to the ANC. Leballo could only function in opposition to something. 'By nature P.K. is an oppositionist,' Sobukwe observed. 'He's always got to be in opposition to something.'⁷⁵ Sobukwe comments on the emotionalism that characterised Leballo's politics, and that distinguished Leballo from Sobukwe:

At the time I first came to Johannesburg I didn't see myself as an activist, particularly not of the Leballo type anyway. I saw myself more as an intellectual who could help back up this movement and give it some theoretical strength. PK and his group were mainly emotional in their nationalism. They needed firmer theory, more academic grounding. The articles that appeared in *The Africanist* were a bit wild and diffuse, without educational value.⁷⁶

The PAC wanted to emphasise the ability of leaders to provide intellectual direction and vision. It did not mean that radical actions and posturing were unnecessary, but they became less significant. The major challenge for the PAC was whether it was going to be able to contain Leballo, who was seen as a loose canon. Leballo was not held in high regard by colleagues more educated than he was. He had only a teacher's diploma. However, they admired his boundless energy. Raboroko and Matthew Nkoana wrote articles that were published in newspapers and attributed to Leballo. In an interview in 1969, either Raboroko or Molete states that: 'I could write anything to the press and say that I have just had an interview with Leballo on this point and Leballo said this, and he would be so happy to see his name in print. Now when I stopped doing this, that is another reason why there became bad blood between the two of us.'⁷⁷

The view of most members of the PAC was that Sobukwe, who enjoyed the undivided loyalty of many PAC leaders, was the only person who could control Leballo.⁷⁸ However, this dependence on one leader to maintain cohesion within the organisation, particularly when that leader could not do so because of imprisonment, meant that his absence triggered havoc and unleashed long-restrained frustrations and antagonisms. The history of the PAC in exile was to demonstrate this (as we will see in the next chapter).

74 Discussion between P.R.N. Raboroko, Z.B. Molete and G.M. Gerhart.

75 Interview with R.M. Sobukwe conducted by G.M. Gerhart.

76 *Ibid.*, 10.

77 Discussion between P.R.N. Raboroko, Z.B. Molete and G.M. Gerhart, 4.

78 Interview with Johnson Mlambo; Interview with John Ganya.

Soon after he had taken over the leadership of the PAC, Leballo made a careless press statement on 24 March 1963 to the effect that the PAC and Poqo were synonymous and that they were poised to launch an attack on the South African government with about 150 000 cadres in 1963.⁷⁹ These raids would be directed at police stations, and at seizing armouries, blowing up power stations, setting alight petrol tanks (by garage attendants), and poisoning the food of white employers (by their domestic servants).⁸⁰ This statement came at the unfortunate time that the South African government had just appointed the Snyman Commission to investigate the Poqo uprisings in the Paarl area. Leballo gave the commission what it had been looking for.⁸¹ Gail Gerhart adds: 'Police were able to infiltrate Poqo and curb its activities by 1963 ... and in this they were greatly aided by Leballo himself, who turned out, predictably, to be a poor substitute for Sobukwe at the helm of the PAC.'⁸²

Leballo's recklessness knew no bounds. A few days after making the press statement, on 29 March he sent out two women couriers, Cynthia Lichaba, 18 years, and Thabisa Lethala, 19 years, to post letters in Ladybrand (a South African town about ten miles from the Basutoland capital, Maseru) instructing Poqo cadres about the planned insurrection.⁸³ These letters contained details about Poqo leaders inside the country. The Basutoland police informed the South African police, who, according to Pogrund, up to that point had had no idea about the plan. The police captured the two women before they could post the letters and the identities of many Poqo leaders were revealed.⁸⁴ Pogrund writes:

The letters put South African police inside the Poqo network. Mass arrests followed immediately. Where the police knew the identity of the leader of a cell but not the members, they spread a message calling a meeting – and grabbed everyone who came. Poqo was broken. For months to come, large numbers were charged: in mid-June Parliament was told that 3, 246 Poqo members had been arrested.⁸⁵

Following the arrest of the two women, the British Colonial Police in Basutoland raided the PAC offices in Maseru on 1 April and seized a considerable amount of documents. Nomthetho Simelane, who worked in the PAC offices in Maseru, says there was a notebook among them, 'and that notebook had the addresses of people back at home'.⁸⁶

Various explanations, or accusations, are made about Leballo's decision to make the press statement, whose impact was disastrous to the clandestine activities of the PAC. It also affected Leballo's standing in the organisation. Molotsi says there was

79 See Tom Lodge, *Resistance and Ideology in Settler Societies* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), 186.

80 Pogrund, *How Can Man Die Better*, 181–2.

81 Lakaje, Notes, 35. See also Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 252.

82 Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 252.

83 Pogrund, *How Can Man Die Better*, 182.

84 *Ibid.*

85 *Ibid.*

86 Interview with Nomthetho Simelane conducted by Brown Maaba, University of Swaziland, SADET Oral History Project.

aversion towards Leballo for a long time after he made the press statement.⁸⁷ The unanswered question is what could have conceivably have motivated Leballo to act in this manner when the release of Sobukwe from his three-year sentence was only a few weeks away?⁸⁸

Charles Lakaje, who had known Leballo since their days as members of the ANC branch in Orlando, believes that the press statement was a sinister effort to plunge the organisation under Sobukwe into a veritable mess or, conversely, to forestall Sobukwe's release, if it came to the attention of the state that the organisation was planning indiscriminate 'acts of terrorism':

If Sobukwe was released, his colleagues in Maseru had to see to it he would be plunged into a stinking mess of embarrassment so calculated that his reputation would have gone to the dogs, and any attempt by Sobukwe, if released, to absolve himself of the criminal acts of his co-leaders would certainly have discredited him ... If those disastrous situations created by Leballo and his cronies resulted in the continued imprisonment of Sobukwe, as it seemed to be the desperate craving of his co-leaders, then they would lick their lips with pride at their despicable, vainglorious victory.⁸⁹

Lakaje also thinks that Leballo, who since his release had been 'basking in the limelight', intended to usurp the leadership of the PAC: 'He had virtually assumed the leadership of the PAC and was he going to relinquish that leadership so easily if Sobukwe came out of prison?'⁹⁰ There were, indeed, occasions when Leballo set out to discredit Sobukwe, even to some PAC members. Nkoana recounts an event that took place in the Stofberg prison where Leballo accused Sobukwe of encouraging tribalism by calling other PAC members by their clan names.⁹¹ Nkoana, who approached Sobukwe about this matter and was satisfied with the explanation Sobukwe gave, often wondered what damage Leballo's accusations would have caused, had Nkoana not approached Sobukwe.⁹²

Johnson Mlambo rejects these conspiracy theories and suggests that the fateful statement was vintage Leballo – an act of recklessness, boastfulness and overzealousness.⁹³ There is merit in such a view if we take into account Leballo's conduct in the 1950s, when he exposed the Africanists' plans to form their own organisation. This occurred in February 1954. He disrupted an ANC meeting that was being addressed by Duma Nokwe, Walter Sisulu and Robert Resha. By this time the Africanists were beginning to coalesce into a distinct group within the ANC branch in Orlando. Leballo unwittingly revealed the clandestine plans of the Africanists. Lakaje recounts Leballo's tempestuous conduct at the meeting:

87 Interview with Peter Molotsi conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie.

88 Lakaje, Notes, 33.

89 Ibid, 37.

90 Ibid, 33.

91 Nkoana, *Crises in the Revolution*, 39.

92 Ibid.

93 Interview with Johnson Mlambo.

I tried by all means to pull him by the jacket so that he could realise how disastrous his revelations were to the then forming 'Africanists'. Instead, Leballo turned on me and said: 'Man, I must speak!' And the assembly burst into spasms of laughter. All the time while Leballo was speaking he was very emotional and cheers from the meeting were blowing the roof off.⁹⁴

Peter Molotsi, too, attributes what he calls the 'Lesotho débâcle' to Leballo's characteristic carelessness and thoughtlessness.⁹⁵

Nkoana gives another view of the background to the Maseru press statement. He argues that prior to the press statement, Leballo had received three messages from Hans Lombard to the effect that the PAC was perceived to be too inactive outside South Africa and this made it very difficult to raise funds for the organisation.⁹⁶ Hans Lombard was a white South African who was recommended by Leballo to the PAC. Leballo also gave Lombard unrestricted access to the PAC material and underground. Lombard had a letter with Leballo's signature that he carried everywhere as proof of his membership of the PAC. He was later discovered to be a police informer who worked for the Afrikaans newspaper *Transvaler*. Leballo was taken to task for his lack of judgement by other PAC members.⁹⁷ Nkoana writes: 'If Lombard felt strongly enough about this [the inactiveness of the PAC] to cable his feelings in spite of the fact that he was due to meet Leballo shortly, it can well be imagined with what emphasis he made the point when they eventually met. A week later Leballo called a disastrous press conference.'⁹⁸

S.W.P. Mhlongo, on the other hand, says that Leballo deliberately made the press statement because he was a police informer:

I know I have no proof to substantiate this argument, but I have no doubt that that man was working for the enemy. Leballo knew very well that Sobukwe had proclaimed 1963 as the year of independence and was also fully aware of the preparations that were made in the Eastern Cape for the launch of the revolutionary take-over and conspired against that revolution.⁹⁹

Mhlongo's view opens other avenues of inquiry that can only be verified by additional information.

Ace Mgxashe regards the press statement, whatever Leballo's motives, as a blessing in disguise. If the press statement had not been made, he argues, there would have been a massacre on the appointed day of the countrywide uprising: 'You think probably that statement was stupid, it was also a blessing in disguise because the Boers were really waiting ... to massacre people ... I remember this fellow Gongo, he

94 Charles Lakaje, Notes, 12.

95 Interview with Peter Molotsi conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie.

96 Nkoana, *Crises in the Revolution*, 8.

97 For more information see Nkoana, *Crises in the Revolution*, 1-30.

98 *Ibid.*, 12.

99 Interview with S.W.P. Mhlongo.

said on the eve of 8 April, they drove around round about midnight in Cape Town, the Boers were just there and the army, they were waiting. They were armed.¹⁰⁰

The repercussions of the Lesotho press statement were catastrophic because it crippled the PAC.¹⁰¹ M Malatsi assessed the damage:

When this thing happened, the PAC was by far the most revolutionary and the most radical organisation and it delivered the most devastating blow to the organisation. The setback was for at least ten to fifteen years before we were able to recover properly. You must not forget that over 11 000 PAC members were arrested. The whole of 1963-1964 the majority of people on Robben Island were PAC members. That was why John Vorster was able to pride himself on saying that they had broken the back of the PAC.¹⁰²

Whatever lay behind Leballo's actions, they resulted in the loss of the PAC's most able leader. The apartheid regime introduced a clause in the General Law Amendment Act in 1963, the so-called Sobukwe Clause, which provided for the extension of the prison term of anyone after his or her sentence had been completed if the Minister of Justice considered he or she was likely, if released, to further the achievement of any of the objects of communism.¹⁰³ This clause was used to keep Sobukwe in prison until 1969.

The PAC's military wing suffered another severe blow in 1967 when its head, John Pokela, was kidnapped in Lesotho and brought to South Africa. As we have seen, Pokela was charged with a host of offences that confirmed his critical role in the activities of Poqo as well as the South African government's awareness of his leadership of Poqo.¹⁰⁴

All this grossly retarded the military programme of the PAC inside the country. The arrests and imprisonment on Robben Island of scores of PAC members for many years and the death sentences imposed on many Poqo cadres served to instill unparalleled fear in the ranks of those who were still intent on participating in the struggle.

The revival of the underground: the 1970s

The PAC continued with underground work in the second half of the 1960s (as indicated by the various trials mentioned above). The arrest of Imam Abdullah Haroun in 1969 was another clear indication of the existence of an internal underground. The imam was arrested, and subsequently killed in police custody, for allegedly recruiting people for military training in China under the guise of going to Mecca on pilgrimage.¹⁰⁵

100 Interview with Mxolisi Ace Mgxashe conducted by Brown Maaba, 26 January 2002, Cape Town, SADET Oral History Project.

101 Interview with Peter Molotsi conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie. See also Interview with S.W. Mhlongo.

102 Interview with M. Malatsi conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie, 24 October, 1999, Midrand.

103 Pogrand, *How Can Man Die Better*, 184.

104 Mazambane, 'The Famous Court Hearing', 17.

105 Richard Leonard, *South Africa at War: White Power and the Crisis in Southern Africa* (Craighall: AD. Donker, 1983), 39.

The evidence that was led before the Bethal Treason Trial in 1978 revealed the existence of the PAC underground that had begun to emerge from the mid-1970s. It was initially centred largely on Johannesburg and Pretoria. Although there were other areas where the underground had been revived, activities inevitably became linked to Johannesburg and Pretoria. This was largely because Zephania Mothopeng, the most senior member of the PAC National Executive Committee (after Robert Sobukwe) who was still inside the country, was based in Johannesburg after his release from prison. Most PAC members in and around Johannesburg were released around the same time and thus provided the nucleus from which the revival of the PAC could be initiated. Johannesburg was also a strategic location for two crucial routes to exile: Swaziland and Botswana. In addition, the Soweto student uprising in 1976 was initially centred on Johannesburg. The uprising provided the PAC, as it did the ANC, with a large pool of angry youth willing to go into exile and acquire military training.

Although a critical mass of PAC members were released from Robben Island in the late 1960s, the actual efforts towards the revival of the PAC underground were made around 1974 and 1975. The main reason given for the lull in PAC internal political activity until 1974 was the brutality of the regime. 'The regime's brutality was intense,' John Ganya says. 'The other critical factor was the execution of PAC members in 1963 and 1966. This sent some very shocking signals in the PAC and Zeph Mothopeng advised that we couldn't subject our people to such a slaughter. We had to find other ways to advance the struggle.'¹⁰⁶ The 'Lesotho débâcle' would, of course, have been another factor behind the long lull.

The determination of the regime to obliterate the PAC and the vestiges of Poqo led to a cautious approach among PAC leaders. What also made operations in the late 1960s difficult was the dispersal of the national executive, thus making it hard to coordinate activities. Leballo and others were in exile; some, such as Sobukwe and Mothopeng, released from prison, were either served with banning orders that ranged from two to five years or banished to remote areas and rendered inoperative.

A number of factors accounted for a favourable climate in the mid 1970s for the revival of the underground. Perhaps the most important of these was the formation of student, youth and community organisations from 1968 that adopted ideologies that bore some resemblance to the Africanism of the PAC. These were the Black Consciousness organisations that made their debut with the formation of the South African Student Organisation (SASO) in 1968.¹⁰⁷ John Ganya recalls after the formation of the Black Peoples Convention (BPC) that:

106 Interview with John Ganya. Those who were hanged by the regime were Fezile Jaza, Lennox Madikane, Johannes Notyawwe, Fanele Matikinca and Johnathan Sogwagwa. Others who were serving sentences on Robben Island who were also hanged in 1967 were Baden Koboka, Edward Sikhundla, Jabavu Mzondi, Hans Gqibile, MacDonald Mgweba, Magdadaza Magushe, Goduka Galem, Livingstone Fatyela, Wellington Tyobeka, Nkosencinci Maseti, Mthetheleli Ntuli and Lennox Zambodla. See the Snyman Commission report. See also Ace Mgxashe's unpublished 'Memoirs and Reflections of Freedom Fighters', 131.

107 Ibid.

We told the BPC that we wanted to use their organisation as a base from which to recruit members for the PAC and this request was supported. They even alerted us to those members of the BPC who were too close to the ANC in their ideological thinking. For example, Steve Biko's brother was a PAC member. Some of the BPC leaders had their relatives who were ANC members. So the BPC leaders and its members were divided between us and the ANC. Abraham Tiro's expulsion from Turfloop created a further impetus in our efforts to get more recruits. The activities of SASO in the schools also made it very easy for us to recruit students from the schools. Zeph Mothopeng was also helpful in ensuring that Tiro gets a teaching position at Morris Isaacson [School] in Soweto. So, we became very close to SASO people as a result. We went to talk to Tsietsi Mashinini and he was not so welcoming. The meeting we had with Tsepo Seathlolo was very fruitful.¹⁰⁸

Most PAC leaders and members who were in prison were dispersed in a variety of prisons such as Robben Island, Victor Verster, Leeukop and Stofberg. It was mainly those PAC members who had been imprisoned on Robben Island that carried out the revival of the internal PAC. The court records of the Bethal Treason Trial indicate that a particular process led to the revival of the PAC's underground. First, the old PAC members met to discuss their prison experiences. The initial group was made up of the former Robben Island prisoners who returned to Johannesburg. These leaders were used as a nucleus around which re-organisation was to take place. They would recruit new members to the PAC and form cells. The members of the new cells were then charged with forming other cells, until large numbers of people had been drawn into the underground. This was followed by efforts to establish contact with PAC members in other parts of the country, who were similarly charged with the revival of the underground in their areas. Efforts were then made to make contact with PAC leaders in exile, particularly in Botswana and Swaziland, and recruits were sent out of the country for military training. Finally, the Soweto uprising raised the intensity of activities of the internal underground.

Support from the external wing of the PAC for the revival of the internal underground came when an agent was despatched from abroad to go 'on a nationwide tour of PAC contacts, ordering them immediately to reassemble their clandestine cells'; in the process, two lead units were established, one in Pretoria to coordinate operations in the Transvaal and the other in East London to cover the Eastern Cape.¹⁰⁹ Pascal Vakaliza testified at the Bethal Trial that in the summer of 1974/75 he had met Zeph Mothopeng, who told him that he had been visited by a young man by the name of Johannes Moabi. Moabi had informed Mothopeng that he had come from Tanzania, and was bearing messages for Mothopeng from the leadership in exile. One of these

108 Ibid.

109 Stephen M. Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels: Inside South Africa's Hidden War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 31–2.

messages was that the PAC was soon going to open an office in Swaziland and PAC members based inside the country must send youths abroad for military training.¹¹⁰

The four PAC members who played a leading role in the revival of internal underground activities were Zephania Mothopeng (de facto head of the PAC inside the country); John Ganya; Mark Shinnars; and Isaac (Saki) Mafatshe. The four became central in reviving old and inactive PAC members, recruiting new members, creating underground cells, establishing links with the external leadership, and transporting recruits into exile. Mothopeng and Ganya, both released from prison in 1968, operated in the Johannesburg area. Mafatshe and Shinnars, both released from prison in 1973, operated mainly in Pretoria.

There is some slight disagreement about how the decision to revamp the PAC came about. Mafatshe says the decision was taken on Robben Island when he was mandated by the PAC, led by John Pokela, to contact the leadership in exile upon his release. He continues:

We were worried about what was happening in exile because whatever we heard about exile was depressing. There was infighting, expulsions, even people who we knew were activists were scattered in Kenya and other places and there was nothing good or inspiring about the PAC that was coming from abroad. The only good thing we heard was ... an effort to come back into the country. But besides [that] it was just people firing and expelling each other and this was not good at all. One, I was sent to ... see to the revival of the PAC within the country, and ... to take people out of the country abroad.¹¹¹

Soon after his release, Mafatshe went to see Zeph Mothopeng, in the company of Benny Ntoele, an ex-Robben Islander and Bethal Treason trialist.

When I arrived at Zeph's place I briefed him about the brief from Robben Island. I found out that Mothopeng was already ahead. I was supposed to brief him that he was supposed to coordinate with the Black Consciousness Movement. Mothopeng was more active in the BPC politics. Some of the Black Consciousness meetings were held at his house ... The day I was ... at his house, there were activists of the BPC. The agreement with Zeph was that ... we should concentrate on the BPC because it will give us the legal say. Although we would not be that active like them, we will work behind the scenes. We will orientate them towards the underground work and how to operate with the view to form two structures, i.e. the legal and illegal structures because they must know the regime was going to knock them at the level of the legal structure. When that time comes they must be prepared to survive underground ... We could not overtly talk about the armed wing.

110 *S v. Zephania Mothopeng, John Ganya, Mark Shinnars, Bennie Ntoele and Hamilton Keke and others*, testimony of Pascot Vakaliza, 430–1.

111 Interview with Sakki Mafatshe conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie, 20 May 2005, Pretoria, SADET Oral History Project.

But if they wanted it the PAC would have to offer something. There was an agreement with Zeph that I was supposed at some stage to go outside the country to deliver the report from Robben Island.¹¹²

Moses Masemola has a different recollection of these events. In his testimony at the treason trial in 1978, he agreed that Isaac Mafatshe and Mark Shinnars were drawn into underground activities following a visit to Mothopeng soon after their release from prison. The purpose of this meeting was to determine their roles. Shinnars, Mafatshe and Benny Ntoele approached Mothopeng and sought advice about what could be done to revive the PAC. They were advised to operate within lawful organisations such as the BPC, because the PAC was dead. They did not accept this view and decided to send Mafatshe to the external leadership of the PAC for direction.¹¹³

At this stage, Mafatshe decided to go into exile. Before he left, however, he had another meeting with Mothopeng, who gave him his blessing. Mothopeng advised Mafatshe to base himself in Lobatse, Botswana, to take advantage of the SASO and BPC members there. He was charged with directing them towards the PAC offices in Francistown. He was also to take a message to the external leadership indicating Mothopeng's concern about the apparent change in the PAC's ideological direction from a national struggle to a class struggle.¹¹⁴

Mafatshe spent a year in Botswana, working with BCM activists such as Bokwe Mafuna, Tebogo Mafole, Welile Nhlapo and Jeff Baqwa. During this period Mafatshe studied the Botswana-South Africa border for safe routes.¹¹⁵ This information proved valuable during Mafatshe's infiltrations into the country. He advised other cadres of the best way out of the country through Botswana. Mafatshe also travelled to Tanzania to consult the external leadership. 'In Dar es Salaam I met the then High Command: Jack Jako (head of security), Mfanasekhaya Gqobose (national treasurer), Gasson Ndlovu (deputy commander), and gave them the whole report,' he says:

They said that my report coincided with a move to launch into the country, but before that they wanted to get people inside the country to take out possibly Mothopeng and Sobukwe because as long as P.K. Leballo was alone here there was no way that the PAC was going to go anywhere. They needed a senior person, in the mode of Sobukwe or Mothopeng, because at the cadre level things were good and there were problems at the leadership level ... I later on met the whole Central Committee – but what the Central Committee was not aware of was that the High Command had sent me back home – and gave them the report from the island [then asked them] about the disintegration of the Party, the expulsions, and P.K. was explaining that there were these cold-footed people who did not want to fight, blaming

112 Ibid.

113 *S v. Zephania Mothopeng, John Ganya, Mark Shinnars, Bennie Ntoele and Hamilton Keke and others*, testimony of Moses Masemola, 1951.

114 Ibid, testimony of Enoch Ngomezulu, 277.

115 Interview with Sakki Mafatshe.

his opponents for being infiltrated agents. It was the other guys, including cadres, who informed me that these were inner party struggles for power and the struggle was about self-interest.¹¹⁶

Mafatshe returned to Botswana in 1975 with two large bags containing copies of the PAC policy and strategy book *The New Road to Revolution*. He linked up again with the BCM cadres in Botswana and told them about his mission. The BCM suggested that he use their links inside South Africa. They subsequently called a certain Paris and briefed him in Botswana about the plan to take Mafatshe into South Africa. Mafatshe and Greg Bothloho crossed through the Tlokweng border at night into South Africa, each carrying a bag full of the books. Bothloho returned to Botswana after Mafatshe had been securely taken across the border. Mafatshe recounts:

I took long to reach the point of contact. Paris waited and looked about without seeing me and he left ... Now I am stuck on the other side with two bags. I had two options. Option one was I go back. But if I do, I cannot go back with all these books. Option two was to move along the road deeper into South Africa and hike. I took the second option and slept in the bush. I woke up in the morning, but moved away from the road, but not far away so that I could see. As I was moving a helicopter was coming so what I did, because I was next to some shrubs, I stood straight underneath the tree and they passed. I was worried about the presence of the helicopter ... Is there anything that they suspected or was it a routine check? After fifteen minutes or so I realised that there were no cars moving or police. I moved again into the main road on the South African side and who came in the distance? It was Paris. We then travelled into South Africa. I met Dikgang Moseneke, who was under banishment then. I met Ntoele. I met Zeph and gave him my analysis about what the cadres were saying and I told him that he was wanted outside the country and he said: 'Not at this juncture; at this juncture it is critical for me to be here.' Others said that we needed to take Sobukwe, but I was aware that healthwise he was not good and there was too much vigilance around him in that area (Kimberley). The other person that I was supposed to take out was Makwethu. I went to Makwethu at Cofimvaba because I travelled throughout the whole country: in Zululand, the Free State, places such as QwaQwa. That is what made the police mad about my activities. When I told Makwethu I found him in the fields and he refused to go. I was accompanied by Sabelo Phama, who was [introduced] to me by one former Robben Islander.¹¹⁷

Mafatshe then moved from region to region informing PAC members of the need for revival and briefing them about the latest developments in exile, after which he returned to Dar es Salaam. His report was received with excitement. 'The leadership

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

felt that I had made a major breakthrough,' he says.¹¹⁸ The refusal by Mothopeng and Makwethu to go into exile to supplement the leadership of the PAC had disastrous implications for the organisation. Had they gone, it is likely that the intensification of conflicts could have been averted.

At the Bethal Trial Ngomezulu gave a different account of Mafatshe's exploits and the revival of the PAC underground. According to Ngomezulu, Mafatshe came back and gave Mothopeng a document that explained the change in PAC policy, following which Mothopeng chased Mafatshe from his house.¹¹⁹ Ngomezulu says he made contact with Mothopeng in 1974 and became involved in efforts to revive the PAC.¹²⁰ Mothopeng requested Ngomezulu to bring him two people he could engage as couriers:

Ngomezulu: I then made contact first with Mike Mzileni and later with Samuel Malinga. I accompanied Mike Mzileni to Zeph Mothopeng's house. It was early in March (1975). I then introduced Mike to Zeph Mothopeng. They then discussed, but I did not take part in the discussions although I was in the same room. On our way back home, Mike Mzileni told me that he would be coming ...

Mr Haasbroek: And then towards the end of March, 1975, did you at all visit Zeph Mothopeng at his house?

Ngomezulu: Yes, I visited him at his house.

Haasbroek: What was the reason for your visit?

Ngomezulu: The reason was that I wanted to – I went there to find out how the trip went, the trip to Swaziland. Then he reported to me that the trip was successful and that Mike Mzileni met Joe Moabi and Joe Makwanazi [sic] in Swaziland ... And that the message Mzileni brought back was that the PAC head office in Tanzania had asked Zeph Mothopeng to revive the PAC and start sending recruits for military training to Swaziland ... And that these recruits should be sent to Makwanazi, Joe Makwanazi in Swaziland, who would then forward them. And that if Zeph Mothopeng needs money, he should send for it in Swaziland. However, Zeph told me on this day that he was not keen to bring money into the country because this would cause problems amongst members as they would fight over money and this would lead to the whole thing being exposed to the police. In addition to this, he also told me that he had been visited by Mhlamli Makwetu.¹²¹

The PAC's external mission needed recruits for military training abroad in countries such as Libya, China and Egypt. In 1974 Libya had provided the PAC with training

118 Ibid.

119 *S v. Zephania Mothopeng, John Ganya, Mark Shinnars, Bennie Ntolele and Hamilton Keke and others*, testimony of Enoch Ngomezulu, 277.

120 Ibid., testimony of Enoch Ngomezulu, 277.

121 Ibid., testimony of Enoch Ngomezulu, 271–2.

facilities, but the PAC was unable to provide enough recruits. Most of its guerrillas had been abroad for a long time and it urgently needed new recruits (a subject we discuss further in the next chapter). These were sent from South Africa through Swaziland and Botswana.

Swaziland was a convenient transit route for PAC recruits. It had become independent in 1967 and in the early 1970s it had a considerable PAC exile community. The PAC representative in Swaziland was Joe Mkhwanazi and it was largely through Mkhwanazi that the internal leadership maintained contact with the external leadership. According to Ngomezulu, a courier by the name of Samuel Malinga was despatched to Swaziland by Mothopeng in 1975.¹²²

Mark Shinnars was in contact with PAC members based in Botswana, in particular Isaac Mafatshe. In April 1976 he sent Matemana Joseph Mogashoa and Aaron Goqwana to take messages to Mafatshe and receive instructions and PAC documents from him. The message from inside the country was that the PAC was ready to send recruits abroad for military training.¹²³ John Ganya was the key person, however, responsible for sending people through the Botswana route. Ganya had told Enoch Ngomezulu, the court in Bethal heard, that he was working with Joe Seremane (a PAC activist who had been imprisoned on Robben Island in the 1960s and was now stationed in Mafikeng) to take PAC recruits out of South Africa into Botswana.¹²⁴

Seremane had been banished to Mafikeng in 1969.¹²⁵ In 1975 he worked as a sales representative for the United Tobacco Company, responsible for the Rustenburg area, the Western Transvaal and part of Botswana. 'During that time in Mafikeng, people who knew me, who wanted to go into exile, would come,' he says. 'And I made it my business to help them over: just jump to Pitsane ... three or four kilometres. Just guide them through. Then come back.' Seremane says he did not do this work only for the PAC:

I did not discriminate. I had made my mind up. After Robben Island I had seen what was happening and I said, 'To hell with this backstabbing among political parties, it's delaying our struggle.' And I made my own resolution that I'm going to serve anybody who wants to advance the struggle. Later on you can grab your niceties and brag you belong to this group. And I knew that when they left the country they were either going to get into the hands of the ANC, PAC or BCM. It's their choice and has nothing to do with me. But I had to help them.¹²⁶

PAC leaders based in other parts of the country began to establish contact with Zeph Mothopeng. One of the people who visited him in Johannesburg was Clarence Makwethu. Makwethu's visit in 1975 was soon followed by the visit of another

122 *Ibid.*, 273.

123 *Ibid.*, testimony of Mogashoa, 1042–52.

124 *Ibid.*, 274, 276.

125 Interview with Joe Seremane conducted by Andrew Manson, April 2004, Johannesburg International Airport, SADET Oral History Project.

126 *Ibid.*

delegation from Cape Town led by McKay Maboza to report to Mothopeng that they had received the message conveyed to them by Makwethu about reviving the PAC in the Western Cape. In addition, they reported that they had completed the revival of the PAC in Cape Town and were ready to start sending recruits for military training. Mothopeng informed them about the message he had received from the external leadership about Mozambique, and advised them to send their recruits through the Botswana route.¹²⁷ Mozambique was hostile terrain for the PAC and they were advised not to use that route.

Contact was also established with Robert Sobukwe in the mid 1970s. Sobukwe was released from prison in May 1969 and banished to Galeshewe in Kimberley, about 470 kilometres from Johannesburg. He was served with a five-year banning order that restricted him to Kimberley and to house arrest between 6 pm and 6 am, limited his visitors, prohibited him from entering any hostel or premises for black workers, factory premises, newspaper premises, university or school premises, or courts of law unless he was a party to proceedings, communicating with other banned people or anyone listed as having been a member of a banned organisation, and writing anything for publication, preparing anything for publication, and helping in any way with the preparation, compilation or transmission of any matter for publication in any form.¹²⁸ Sobukwe attempted to obtain an exit permit, which would allow him to leave the country, although by doing so he would lose his South African citizenship and be liable for arrest if he re-entered the country. The government turned him down.¹²⁹ The banning orders expired in May 1974, but were immediately extended for another five years.¹³⁰

Michael Mzileni recalls escorting Mothopeng to meet Sobukwe in Kimberley in 1975 at Sobukwe's house and later at the house of a local Indian businessman. John Ganya also visited Sobukwe frequently in Kimberley. Initially, there was some hesitation on the part of Sobukwe to meet with Ganya because he did not trust him. They soon developed a friendship, however, and Ganya began to carry messages from Sobukwe to Mothopeng and the exile leadership of the PAC.

The Johannesburg leadership also made efforts to revive the underground in other parts of the country. Pascot Vakalisa recalls attempts to establish a PAC network in the Transkei. He says of the effort by Mothopeng: 'He wanted to know who could be sent to the Transkei to go and revive there ... Before I could answer that question, he asked me how about sending Ganya ... I said that Ganya is all right because he knows the Xhosas in the Transkei.'¹³¹ Subsequent to his meeting with Mothopeng, Vakalisa met Ganya in the street and Ganya informed him 'that there are about seven

127 *S v. Zephania Mothopeng, John Ganya, Mark Shinnars, Bennie Ntolele and Hamilton Keke and others*, testimony of Enoch Ngomezulu, 274–5.

128 Pogrand, *How Can Man Die Better*, 305–8.

129 *Ibid.*, 342–4.

130 *Ibid.*, 341.

131 *S v. Zephania Mothopeng, John Ganya, Mark Shinnars, Bennie Ntolele and Hamilton Keke and others*, testimony of Pascot Vakalisa, 431–2.

young men from the Transkei who are also to leave for military training, also by the Mafeking route to Botswana'.¹³²

Mafatshe and Benjamin Ntoele visited another former Robben Island prisoner, Abie Motau, in Witbank in September or October 1974. They told Motau about Mothopeng's instructions that 'they must go about reviving all the PAC ex-islanders'. Motau was requested to form a PAC cell in Witbank. Nothing was done for more than a year, until a meeting in Mamelodi, Pretoria, in December 1975 when Moses Masemola, Ntoele and Motau were told by Mafatshe (who had earlier left the country and returned) that he had been sent to 'inform responsible members of the PAC to recruit as many people as possible'. Mafatshe also informed them that he was going to meet with Zolile Keke and Kolisile Masibiso in East London and King William's Town to convey the same message.¹³³ At a subsequent meeting, Jonathan Sibiya (a former PAC prisoner on Robben Island from Lamontville, Durban) was tasked with reviving the PAC in Durban. Mafatshe made contact with people in Cape Town, East London, and Witsieshoek in the Free State.¹³⁴

The PAC underground also focused on recruiting youths to operate inside the country. One such recruit was Sthembele Khala, who explains his involvement with the PAC:

My first contact with the PAC was in 1974 at Orlando High School two years after the formation of SASM, after I had met with Zinzi Ntsunge, the SASM regional organiser, who introduced me to John Ganya, who took us to Swaziland with a group of other students to undergo political classes. We were introduced to the PAC's political leadership in the person of Joe Mkhwanazi, Pitika Ntuli, Gasson Ndlovu, Mike Muendane, Enoch Zulu, Dan Mdluli and Joe Moabi. The training we underwent was highly ideological. On our return from Swaziland we were introduced to Zeph Mothopeng, who was then doing some work for the Wilgespruit Centre. He, Zeph, during the evening conducted extra political and historical classes for us. We soon frequented Swaziland mostly during fortnights. I was now responsible for recruiting students to Swaziland and about 100 skipped the country when Dr Naboath Ntshuntsha was arrested.¹³⁵

Sthembele Khala, who operated in Soweto with Mothopeng and Ganya, was one of the youngest members of the PAC to be arrested after the 1976 Soweto Uprising and stood trial with Mothopeng at the Bethal Treason Trial.

The PAC underground was also revived in other areas such as Kagiso in Krugersdorp. The revival of the PAC underground in Kagiso was undertaken mostly by the youth. The Matsobane brothers, Michael and Dan, were in the forefront of these efforts. Michael Matsobane (who was arrested in 1963 for Poqo activities

¹³² *Ibid.*, 433.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, testimony of Abie Patrick Motau, 1914ff.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, testimony of Moses Masemola, 1954 and Jonathan Sibiya, 1974ff.

¹³⁵ Interview with Sthembele Khala conducted by Thami ka Plaatjie, 24 June 2004, Braamfontein, SADET Oral History Project.

and released in 1967) organised the youth in Kagiso under the banner of the Young African Christian Movement (YACM). At least two other people who worked closely with Matsobane in the youth organisation had been members of the PAC. Johnson Nyathi was arrested in 1963 at the age of 17 for Poqo activities and sentenced to three years. Nyathi, together with Matsobane, was among a group of people who consulted with various church ministers in Kagiso about the possibility of setting up a church youth organisation from early 1975. Matsobane, Nyathi and Aaron Khosa (another person known to have been active in the PAC in the 1960s) were elected to the first executive of the organisation, when it was formed on 14 December 1975.¹³⁶ The initial plan was to form a church choir at the Methodist Church; the Reverend Pitso gave the youth permission to go ahead.¹³⁷ At its formation, the founding members drew up a constitution with aims that were non-political. Michael Matsobane explains:

One of the aims was to try and persuade or to get the youth into church. One of the aims again was to get the youth to respect old people and to (have) respect among themselves. Another aim was to get them away from liquor, to discourage them from drinking; to discourage them from the use of alcohol by getting them to be interested in sports and some other activities and to help other people like people who are struggling and suffering and grown up.¹³⁸

The YACM was intended to help church leaders draw the youth into the church and to teach them the correct interpretation of the Bible. Thus, the primary aim of the movement was to take the youth of Kagiso off the streets and promote good relations among them within the framework of inter-denominationalism.¹³⁹

Most of the churches in Kagiso seem to have supported this initiative. Eventually the membership of the organisation was drawn from young worshippers at the Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic, Dutch Reformed, Baptist and Zionist churches in Kagiso.¹⁴⁰ Matsobane estimated that the Young African Christian Movement consisted of between 200 and 300 members when the organisation was launched in December 1975.¹⁴¹ The initial membership drive was directed at the churches and the schools in Kagiso. The ultimate aim, however, was to draw in the entire community in Kagiso and the adjoining townships in Munsieville and Randfontein.¹⁴²

Because some of the leading members of the structure were former PAC members, the organisation came to be seen as a front for the liberation movement. Some of the witnesses at the Bethal Trial alleged that the structure was part of the PAC. James Sejanamane, a former school principal testifying for the state, stated that Michael

136 *S v. Zephania Mthopeng, John Ganya, Mark Shinnars, Bennie Ntolele and Hamilton Keke and others*, testimony of Johnson Nyathi, 2919, 2962.

137 *Ibid.*, testimony of James Sejanamane, 532.

138 *Ibid.*, testimony of Michael Matsobane, 2505.

139 *Ibid.*, testimony of Mosweu, 2425.

140 *Ibid.*, testimony of Michael Matsobane, 2505.

141 *Ibid.*, testimony of Michael Matsobane, 2509.

142 *Ibid.*, testimony of Johnson Nyathi, 2925. Some of the schools in Kagiso were attended by students from Munsieville and Randfontein.

Matsobane had told him that the YACM was a secret organisation that was a front for a political party whose aims were to forge black solidarity.¹⁴³ Matsobane ‘explained ... that this organisation, the Young African Christian Movement, to speak the truth about it ... is the Pan Africanist Congress, that it was an organisation, a secret organisation that was acting under the cloak of the church,’ Sejanamane told the court:

He further pointed out that ... the youth in our township are divided according to class; that we were to bring together the youth in the townships to one group for black solidarity ... He said this organisation would enlighten the youth that the Bible is being used by the whites against blacks in an endeavour to keep them calm ...¹⁴⁴

Young recruits were allegedly told at meetings that the YACM was ‘actually formed to revive the Pan Africanist Congress’; that the PAC ‘has an army abroad that is preparing for war’; and that the ‘organisation was in need of more members to strengthen it so that when the time comes they should not run out of people who would fight’. The students were told that arrangements would be ‘made for them to skip the country and undergo military training’. Those students who wanted to continue with their studies would be provided with scholarships when they were out of the country. Zeph Mothopeng also addressed some of the meetings of the YACM.¹⁴⁵

The YACM changed its name to the Young African Religious Movement (YARM) to draw members from other religious persuasions. This followed a visit to Durban in 1976 when a number of the movement’s leaders converted to Islam. At a meeting organised by the YARM at a local school on 5 August 1976, the Kagiso African Parents Association and a local student representative council (SRC) were formed. At this meeting Sejanamane says he realised that ‘the Young African Religious Movement was now on top of the whole thing ... This was because I realised the members of the Students’ Representative Council together with those of the Parents’ Association were members of the YARM.’¹⁴⁶

The Matsobane brothers, as well as a number of the other accused, were charged with having incited or participated in various acts of violence in Kagiso related to the Soweto uprising on about 17 June 1976. Among the acts of violence were stoning and/or burning a beer hall, beer depot, bottle store, buses, a lorry, a store, a clinic, vehicles of the South African Police, the Kagiso Bantu Hostel Administration office, and three secondary schools in Kagiso.¹⁴⁷ Mike Matsobane allegedly addressed a meeting of student members of the YARM on 16 June 1976, where he called on the students to participate in the uprising, including burning government buildings.¹⁴⁸ Arrests of members of the youth movement began on 9 December 1976.

143 *Ibid.*, testimony of James Sejanamane, 536.

144 *Ibid.*, testimony of James Sejanamane, 538. See for instance the testimony of Johnson Nyathi, 2966ff.

145 *Ibid.*, testimony of Papuis Rasegomela Seroka, pp 1810ff.

146 *Ibid.*, testimony of James Sejanamane, 553.

147 *Ibid.*, charge sheet, 7-8 and testimony of Papuis Rasegomela Seroka, 1814ff.

148 *Ibid.*, testimony of Papuis Rasegomela Seroka, 1814–5.

Some of the defence witnesses testified in rebuttal of these arguments that during their detention torture had been used on all the accused, as well as state witnesses such as Sejanamane. During the course of the torture they were told to admit that the YARM was a front for the PAC.

The areas where the accused in the Bethal Treason Trial were living at the time of their arrest indicate the loci of PAC internal work and the distribution of the underground. Five of the accused, Zeph Mothopeng, John Ganya, Michael Khala, Moffat Zungu and Jerome Kodisang, were from Soweto; two, Mark Shinnars and Ben Ntoele, were from Pretoria; Hamilton Keke was from East London; Julius Landingwe and Goodwill Moni were from Cape Town; five, Michael Matsobane, Daniel Matshobane, John Nyathi, Themba Hlatshwayo and Molatlhegi Tlale, were from Kagiso; and one of the accused, Alfred Ntshali-Ntshali, was from Swaziland.

The imperatives of underground work demanded that very strict measures be taken to conceal any signs of attempts to revive the PAC and to work only with people who could be trusted. In the initial phase, for example, only those PAC members who knew one another closely, especially those who had been together on Robben Island (as we have shown), constituted the nucleus around which the PAC underground was re-organised.

The cell structure that the PAC had used on Robben Island and during the Poqo era was revived. Recruitment was also conducted along cell lines. Couriers were used a great deal, but they were carefully screened. Mothopeng assigned one of his trusted subordinates to get him reliable people he could use as couriers. Enoch Ngomezulu played this role for a while, because he had been imprisoned for a long time on Robben Island with Mothopeng. Measures were also put in place to ensure that the external leadership would accept the credentials of any unknown courier. Coded language was used to verify the credentials of the couriers and conceal messages from the regime. Mzileni described the instructions given to him by Mothopeng to prove his credentials when he was assigned to convey a message to Moabi in Swaziland: 'On arrival there I had to tell Moabi the kettle was boiling and I was to stamp one of my feet on the ground and that he would know I am from him [Mothopeng].'¹⁴⁹

The outbreak of the Soweto student uprising in June 1976 created fertile ground for the expansion of the underground and for obtaining recruits for military training abroad. A large number of youths were wanted by the police for incidents linked to the student revolt, such as damage to property and a whole range of other criminal acts. Many students did not feel safe and left the country. Enoch Ngomezulu testified that John Ganya, who played a central role in transporting youths out of the country, attended 'the funerals of the students who got killed in these riots and as a result of this he had a number of students who asked him to help them to leave South Africa for military training'.¹⁵⁰ Pascot Vakalisa recalled that towards the end of June 1976 Ganya had told him that he and Dr Naoboth Ntshunsha had sent about 60 youths

149 Ibid., testimony of Mike Mzileni, 775.

150 Ibid., testimony of Enoch Ngomezulu, 279.

in groups of 10 and 20 to Swaziland for military training.¹⁵¹ 'I have sent out of the country countless young people, mostly through Botswana and Swaziland,'¹⁵² Ganya admitted. Vusi Make, a senior PAC operative in exile, confirmed Ganya's frequent trips abroad with new recruits in a speech he gave at Ganya's funeral: 'This was one man that we thought, initially, was not normal. We could not understand how he could leave South Africa amid the security in that country and reach exile with student recruits. He would chastise us for not doing enough to execute the struggle. He was daring and very committed.'¹⁵³

The state also accused Ganya of persuading others to transport recruits to Swaziland and Botswana. The PAC used Siphon Ngwenya and two Swaziland nationals, Richard Mlotha and Alfred Ntshali-Ntshali, who were operating private taxi services between Johannesburg and Swaziland, to take youths out of the country. Mlotha testified about the number of occasions that they took groups of youths for PAC members based in Johannesburg to Swaziland from September 1976.¹⁵⁴ Ngwenya admitted to ferrying about 43 youths into Swaziland and to being paid between R9 and R10 for each recruit.¹⁵⁵ He would drop recruits who did not have passports near the border gate during the night and they would cross the fence by themselves and be picked up on the Swaziland side of the border. Once in Swaziland, they were taken to Joe Mkhwanazi for military training or any other mission for the organisation.

Members of the PAC in Cape Town were also tasked with recruiting for the organisation's military wing. Among them were Julius Landingwe and Zolile Ndindwa, who were instrumental in arranging the transport of youths during and after the Soweto Uprising. On one occasion in March 1977, the two recruited an unemployed youth, Zolile Mazamanzi, to transport 11 youths to Johannesburg, whence they were to be taken to Swaziland for military training.¹⁵⁶

Towards the end of 1976, members of the internal underground were requested to make preparations for the return of trained cadres from abroad. A member of the underground, Sam Malinga, returned from a trip to Swaziland and informed Pascot Vokaliza that 'freedom fighters who are abroad are about to come back'; Malinga also told him that members of the underground based in 'Soweto should look for widows' houses where freedom fighters would hide'.¹⁵⁷

The work of the internal underground was being undermined, however, by events taking place among the leaders abroad. Ganya explains:

I was asked to go and give a report to the external leadership of the PAC in Tanzania. It was there that I realised that there were divisions between Leballo and Ntantala. I was disheartened by these developments in the PAC

151 Ibid., testimony of Pascot Vokaliza, 437.

152 Interview with John Ganya.

153 Speech by Vusi Make at the funeral of John Dlevalile Ganya, Soweto, 2004.

154 *S v. Zephania Mothopeng, John Ganya, Mark Shinnars, Bennie Ntolele and Hamilton Keke and others*, testimony of Richard Mlotha, 1248ff.

155 Ibid., testimony of Siphon Ngwenya, 2227–39.

156 Ibid., testimony of Zolile Mzamanzi, 1656ff.

157 Ibid., testimony of Pascot Vokaliza, 439–40.

as each group wanted to win my support against their side. Each group was accusing the other of all sorts of things. The Ntantala group was accusing the Leballo group of being agents of the CIA. Some of the students that I had brought to exile had joined the ANC because of the internal leadership instability in the PAC. I then travelled to Zambia where I met Siphon Tshabalala and Motsoko Pheko. I met 12 female students who came from Ghana and were teaching in Botswana. There was also a guy whose name was Dr Kwesi Prah in Botswana. He was from Ghana and we became close friends. I travelled with him to Ghana and other African countries and this was very inspiring.¹⁵⁸

Large sums of money were needed for underground activities and the constant transportation of new recruits out of the country, apart from the money that was needed to attend to the welfare of PAC leaders such as Zephania Mothopeng and Robert Sobukwe. The only sources of funding for the internal underground were the external missions of the PAC, especially those in Swaziland and Botswana. A youth called Ngangeliswe Qongqo, who accompanied Ganya to Botswana in late 1976, testified that Qongqo had told him when they arrived in Botswana that he was there to collect money to transport recruits out of the country and that he had been given R200 by a certain Victor Obote.¹⁵⁹ Qongqo also accompanied Vuyisile Dlova to Botswana after he had been there with Ganya. Apart from taking new recruits, Dlova wanted money from Victor Obote to pay a defence lawyer for a PAC activist who had been arrested. Dlova was told that the money had already been taken by Ganya and instead was given the equivalent of R200 in pula (the local currency).¹⁶⁰

The major expense from June 1976 was transporting youths out of the country. Normally the PAC would hire a taxi to ferry the youths to the South African borders with Swaziland and Botswana. Another method, according to Qongqo, was to hire cars. 'We went together to Budget Car-Hire in Main Street. Vuyisile (Dlova) had given me money, about R150, when I left Mofolo. We got a Ford Granada motor car there with ND registration.'¹⁶¹ On another occasion he was also assigned to hire a car: 'I saw Vuyisile again when he came to me and said I must go and hire a car again at the place where I had hired the previous car ... He gave me R150 again ... I went to Budget in Main Street ... I hired a Toyota Corolla.'¹⁶² Escalating transport costs led the PAC to consider purchasing its own car to ferry recruits out of the country. The car was never bought because the South African security forces soon began to arrest members of the internal underground.

The PAC underground was smashed when the police began to arrest scores of people from early 1976. Part of the problem was that the leaders of the internal underground were known to the security police from the lists of PAC members seized in Maseru

158 Interview with John Ganya.

159 *Ibid.*, testimony of Ngangeliswe Qongqo, 1835-6.

160 *Ibid.*, 1842-3.

161 *Ibid.*, testimony of Qongqo, 1838.

162 *Ibid.*, 1839.

by the British Colonial Police and handed over to the South African government in 1963.¹⁶³ In addition, many were former political prisoners who had recently been released and it was normal practice for such people to be under constant surveillance for some time. Thus, as Davis points out, the security police used surveillance and informants to arrest nearly the entire leadership of the reconstituted internal PAC.¹⁶⁴

The organisation was rife with informers. Isaac Mafatshe regards some of the arrests leading to the Bethal Treason Trial as the result of a police informer who had infiltrated the East London PAC. This unnamed individual was in a group of recruits that were supposed to pass through Mafikeng on their way out of the country. One member of this group, after being introduced to Joe Seremane in Mafikeng, informed the police. The group were arrested at Seremane's house, and efforts to revive the PAC inside the country were exposed.¹⁶⁵

Eighteen people were brought to trial in Bethal in January 1978, while 86 others were named as co-conspirators. The arrests drew in scores of people, including Joe Seremane, who was detained in March 1976. Seremane was released from detention only in August 1978.¹⁶⁶ Four people detained during this period as co-conspirators in the trial died in detention: Naoboth Ntshunsha, Bonaventure Malaza, Aaron Khosa and Samuel Malinga.¹⁶⁷

Zolile Hamilton Keke, one of the accused, was arrested on 29 April 1976 and kept in detention until November when he was charged under the Internal Security Act. Keke and his co-accused were found not guilty, but he was immediately re-detained. He was kept in detention until December 1977, when he, Mothopeng and 16 others were brought to trial in Bethal. Alfred Ntshali-Ntshali was acquitted, but the others were sentenced: Zephania Mothopeng to 15 years imprisonment; Moffat Zungu, 7 years; Michael Matsobane, 15 years; Daniel Matsobane, 12 years; Mark Shinnars, 12 years; John Ganya, 11 years; Ben Ntoele, 10 years; Johnson Nyathi, 10 years; Themba Hlatshwayo, 8 years; Molathlegi Thlale, 8 years; Julius Landingwe, 8 years; Michael Khala, 7 years; Goodwill Moni, 7 years; Zolile Ndindwa, 7 years; Jerome Kodisang, 5 years; Rodney Tsoletsane, 5 years; and Hamilton Keke, five years suspended for five years.¹⁶⁸

Conclusion

The arrest of PAC members and their subsequent sentence to Robben Island after the Bethal Treason Trial had an adverse affect on the organisation's internal underground activities from which it never really recovered. From the late 1960s, the PAC had started forging strong ties with SASO and the BPC. These ties allowed for a readily politicised pool from which PAC cadres could be recruited. The arrest of PAC leaders

163 Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 32.

164 *Ibid.*

165 Interview with S. Mafatshe.

166 *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1978* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, (1979), 93.

167 *Loc. cit.*

168 *Survey*, 1980, 127–8.

destroyed those strategic links and rendered such efforts fruitless. The mass arrests of the leaders of the internal underground further liquidated the reservoir of experienced leaders who were becoming crucial in efforts to revive the PAC inside the country. A critical layer of PAC leaders was removed and sent back to Robben Island (where most of them had served sentences in the early 1960s). However, and most critically, the internal leaders were arrested and sentenced after many young recruits had already been taken out of the country for military training. These youths joined the PAC and ANC in exile, particularly the ANC. So the efforts of the PAC's internal underground in the 1970s played a critical role in reviving both liberation movements.