Chapter 5


Conditions inside PAC camps remain hidden from mainstream academic research: something which can be described as historical sidelining or erasure. An analysis of conditions inside PAC camps is important, since it offers a magnifying glass through which the exile experience of ordinary members of the organisation can be viewed. There is still a veil of secrecy surrounding the location of PAC camps, how the residents lived and what constituted the fundamental aspects of the experiences of camp inmates during the exile period. In one way or another, the area still remains obscured from historical analysis and enquiry. It has all the ramifications of a world of experiences which is strictly concealed. Hence, this research represents an attempt to uncover this vital area of the PAC’s exile history. One of the reasons why the area remains concealed is that an expository analysis is likely to impact, directly or indirectly, on the PAC’s present political fortunes. The positions and public images of historical actors, some of whom are still active in the new South Africa, may be affected. Added to this problem is that available evidence affords the researcher a broken dialogue, leaving in abeyance all that may figure as an incomprehensible history, a web of ambiguity which seems impossible to untangle. As a result, scholarship in South Africa has overlooked this area, even though inadvertently. Based on the limited evidence available and the few comparisons which can be drawn from experiences of members of the ANC in the camps, this chapter tries to reconstruct an image of conditions inside PAC camps. As the late Dr Mantshontsho suggested when interviewed, “some of the internal issues in the PAC, are secrets which history will never divulge”.  

The difficulties experienced in developing a sense of what happened in the PAC camps from the few informants who were contacted during the course of this research, confirmed the assertion.

With the ANC, the picture is clearer, but scholarly literature still remains less

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extensive than one would expect given the popularity of the organisation and the significance of the theme in the history of liberation and human rights struggles in Southern Africa. Of what exists, in the case of the ANC, as Sean Morrow points out, “some is written from within the movement” and even though it provides valuable insights, “political commitment may iron out wrinkles in the historical fabric”. The same can be said about the scanty PAC internal literature on exile experiences. The most recent biography of Letlapa Mphahlele Child of this Soil’–My Life as A Freedom Fighter’, which partially highlights conditions in two PAC camps in Tanzania, is a good example. His work displays the exact tendency Morrow identified in the literature written from within the ANC. Careful corroboration with archival and oral sources, therefore becomes vary important in order to capture the broad picture.

This chapter examines the development of PAC settlements, first in Lesotho in the early 1960s, and later in Tanzania from 1964 to 1990. However, there are difficulties in periodising the development of these settlements in more precise terms, but the sometimes tentative ideas disclosed, both directly and sometimes indirectly, in the records and by informants, have been useful in estimating the period of existence of some of the settlements covered in this chapter. The chapter also examines the living conditions in these various PAC camps. It focuses specifically on the Ruvu settlement in Tanzania, which was the first stable PAC settlement in exile, from 1978 to 1993. It examines issues of health, culture, tribalism, corporal punishment as well as the general politics of the camp in order to expose the concrete basis of the internal conflicts within the PAC. From this emerges an understanding that a different kind of justice was practiced simultaneously with a rather awkward ‘class’ system, which existed within the liberation forces during exile. This was indeed a demunition of the very liberating ideals which motivated the exiles to join the ‘revolution’ permanently, in the first place. Most importantly, this chapter shows the extent to which the lack of policies, organisational procedures and inept leadership affected the lives of ordinary PAC members in the camps. It also shows that despite the misery of living conditions in the camps, the

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residents had moments of joy which enabled them to recuperate and project a vision of hope beyond their immediate circumstances.

Similar to the ANC of South Africa, the PAC had camps (i.e. areas of settlement inhabited by PAC members or various rural army bases in different countries) in various parts of Southern Africa. The most notable camps were in Maseru (Lesotho), Tanzania, Botswana and in Leopoldville, (Kinshasa in Zaire). The Botswana camp was in fact a refugee camp, called Dukwe, about 130 km north-west of Francistown. The camp accommodated members of the ANC, PAC, South African Youth Revolutionary Council (SAYRCO) which was formed by Tsietsie Mashinini, the leader of the June, 16, 1976 Soweto student uprisings, and a few members of ZAPU and ZANU. The Dukwe refugee camp was established in 1980 on the insistence of the Botswana government (under pressure from the South African government to get rid of ‘terrorists’ from within its borders) that all members of liberation movements, not attending school and who were not employed should move to Dukwe. The camp had previously accommodated Zimbabweans who were on their way back to their country in preparation for independence.

In chapter 3, a detailed examination was offered of the establishment of the first category of PAC camps in Maseru and how they spread to the surrounding villages and towns. The toughness of living conditions in these camps was also outlined. The only issue not highlighted was that the relocation of the PAC head-office to Tanzania in 1964 did not mean the end to or closure of the Maseru chapter of the PAC. In essence it was Leballo and the inner core of his leadership who were the first to move to Dar-es-Salaam. The one structure of the PAC continued to operate, as the Lesotho PAC mission, but after 1985, following the death of the six PAC cadres who were murdered by the Basotholand para-militia in Qacha’s Neck in March 1985, relations between the PAC and the Lesotho

4 In Lusaka and Botswana, (and later Zimbabwe) the PAC only established cells and offices but had no camps in the military sense. It was only in Tanzania, that one could identify PAC camps. Also see T. Lodge: Black Politics in South Africa since 1940, pp. 311-317.
5 L. Mphahlele: Child of this Soil: My life as a freedom fighter, pp. 62-65.
government became strained. The circumstances surrounding the murder of the PAC six remained unclear, but the complicity of the Lesotho government in the schemes of the South African regime to eliminate members of the liberation movements in the neighbouring territories was not ruled out. During this time, the government of South Africa had adopted the ‘carrot and stick’ approach in its relations with neighbouring countries in Southern Africa. Details of this approach were summarised in chapter 2. The PAC began to move the majority of its cadres to Tanzania. Unlike the ANC which had numerous camps in Angola, Zambia, Lesotho and Tanzania, (with cadres more than a hundred in each), the recognisable PAC camps which existed in exile were in Lesotho and Tanzania. The PAC however had numerous cell structures in countries such as Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and even Uganda.

In Tanzania, the establishment of a functioning official PAC organ became a priority during the early part of 1964. Hence for the whole of 1964, no major political activity was recorded by the PAC. Accommodation was secured for the PAC leadership “in plush suburbs and hotels” but for the rank and file members who trickled in drips and drabs into Tanzania during the course of 1964, accommodation was offered in a bush camp in Chunya. The area needed to be cleared of bush to make it habitable. The camp settlement was offered by the government of Tanzania. In Chunya, PAC members erected “rudimentary structures and shacks for accommodation”. It appears that the Chunya camp was the first PAC camp in Tanzania. Besides this camp, the PAC had established an army camp in Leopoldville, in Congo, in 1963 where the first group of its guerrillas was trained. The camp in Leopoldville was at Kikunzu. It belonged to the FNLA but was temporarily given to the PAC for the training of its first group of guerrillas in what was code named ‘Operation Tape Recorder’ in November 1963. Conditions in this camp were typical of conditions in all the PAC camps in Tanzania since then. In his summary of conditions inside the Kikunzu camp Lodge refers to the “ramshackle logistical

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6 PAC Archives: ‘PAC Address on the occasion of the burial of the Qacha’s Nek six, 30 March 1985.
7 PAC Archives: PAC/Tan/1/159/4 – Guidelines on PAC Cells Abroad, n.d, pp. 1-6
8 Interview with Comrade Zimbiri, Umtata, 18 November 1988.
9 Ibid.
systems, inadequate food, poor training facilities and inhabitability which led to poor health of inmates, death and disease”.  

11 In the Chunya bush camp, the same conditions prevailed. Residents complained of being ill-fed, loneliness, poor training facilities and worst of all, rotting in the camp without a program of action.  

12 Hence many PAC cadres who had learnt to speak Swahili (the local language), tended to disappear over weekends from the Chunya camp, to mingle with the ‘locals’ (Tanzanian nationals) for a better livelihood. With the PAC embroiled in leadership battles and internal conflicts, no significant attention was given to expanding the Chunya bush camp into a significant military camp. The cadre population in this camp varied from time to time. It is estimated that at no single time did this camp accommodate more than a hundred PAC militants.  

13 Continuously aware of the temporary nature of the settlement and also the importance of secrecy, given the political conditions of Southern Africa as a whole, the residents of Chunya bush camp never established a thoroughly organised community life. As indicated by Nomakhwezi Ganya, one of the reasons why early PAC camps never developed into full-scale settlements was that “once a person establishes himself, he develops roots and this retards the home going process”.  

14 This seems to have been the rationale of the PAC leadership not to fund the development of infrastructure in the Chunya bush camp. Hence the conditions in this camp remained precarious, unstable and transient.

The other PAC camps which developed in the early 1970s, i.e. the Itumbi camp in Mbeya and Mgagao camp in Iringa, all in Tanzania, were also small-scale PAC military settlements. They could not develop any further than the Chunya bush camp. Mgagao camp was slightly better than Chunya and Itumbi in terms of infrastructure and facilities. The small groups of cadres in these camps (between sixty to one hundred) changed constantly as recruits came and went for military training in other countries inside and outside Africa. In other words, the PAC camps (until the establishment of Ruvu settlement in 1978) were temporary in nature and the demands for secrecy made it

11 Tom Lodge: Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, p. 308.  
12 Interview with Comrade Mnqojane, Umtata, 23 June 1995.  
13 APLA Notes: Pretoria, 21 December 2002.  
14 PAC Archives: PAC Transit Center Tanzania, 1982, p. 3.
difficult to record their composition, internal organisation and growth. Documentary sources therefore have scanty information in this regard. Compared to Itumbi in particular, Mgagoa “was a city”.\textsuperscript{15} Conditions at Itumbi camp in Mbeya, were extremely bad. As Mphahlele explains, “humans survived in Mbeya but the story was different for some animals. No matter how healthy dogs and domestic pigs were when they arrived, they would get sick and die within weeks. The dogs wailed hauntingly, as if communicating some evil message, before they die. But the dog loving cadres never tired of bringing the pets to the camp and to their miserable end. Only wild pigs thrived in this wild place”.\textsuperscript{16} The camp was situated in the forest and consisted of a double-storey red-brick structure. Its ground floor housed a small camp press, the store-room and dispensary. The first floor accommodated cadres. There were a few tents, some borrowed from the Tanzania military. These were pitched near the building and were used to alleviate overcrowding. In front of the red-brick building was a parade ground used for drills by the soldiers and also for sporting activities such as volleyball and soccer. The red-brick building was commonly known among the residents of the camp as ‘Carlton Centre’ named in memory of the Carlton Center in Johannesburg, South Africa.\textsuperscript{17} Apart from the Carlton Center, there was a leader’s quarters called Shangai, on the edge of the forest about 200 meters from the Carlton Center. The leader’s quarters was used by the camp commander and his juniors in the army. Members of the Central Committee who visited the camp also stayed in Shangai.\textsuperscript{18} There was also a kitchen separated from the Carlton Center by a water tap. “A few steps from the fowl run stood what we called the Historic Tree” and “under it we held meetings and listened to many disciplines. The benches and tables under the tree were made of logs split lengthways”.\textsuperscript{19}

One PAC informant, indicated that from his experience a “class differentiation” of some kind existed within this camps. He indicated that, for instance, in the Itumbi camp, even though conditions were generally bad, some residents who were accommodated in the leadership block called Shangai, “were better off” as compared to the rest of the cadres in

\textsuperscript{15} L. Mphahlele: Child of this Soil – My Life as Freedom Fighter, 2002, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, p.92.
\textsuperscript{17} APLA Notes: 21 December 2002, Pretoria.
\textsuperscript{18} L. Mphahlele: Child of this Soil – My Life as Freedom Fighter, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
the camp. They always had better access to limited camp facilities and were hardly “cash strapped”.\(^{20}\) This seems to contrast with the rather romantic picture painted by Mphahlele who also lived in this camp in the early 1980s. Mphahlele indicated that “there was no noticeable difference between the Shangai residents and the rest of us. We ate from the same pot, sometimes from the same dish with them. The coocking roster roped everyone in, including members of the High Command”.\(^{21}\) Mphahlele indicated that a group eating from the same dish was called a *chama*, a Swahili name for party. It is not clear how prevalent the *chama* was, but it symbolised unity in the camp, given the alleged differentiation.

At Mgagao camp conditions were better. The camp consisted of six spacious dormitories, a large administration complex, a big kitchen, storeroom, a shelter for firewood, flush toilets and showers (even though for most of the time, the toilets and showers were out of order).\(^{22}\) In this particular camp, discipline was strictly enforced. Previous incidents involving the murder of MPLA and ZANU cadres by the neighbouring villagers from the Wahehe tribe had taught members of the liberation movements a couple of lessons. These included controlling movements by cadres from the camps to the surrounding villages. This caused unhappiness among cadres in this camp because it meant that they were denied the chance of mingling with Tanzanian nationals, especially local girls “some of whom held South African guys in the highest esteem”.\(^{23}\) Hence, to most PAC cadres who lived in Mgagoa camp, the place resembled “a concentration camp, a prison or solitary confinement”.\(^{24}\) The cadres continued to sneak out into the village, bought home-made beer and brought it to the camp. They also objected to the rule forbidding them from going to the villages, until it was relaxed. Cadres were allowed to go to the villages only over week-ends. This resulted in disciplinary problems in the camp, hence corporal punishment became common in that particular camp. In fact, corporal punishment was used in all PAC camps and was among some of the issues which widened the rift between the leadership and the soldiers in the camps. The cadres felt that corporal punishment was

\(^{21}\) L. Mphahlele: *Child of this Soil – My Life as Freedom Fighter*, p. 92. 
arbitrarily applied and the “favoured few were absolved from it”. In most instances, the “favoured few” were defined along tribal lines. This issue will be dealt with in the section on tribalism in PAC camps.

The food situation in Mgagao camp was better than at Itumbi. Crop farming was doing well in this camp. As Mphahlele observed “the garden thrived. We had abnormally large cabbages, beetroots, onions and carrots. The vast shamba, the ploughing field, was green with maize. We ploughed with a tractor, so our toughest manual work was weeding the fields. We called maize fields ‘nguvu kazi’ – Swahili for hard work. We reared a flock of pigs and slaughtered them for meat. Yugoslavia also sent us a large quantity of tinned food that drastically changed our diet. We shipped bags of cabbage to Iringa town to sell. We were already anticipating a time not far off when we would be liberated from handouts from OAU’s Liberation Committee”.

Due to limited documentary evidence on the internal conditions within the three camps mentioned above, this chapter chooses instead to focus specifically on the most notable PAC settlement in Masuguru, in the Bagomoyo district of Tanzania. This camp is sometimes referred to as the ‘Ruvu’ settlement. The conditions in this camp serve as a magnifying glass of the internal dynamics within the PAC from the late 1970’s to 1990 when the organisation was unbanned. However the challenge is to consolidate the evidence on the development of other PAC settlements prior to the Ruvu settlement such as Chunya, Itumbi and Mgagao. The precarious conditions and transient nature, the limited size of the population of these three early PAC camps, as well as the range of activities and attention received from the donor community, was negligible compared to the Ruvu camp.

The Ruvu camp was the first-well established and stable PAC settlement in exile. Hence, in this chapter, Ruvu camp is explored as a case study to portray the internal conditions, the nature of life in the camps and relations among the inhabitants in order to explain the

26 L. Mphahlele: Child of this Soil – My Life as Freedom Fighter, p. 102.
generation of strained intra-PAC relations during the period of exile. The Ruvu camp was started as a transit and rehabilitation camp in 1978, along similar lines as other PAC camps. Recruits from South Africa resided there in transit either to military training or education abroad. The Ruvu camp was initially established to serve as a “rehabilitation camp” similar to the ANC’s Quatro camp in Angola, where the so-called enemy agents and comrades who had committed serious ‘offences’ and breaches of discipline, were “re-educated”. With the demise of P.K. Leballo’s leadership and the assumption of power by Make and later Pokela, the development and purpose of the camp was redefined along the lines of the ANC’s Mazimbu settlement near Morogoro and the Dakawa settlement, 55 km north of Morogoro, all in Tanzania. The two ANC settlements were aimed at establishing a stable ANC exile community in Tanzania. They were both aimed at developing human resources for a future non-racial South Africa. Education was at the core of the Mazimbu settlement hence the establishment of the famous Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College.

Ultimately the Ruvu camp grew into a settlement for PAC cadres who had families living with them. In other words, the settlement resembled efforts of the PAC to “create a fuller human life” for all its members in exile, especially families, children and women. Residents in this camp were taught technical skills previously denied to them in South Africa. These included skills in horticulture, poultry, carpentry, sanitary engineering, plumbing, piggery, motor mechanics and electrification.

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29 PAC Archives: ‘Message from the Chairman of the PAC – Johnson Mlambo’, no date.
30 PAC Archives: ‘Short Memorandum on Manpower requirements for Masuguru/Kitonga (Ruvu), Tanzania, 3 November 1986.'
5.2. The formative years of Ruvu camp (1978-1984).

The Ruvu settlement started during the era of P.K. Leballo in 1978. It assumed an elaborate form during the era of Nyathi John Pokela in 1982 when the Tanzania government granted 440 hectares of land to the PAC. The aim was to help the organisation to establish a settlement for “self-reliance and other developmental activities”. As already indicated, the establishment of the Ruvu camp was a response by the exiled PAC to the June 16, 1976 uprisings. It was initially conceived by Leballo as similar to the ANC’s ‘June 16 Detachment’ which was initially based in the Novo Catengue camp in Benguella Province in Angola in 1978 and later moved to Fezenda situated further north across the Rio Donge in Angola. Initially the Ruvu camp was a small refugees camp for PAC members who fled the repression of the South African government following the Soweto uprisings in 1976. It accommodated new recruits who were awaiting military training. It was referred to as a ‘transit camp’. From 1982, with the change in leadership in the PAC, the camp was remodeled along similar lines as the ANC settlements in Mazimbu and Dakawa. Both accommodated the June 16 generation of exiles from South Africa. The initial population at the Ruvu camp counted 52 and increased, by the end of February 1979, to more than 100 persons. By 1982 the figure had risen to close to a thousand people. Compared to both the Dakawa and Mazimbu settlements, the population in Ruvu was small. Dakawa’s resident population in the late 1980’s was about 5,000 people whereas Mazimbu had a population of roughly 3,200 people. A detailed analysis of the development of these two ANC settlements gives the impression that the ANC settlement projects were more robust both in terms of scale and organisation than the PAC camps.

Accommodation in the PAC’s Ruvu camp consisted of dormitories which were later upgraded into houses. Each house consisted of five bedrooms and a separate communal

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34 PAC Archives: ‘PAC Transit Center, Tanzania’, undated.
35 Sean Morrow: Dakawa Development Center, pp. 499-501.
dining hall with kitchen and were built as the settlement grew early in 1982. By 1984 about 67 houses were constructed on the site.\textsuperscript{36} From 1982, the scope of activities at the camp developed beyond the provision of a sanctuary for activists, to the establishment of a self-sufficient community with a clinic, classrooms, mechanical and agricultural training centers where PAC members could acquire skills which were to be beneficial to the “liberated Azania of the future”.\textsuperscript{37}

Phase one of this settlement was built in 1978. It involved the construction of 67 houses, a separate dining hall, kitchen and toilets, an administration block, one classroom and library, a store, roads and paths, water pumps, boundary fences and gates.\textsuperscript{38} This was built on the initial land assigned by the Tanzanian government. Phase one consisted of one cement house, and one brick house as well as three smaller houses, one large brick building and two other uncompleted buildings, in which 67 PAC cadres were accommodated.\textsuperscript{39} Support for the initial development of phase one of the settlement was received from various governments as well as non-governmental organisations. The government of the Netherlands made a financial contribution to the costs of repairing the existing facilities and also contributed part of the finance for the construction of the first 67 houses. Similarly the government of Norway made a contribution in this regard. The Tanzanian Christian Refugee Service also made a financial contribution towards the purchase of clothes for the young men at the settlement, and also purchased urgently needed medical supplies.\textsuperscript{40} In addition to these financial contributions, United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Program and United Nations High Commission for Refugees donated US $233 000 and US $350 000 respectively.\textsuperscript{41}

During the initial stages of the start-up of the settlement, significant proportions of donor funding were spent on attempts to defray the costs incurred in the maintenance of the centre. “Apart from the purchase of the furniture and cooking utensils” weekly costs were

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} PAC Archives: ‘PAC Transit Center, Tanzania’, undated, pp. 1-10.
\item \textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.} p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{38} PAC Archives: Culham and Hunters (Charted Quantity Surveyors): ‘Transit and Rehabilitation Center, Bagomoyo district, Approximate Estimate No. 2’, October, 1978, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{39} PAC Archives: ‘PAC Transit Centre, Tanzania’, undated, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{41} \textit{Ibid.} p. 6
\end{itemize}
incurred to purchase food and fuel.⁴² Because the camp was situated approximately 170km from Dar-es-Salaam, along a very rough road, transport to and from the camp had to be provided and this increased the costs of maintaining the camp. Hence the weekly costs of administration and maintenance were estimated to be around US $2000, excluding the costs of medication, laundry and other incidental costs.

The master plan for the development of the Ruvu camp into a settlement involved the construction of a full-scale village within the settlement area, with accommodation for families and single persons. By 1985, approximately 1500 people were accommodated in the settlement. A pre-school and a pre-vocational school, a dispensary and a community centre were developed during this period. Most importantly, the settlement had farm-land to ensure self-sufficiency in food production. Over 55 hectares of land had to be cleared of bushes before it was used for farming. During the initial period, there were difficulties with crop farming. Most of the PAC families and cadres in the settlement, came from the townships in South Africa. They were not skilled enough to take advantage of the fertile land and use it for growing crops in the settlement area. They devoted their time to political issues and factional conflicts which tended to divide them according to regions from where they came in South Africa. Some issues arose from tribal divisions. Skills in agriculture were progressively developed among camp residents. Various agricultural training courses were organised by the PAC’s Department of Education and Manpower development in order to equip its membership with agricultural skills.

5.3. Ruvu Camp beyond 1984

After the formative years, the Ruvu settlement developed into a full-scale settlement, a hive of political activities and a home of PAC members in exile. It provided a stable environment for children and women of the PAC. The “habit of infiltrating babies back home”, prevalent among PAC exiles, stopped as the settlement became more homely and

its facilities expanded and improved. In other words, the habit of ‘smuggling’ children born in exile into South Africa was curbed.

The settlement became an important source of income to the PAC and contributed towards lowering the costs of feeding the cadres. Between the years 1986 and 1988, for instance, enormous quantities of peddy rice, maize, sorghum, cowpea and fruit such as pineapple and pawpaw were produced from the settlement. The farming settlement also raised 1200 broilers and 12 beef cattle. Crop production in the settlement was made possible largely through irrigation schemes. The Ruvu river which supplied water to the city of Dar-es-Salaam, Bagomoyo and other towns in Tanzania, passed through the settlement thus making irrigation possible. In this way the settlement helped the PAC not to depend entirely on material handouts from international donors, especially on items such as food. The settlement continued to exist until 1993 when most of the assets were sold and the residents of the settlement were relocated to South Africa in preparation for the April 1994 elections.

There were, however, times after 1988, when the farming activities in the settlement suffered. Poor production determined continued PAC appeal to donors for funds to buy food for the residents. As a result of food shortages, diseases related to malnutrition, e.g. tuberculosis, diarhorea, dysentris and helminthiasis, were common among residents. Between 1988 and 1990, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimated an infant mortality rate of 121 (which was over 50%) for the area of the settlement including the neighbouring Pivani region. This led to the development of an extensive medical facility within the settlement. It provided basic health services not only for inmates but also for a population of over 10,000 people living in the neighbouring villages of Kidogozero, Kitonga, Milo and Mbwawa. With the development of agricultural and medical facilities in the Ruvu settlement, the following

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43 PAC Archives: Minutes of the Plenary Session of Central Committee Meeting at External Head Quarters, Dares-Salaam, December, 1- 7, 1982, p. 16.
44 PAC Archives: ‘Memorandum – Ruvu Settlement’, 3rd November 1986. This document details the quantities produced during this period.
46 Ibid.
institutions and governments played a major role: the United Nation’s Development Program which helped with agricultural lessons and donated funds for food; the United Nation’s High Commission for Refugees supported with agricultural equipment, donated funds for the building of a workshop, garage, clearing of bushes and fencing; the Tanzanian Relief Services helped with the installation of a water system; the Tanzania government provided funds for road maintenance; the government of Norway provided funds for the construction of a 14 km feeder road to the camp; the government of Nigeria provided funds for a health center and the government of the Netherlands funded the construction of an agricultural workshop.\textsuperscript{47}

The PAC Women’s section played a pivotal role in the development of the Ruvu settlement during the period after 1988. This time the Women’s section had been granted the status of a full department within the PAC and had a budget of its own. The PAC Women’s department took the initiative and responsibility for the construction of a Children’s Home which housed more than 30 children of up to the ages of seven years in 1988. The children’s home took full responsibility for all aspects of the children’s lives including their feeding, clothing, education and shelter, while at the same time allowing full latitude for a healthy child-parent relationship. The women’s section was also instrumental in moving the PAC Tailoring Unit from Dar-es-Salaam to the Ruvu settlement in Bagomoyo. The unit made clothes for members of the PAC and sold some of them on the market in order to raise funds for the activities of the Women’s section.\textsuperscript{48}

The general programme of routine activities in the settlement consisted of the following: (i) Breakfast from 7am to 8am, (ii) Ideological Studies from 8am to 9am, which involved a series of lectures on Pan Africanism, Maoism, the formation of the PAC and the life and contributions of Mangaliso Sobukwe, the founding President of the PAC, to the liberation struggle in South Africa and from 9am to 12:30 am, residents would be engaged in various chores. Some would do gardening, fishing, carpentry and painting. Lunch was from 12:30am to 1:30pm. It usually consisted of rice/pap, vegetables and

\textsuperscript{47} PAC Archives: ‘Message from the Chairman of the PAC, 1988’, p.11.
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 1-12
sometimes meat, if available. From 1:30 to 4pm was the time for rest and recreation, and from 4pm to 5pm was the time for reading current events by someone who was responsible for the radio on a particular day and the analysis and discussion of these events would follow. From 6:30 pm to 7:30pm was supper time which was usually the same as lunch. The early evening program, beginning at 7:30pm to 8:30pm was the cultural hour. New revolutionary songs would be composed and practiced and would be recorded for radio broadcast. Poems would also be practiced, in fact a mood of free exchange and creativity was characteristic of this session which usually extended beyond 8:30pm to about midnight.\footnote{50}

Plans for the further development of the settlement had already been made during the period of Johnson Mlambo. A rudimentary sewing industry started by the PAC Women’s section in 1983, with five sewing machines, one table, a chair and a small bank was upgraded into a PAC garment factory in 1985 and was financed by the United Nations Development Program.\footnote{50} The skills base at the Ruvu settlement was further developed with the arrival of 422 PAC exiles, removed from Lesotho in 1985. Besides the deteriorating relations between the Lesotho government and the PAC, the need to move recruits from the Lesotho PAC camps was also propelled by the fact that at the Ruvu camp, there was a lack of enthusiasm among the cadership towards manual work, especially, agricultural activities and gardening. This affected food production negatively, which was among the basic reasons behind the establishment of the camp.

5.3. **Health Conditions in Ruvu Camp.**

There is very little information recorded on health issues in Ruvu settlement. This attests to the tendency in the available documentation to view the residents of this settlement as mere instruments of a political liberation struggle. This chapter seeks to unveil the ordinary humanity of the residents at the Ruvu settlement, who experienced moments of

\footnote{PAC Archives: ‘PAC Transit Center, Tanzania’ undated. p. 2.}
\footnote{Ibid. pp. 1-3}
joy and sadness. Their choices were not always politically informed. This will also link up with issues of culture among the residents at Ruvu camp.

In this section, the concept ‘health’ is used to explain the total well-being of a people, community or group. The medical definition of illness which encapsulates “the malfunctioning of a mechanical system” is adopted here in order to make it easy to categorise diseases which inflicted the camp residents. The limited evidence reveals that living conditions inside the camp were not as healthy as would be expected under ‘normal’ circumstances.

It is necessary not to generalise about health conditions within the Ruvu settlement because until 1993, conditions were continuously and gradually improved. During the initial phase of the settlement (1979-1982), its living conditions “would only do a disservice to animals”. Overcrowding was frequent as the houses in the settlement were still under construction. Besides that, cadres from other PAC settlements would normally flock to the Ruvu camp especially over weekends, to visit their “home boys and girls and sometimes they would throw wild parties in the camp”. Refuse from the camp’s routine activities and also from weekends was scattered outside the dwellings and was not collected and removed. Very often, children cut their feet on rusty tins and some received severe burns which became septic, after playing in small spaces near fire buckets. Hence Gora Ebrahim appealed to the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid Mission to Angola, Zambia, and Tanzania in April 1985 on the basis that there was ‘need for a bigger place to stay, live and work’ for the women and children in the Ruvu camp. In the small children’s house, there were no chairs and they sat on blankets on the ground. Without a water pump for the settlement, it meant that residents depended on unpurified water which was drawn directly from the Ruvu river without being reticulated. “The

53 Ibid.
toilets were too nearer to the houses thus causing flies and malodours”.\footnote{PAC Archives: ‘PAC Transit Center, Tanzania, p. 3.} There were no disinfectants and residents used car oil to combat the flies and the smell. These conditions nourished the spread of diseases such as tuberculosis.

In addition to this, the Ruvu settlement was unwisely situated in the sense that it had a problem of flooding during rainy seasons, even though not frequently. Hence the UN delegation sent to inspect conditions at the camp did not manage to get there because, besides the bad road, the Ruvu area as a whole tended to be a heap of mud and moist clay during rainy seasons.\footnote{PAC Archives: United Nations: ‘Women and Children Under Apartheid’, Special Committee against Apartheid Mission to Angola, Zambia and Tanzania, 3-17 April 1985, p. 1.} It was difficult for the residents to cope with the conditions, which were a breeding ground for various diseases and constituted a grave menace to the health of residents.

The physical conditions of the camp during this period were exacerbated by the fact that “there was not enough food, cereals, vegetables, fruit and eggs”.\footnote{Ibid. p. 5.} Hence, the money raised from donors for the building of houses and the improvement of the general conditions of the camp, was used for food and medicines. Diseases such as tuberculosis, bronchitis, malaria, cholera, pneumonia, and gastro-enteritis were common among residents. Those were ‘social diseases’ common among the ill-fed and badly housed in South Africa.\footnote{The language or terminology was used by S. Judges: ‘Poverty, Living Conditions and Social Relations- Aspects of life in Cape Town in the 1830’s, Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1977.} The unhygienic conditions of the camp increased the need for medical attention, hence the lengthy list of medical requirements prepared for submission to the donors and to the UN World Health Organisation in 1982. This included such items as antibiotics injections, tablets, antispasmodics, analgesics, antihistamines, antirheumatics, antihelmintics, anaesthetics, anti-malaria, anti-leprosy, gastro-intestinal drugs and respiration system drugs.\footnote{Ibid. p. 5.} Most of the items requested were “very basic and were not luxurious items for a community that affords a healthy living”\footnote{PAC Archives: ‘List of Medical Requirements’, 1982.} Not one year passed...
without death amongst the residents.\textsuperscript{61} The medical facility which existed before 1985 was rudimentary. It lacked very basic equipment such as sterilising instruments, bowls for washing hands after administering the treatment and even beds for very sick patients who could not sleep on the floor. It was frequent practice to have patients sleeping on mattresses on the floor, despite the fact that it was undesirable.

The concrete living conditions in this camp were one of the reasons which caused the divide between the PAC leadership as represented by the Central Committee and the general membership of the PAC. Since 1981, the Ruvu camp became the centre of most ideological debate and critique of the PAC leadership under the chairmanship of Vusumzi Make. The cadres in this camp demanded that the leadership should derive its mandate to lead from the rank and file membership. They also questioned the use of funds and criticised the lavish life-style of the PAC Chairman, Vusi Make and the entire Central Committee.\textsuperscript{62} The strong base of the two-way ideological split which occurred in the PAC during the era of Vusumzi Make (as already covered in chapter 4) was at Ruvu and Itumbi camps.\textsuperscript{63} The ideological strength and confrontational stance of the residents of the Ruvu camp stemmed from what its residents perceived as neglect and deliberate delays on the part of the PAC leadership to improve conditions in the settlement. The ethnic divisions which emerged and developed as the settlement grew, also fed into the political discourse within the settlement.

5.4. Aspects of Culture Among the Residents of Ruvu Camp.

The concept of culture is usually very controversial and often confusing, hence in the context of this section, it needs clear demarcation. Some of the working definitions of culture in the context of this section, are that “culture comprises firstly the values, feelings, symbols, beliefs, mores and customs that give a subjective meaning to the material conditions in which a social group lives. Secondly, it refers to the social practices, the institutional and informal human activities that produce those patterns of

\textsuperscript{62} PAC Archives: PAC/Tan/1/164/9: Meeting of the Administrative Committee of the PAC, 1979.
\textsuperscript{63} PAC Archives: Feature: South Africa, unnumbered and undated.
meaning. The maps of meaning that are the product of cultural practices do not only exist subjectively, but acquire an objective existence as a totality of determined notions and concepts’ that are lived by people as an integral part of their daily lives”. It is clear from this that culture is used to infer the making of meaning and is largely concerned with the interconnections of a society, group of people or community. It is largely in this sense that culture is used in this text. The main aim is to identify the interconnections that made the residents of the Ruvu camp a community and demonstrate that the residents of this camp asserted their lives as valuable beyond the limits set by the condition of the camp and most of all the conditions of exile.

On culture in the Ruvu community, there are few sources which yield as valuable information as can be gained by oral sources. Hence, this section uses oral interviews with ex-residents of this camp who were willing to be interviewed during the course of this research. Where possible, oral information is supplemented by and corroborated with available documentary sources.

One informant described the settlement at Ruvu as somewhat in between “a township, a working-class town and an African village”. The reason advanced was that the way of life in the settlement had features of a township, given the fact that a considerable number of residents originated from the townships in South Africa. On the other hand, the settlement also exhibited features of a village because of the predominantly Xhosa - Zulu speaking elements from the villages of Natal and the Cape province in South Africa. Most of them lived as though they were in their villages, using clan names as courteous greeting and also to instill a certain understanding among their kids as to who of their mates fell within the prohibited boundaries of marriage, on the basis of kinship ties. On the other hand, the kind of developments in small-scale modern enterprises, created the impression of an emerging modern working-class town. Many of the residents, including a few Tanzanian locals, were employed in the small scale industries which were

65 APLA Notes: 20 December, 2002.
66 Ibid.
emerging in the settlement. In other words, the Ruvu settlement was a melting pot, a point of intersection of people from diverse backgrounds and these features were blended together in the comradely way of life of the relatively small but growing community.

As the numbers of residents in the Ruvu settlement increased, the community began to relive several aspects of the ‘home’ experience. As one informant indicated, “we began to listen to ‘Mbhaqanga’, cooked the kinds of meals we would have enjoyed at home in South Africa.” As indicated earlier, some of the residents participated in producing ‘revolutionary’ songs and poetry which was used during commemoration ceremonies. The most notable of these were the Sharpeville Day ceremonies on the 21st of March to commemorate the death of PAC led marchers shot by the South African Police during anti-pass law demonstration in Sharpeville, in 1960. The “Sobukwe Day” was also commemorated to mark the death of the founding President of the PAC Mr Mangaliso Sobukwe, in 1978. June 16, 1976 was also commemorated in the camp to mark the Soweto uprisings in Johannesburg, South Africa. These events were an important feature of life not only in this camp but also in other PAC camps. Music and dancing pervaded everyday life in this camp and were not performed only to mark cultural days or days of commemoration.

An analysis of one or two of the popular songs in this camp reveals the kind of consciousness the rank and file PAC members in this camp developed about themselves, and the conditions defined by a common suffering. This group’s self-definition created a loose kind of in-group solidarity and out-group hostility. In this instance those who were outside the group were the leadership of the PAC. Residents of other camps such as Itumbi were considered to be part of the in-group as long as they were not part of the leadership. Leadership here refers to members of the National Executive, camp commanders and heads of the various command structures within APLA. One of these songs, originated from Mgagao camp, was popular among the cadres in Ruvu. It went as follows:

67 Interview with Comrade Mnqojane, Umtata, 23 June 1995; also mentioned by A.T. Moleah: ‘Inaugural address by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Transkei’ October, 15, 1994, p. 1.
‘Siyahlupheka, Pokela
Wee Bawo
Sikhokele, Pokela
Oviva Wee, APLA
Viva PAC

In its English translation it would read as follows:

We are suffering, Pokela
Oh Father, Lead Us, Pokela
Viva APLA
Viva PAC’  

What can be deduced from the above is that Pokela’s name was used to refer to the leadership of the organisation, not to himself as an individual. The reference to “we are suffering, Pokela” needs to be interrogated. In the light of the background uncovered so far, it appears that in the ‘we’, the leadership of the PAC was definitely excluded. All members of the National Executive lived in plush hotels and expensive flats in the up-market suburbs of Dar-es-Salaam. Their suffering was, of course, different from that of the ordinary PAC members who lived in the camps. As the song proceeds it indicated an expression of confidence by calling on Pokela to lead; “Lead Us, Pokela”. The problem is that the Pokela who was called upon to lead, was Pokela, ‘the individual’ not Pokela as representative of the entire leadership of the PAC. Not all songs expressed underlying tensions between the leadership and the rank and file membership of the organisation. Some were about F.W. de Klerk and the land dispossessed from Africans in South Africa. The latter category of songs was intended to keep “morale high, focus the boys on the home-going program, and keep the vision of a liberated Socialist Azania alive”.  

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68 The song appears in L. Mphahlele’s: *Child of this Soil*, p. 102; interviews with D.D.D Mantshontsho, 15 February 1985, confirmed the song as one in the long list of revolutionary songs, chanted in the camps.

69 Interview with Z. Mnqojane, Umtata, 23 June1995.
All the same it must be noted that in the camp there was more diversity in music than in any other aspect of the camp’s cultural life. The diversity was reflected in the life-styles of various groups in the camp. The “bright boys” commonly referred to as “Oolayita”, mostly from urban townships had vicarious taste for jazz, reggae, and pop music. Whereas the “pumpkins” also referred to as “imixhaka” mostly from rural backgrounds in South Africa had a taste for more traditional music such as “umbhaqanga” and choral music. Revolutionary songs remained the point of convergence among all the groups, despite their musical tastes or preferences. Abdul Ibrahim captured the experiences in the world of music, succinctly when he stated “music gives expression to what is deepest in the heart of human beings and this is usually demonstrated by the accompanying style of dance”. As already indicated above, music in the Ruvu camp disclosed implicitly and sometimes explicitly the conflicts and contradictions of the residents’ world of experiences, as exiles and as members of the PAC.

The social life in the camp was also characterised by sport which included soccer and volleyball. These activities were a popular pass-time and provided an opportunity for expression of talent. As Mphahlele indicated, “soccer provided rare moments of joy and healing” and created a bond among the camp residents and the neighbouring Tanzanian communities. In fact, sport in Ruvu camp, in one way or the other, was “a great leveler” as all kinds of people came into contact with one another. Over weekends the youth residents of Ruvu camp, grouped themselves into teams, sometimes on the basis of age, (e.g. under twenty ones versus over twenty ones) and regions from where people came in South Africa. Soccer matches played according to regions tended to expose the deep-seated divisions according to tribe or language which still existed behind the facade of ideological unity. As Dr Mantshontsho put it, “the Cape boys were leading in everything else but in sport, especially soccer, the other non-Xhosa boys used to excel but to us as

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72 L. Mphahlele: ‘Child of this Soil’, p. 68.
the leadership, this was a non-issue”.\textsuperscript{74} Even though the divide along music tastes cannot be firmly upheld as one of the major divisive factors in the camp community, it however reflected a developing sub-culture which cannot be discounted as a factor contributing to the heterogeneity of the Ruvu camp community.

There was also some form of schooling in the camp even though in terms of organisation and scope it did not match the ANC’s Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Mazimbu camp. For the ANC, Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College was the centre around which the entire settlement in Mazimbu developed.\textsuperscript{75} In other words when funding was sought, education for exiles was the major motivation and the settlement developed as an add-on. In Ruvu, accommodation was a priority and education an add-on. Also the allocation of funds within the organisation reflected that the development of an educational capacity within the PAC’s Ruvu settlement was not a priority. All party funds were divided as follows: 50% was allocated to Defense, 30% to Administration and 20% to Publicity and Information.\textsuperscript{76} There was no special budget for Education and Manpower Development in the PAC. Hence the development of the secondary school in Ruvu camp was not as robust as that of the ANC in Mazimbu. With the PAC’s leadership embroiled in quarrels, especially following the deposition of Leballo, the Education Department of the organisation suffered. There was no one who could conceptualise in a comprehensive manner, the development of an education centre in Ruvu camp. Besides that, as Elliot Mfaxa (tasked to lead the Education Department since 1982) indicated at the meeting of the PAC Central Committee, “his department needed competent staff”, as curriculum planners, curriculum co-ordinators, and administrators.\textsuperscript{77}

In 1982, the PAC leadership decided to separate the Education Department from the Manpower Department. Planning towards the development of a school in Ruvu dragged on for a number of years. In 1985, two appointments in the field of Education were made

\textsuperscript{74} Interview with D.D.D. Mantshontsho, Umtata, 23 June 1995.
\textsuperscript{76} PAC Archives: Decisions and Recommendations; Extra-ordinary Central Committee Meeting, Dar-ES-Salaam, February, 1981, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{77} PAC Archives: PAC/Tan/1/159/5: Confidential Letter from Joe Mkhwanazi to PAC officials responsible for training in academic and technical development, n.d, pp. 2-3.
by Johnson Mlambo when he became Chairman of the PAC. J. Vanda was appointed principal of a school which was to be built in Ruvu camp and B. Jordan was appointed as Curriculum Specialist. Elliot Mfaxa remained the Head of the Department of Education. The inefficiency of the two appointees was reflected by the fact that in 1988, the PAC still had no education policy and curriculum. As a result a three-man commission which included Elliot Mfaxa, Bojana Jordan, and A.C. Nkomo was set up to develop the education policy and curriculum for the PAC and submit a report to the Administrative Committee by the end of June 1989. When the PAC was unbanned in 1990, the development of an education centre in Ruvu was still in the planning stage. However, a pre-school for young kids was established early in the settlement and was developed further in 1986. It was run by the PAC Women’s department.

The Ruvu camp accommodated several youths who were relocated from Chunya camp because they were identified for graduate education. For this kind of education, the organisation depended on fellowships and bursaries from the international community, including the United Nations. Hence in 1989 numerous ‘entry clearances’ were sent to the Tanzanian authorities for youths who were on the waiting list for scholarships to universities abroad and in other parts of Africa. The problem which faced the PAC was how to hold the students accountable and of service to the organisation after completing their studies. Besides that, the indiscipline of some of the students in the camp, during the vacation periods, increased as their numbers grew. This became one of the challenges the PAC leadership had to deal with. Attempts to deal with this problem started during the era of Pokela and continued unabated to the era of Mlambo. A decision was taken by the PAC Central Committee towards the end of 1985 that “all PAC sponsored students must sign contracts binding them to return and serve the PAC after completion of their courses and that all PAC sponsored students must pay 5% of their stipends to the Department of Education for administrative purposes”. In addition to this the PAC pledged to enter

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80 PAC Archives: PAC/Tan/1/159/5: Confidential Letter from Joe Mkhwanazi to PAC officials responsible for training in academic and technical development, n.d, p. 1.
into agreements with funding agencies and donor organisations so that the sponsored
students, would return to the PAC after completion of their studies. This grand plan
improved the situation but not for a long time as some of the students continued to find
lucrative opportunities elsewhere after completing their studies. The PAC had no tracking
mechanism to identify where their students went after completion of their studies and
besides that, there were political issues of priority to the organisation during the
preparations for a negotiated solution in South Africa in the late 1980’s. The PAC’s
attempts to develop a viable school in the Ruvu camp “were not as successful or even
viable” compared to the project started in the early 1960’s by the PAC exiles in Maseru.
This was due to a lack of vision and leadership.81

5.5. The Generation of Tribalism among residents of Ruvu camp.

The limited written accounts of exile liberation movements in Southern Africa disclose
implicitly and explicitly the pervasiveness of tribalism within the liberation organisations
despite the ‘revolutionary’ denials. At one stage, between 1967 and 1969, the Frelimo of
Mozambique experienced problems with tribalism. The problem escalated due to
leadership contestation which occurred after the death of its founder and President Dr
Eduardo Mondlane.82 Similar tribal tendencies were manifested within ZANU after the
death of its leader, Herbert Chitepho in 1971. Within the ANC of South Africa, the issue
of Xhosa or predominantly Nguni (Xhosa and Zulu) leadership created tension in the
camps, especially during the 1980s.83 Tribal tendencies in the ANC camps in Angola
reached a stage where in certain instances, if the National Anthem was sung in one of the
Nguni languages, non-Nguni’s would walk out and vice-versa.84

Before one examines the manifestation of tribalism in the PAC camp of Ruvu, it is
important to map out the meaning of the concept in order to clear the basis of the
analysis. The concept ‘tribalism’ has fallen into increased disfavour due to its application

81 Interview with Elliot Mfaka, Kingwilliams Town, 26 July 1998.
83 Interview with Wel Skenjana, and Comrade Morris, Pretoria, 24-25 September 2001; This is
also covered in L. Mphahlele: Child of this Soil, p. 56.
84 PAC Archives: Dan Mdluli: Letter to the Chairman of the PAC, Johnson Mlambo, 28 August 1985, p.2.
during the colonial era, and its present relevance. Whatever the choice of definition, ‘empirical divergences’ are usually so gross, widespread and frequent as to render the concept, as it exists in the literature, untenable.  

Hence, John Saul has argued for the use of the concept of “ethnicity” which hovers around such attributes of commonality as language, territory, political unit and common cultural values or symbols. Archie Mafeje has invoked, instead, the notion of “tribal sentiment” as the most relevant in the context of Africa and her politics of liberation. He argues that the term ‘tribe’ “has no scientific meaning when applied not to a relatively undifferentiated society, practicing a primitive subsistence economy and enjoying local autonomy but societies that have been effectively penetrated by European colonialism, that have been successfully drawn into a capitalist money economy and a World market”.

In the context of the PAC’s Ruvu camp, it would be appropriate to adopt Mafeje’s framework and therefore define tribalism as the expression of “tribal sentiments” by various residents of the camp. This is because there is no evidence which attests to the fact that the sentiments developed into a tribal ideology which found expression in coherent forms as one would find, for instance, in the case of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). In the case of the IFP, the concept of tribe has been overtly politicised in furtherance of a category of interests linked to the traditional elite.

The utilisation of tribal ploys to rally constituencies in order to engage successfully in competition for powerful positions in the Central Committee is what happened in the PAC during its long exile period. The activation of tribal identities depended on various circumstances. Political prospects and considerations were usually an important factor. The power struggle and competition between P.K. Leballo and his deputy T.M. Ntantala in 1977 was based on the mobilisation of tribal sentiments. Ntantala, a Xhosa speaking South African from the Eastern Cape had majority support from the APLA military command structures. Other Ngunis from within the leadership structures of the PAC also

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86 Ibid.
supported Ntantala (for instance, a certain Themba Maphalala from the PAC High Command openly canvassed support for Ntantala on an ethnic ticket). Leballo also mobilised support from the Sotho speaking groups within the PAC and also roped into PAC politics some BCP elements who were in Tanzania. Had it not been for the support given by the post-June 16 generation of exiles who, due to their innocence and political immaturity were manipulated by Leballo against Ntantala, Leballo’s faction would have been unable to oust Ntantala and the entire military High Command of APLA in 1977.

In Ruvu camp, in particular, a wide number of elements stemming from the nature of life in the camp, coalesced situationally into an expression of tribal sentiment. The situations ranged from football matches in which Nguni were regarded as less competent, to the leadership of the army and the knowledge of PAC political ideology in which non-Ngunis were deemed incompetent. All these were generalisations or perceptions which divided the camp community along ethnic lines. These manifested themselves below the superficial pretences of unity in the struggle. Dan Mdluli who responded to rank-and-file debates about Xhosa leadership in APLA, argued that “if forces from the Cape seem most prepared to come forward to fight for their land, it is not a fault”. What is surprising is that the leadership of the PAC including the camp leaders whose power and role in enforcing discipline in the camp was so vital (as will be examined in the following section), were aware of the underlying tribal tensions among camp residents, but the matter was never openly addressed. The correspondence between Mdluli and the Chairman of the PAC (Johnson Mlambo) is a clear illustration of this. In all his correspondence with the Headquarters, Mdluli consistently raised questions about tribalism in the PAC in general. In August 1985, he wrote to the PAC Chairman again and indicated “I always hear unofficial reports of tribalism in the PAC. I have always dismissed reports of tribalism in the PAC, especially as the Central Committee is very much non-tribally constituted: and I have always hated the use of the term ‘tribalism’ to

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89 PAC Archives: Letter from Dan Mdluli to the PAC Chairman, Johnson Mlambo, June, 1987.
90 PAC Archives: Letter from Dan Mdluli to the PAC Chairman, Johnson Mlambo, 28 August, 1985, p. 2.
explain divisions in Africa. Often regionalism is mistaken for tribalism”. Mlambo’s responses to the questions from Mdluli tended to be longwinded and irrelevant. In one response, for instance, Mlambo gave Mdluli a long lecture on “Paul Baran and Sweezy reflecting on the crimes of Stalin” and later talked about the resurgence of interest in the PAC “at home and abroad”. One is therefore likely to conclude that the leadership of the PAC was either evasive or dismissive of the issue about the existence of tribal sentiments in their organisation. This is understandable because to admit that tribalism existed within the PAC would have been deemed an expression of a counter-revolutionary consciousness.

Another generation of recruits arrived in the PAC around 1988-1989 following the uprisings which swept through South Africa from late 1984 to 1987. A portion of the new recruits was accommodated in Ruvu where some were to go through apprenticeship in various trades to develop a skills base for the PAC and also prepare for a liberated South Africa. By the beginning of 1990, the camp had three groups, each with its own tradition, in the camp, i.e. the senior camp residents who lived there since the camp was established in 1978 (mostly those from the June 16, 1976 generation), the Lesotho group and youths relocated from other PAC camps, and lastly the 1988/89 new recruits. With the arrival of the latter, ethnic tensions escalated, but political developments and the intensification of the “home going program” left little space for petty tribal quarrels. From the nature of crimes which were committed in the camp and the group associations during social events or sporting events, it appears that there were emerging and growing “Zulu cliques” and sometimes mixed as “Xhosa-Zulu” cliques. The fights and occasional stabbings during parties over weekends, though not clearly showing a tribalist pattern, indicated that a new and youthful group had arrived in the camp. Fights were mostly over petty issues “like girls, liquor and gossip”, things which mature people would hardly fight and stab each other about. This kind of problem seem to have manifested itself in more serious proportions within the ANC camp in Mazimbu and especially among the students.

91 PAC Archives: Letter from Dan Mdluli to the PAC Chairman, Johnson Mlambo, 28 August, 1985, p. 2.
94 Ibid.
in Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College. The violence displayed by the new arrivals (1988-1989 groups) was shocking. Some “formed themselves into self-conscious Zulu groups and harassed non-Zulus”. The ANC was able to handle issues of ill-discipline in the camps and dealt with the concerns of inmates by introducing what was called “detachment conferences” in Angola. Its cadres were divided into three detachments, the Luthuli detachment (consisting mostly of the old guard), the June 16 detachment and the Moncada detachment and members of the National Executive, including the ANC President Oliver Tambo who belonged to the Luthuli detachment. “Open discussions centered around problems and grievances of any aspect of the ANC soldier’s life. Finally, resolutions and agreements would be noted and drawn up as proposals to be put before the National Executive Committee”. 

With the PAC, there seems not to have been a systematic engagement with camp residents to address the grievances of camp inmates. The only notable efforts were those of Pokela who visited the camps frequently and always appealed for conciliation and peace among the camp residents. He is still remembered for his now famous Swahili saying “Ntwa ke ya madula mmoho” meaning “it is usually those who live together who quarrel”. Despite his good efforts, tribal sentiments remained as a source of underlying tensions in the PAC camps, especially in the Ruvu settlement.

5.6. Punishment and various forms of abuse in the camp

As the camp community grew, problems of ill-discipline also increased. Because of the relatively better conditions, the Ruvu settlement was regularly infiltrated by ill-disciplined people from the PAC army. This trend strengthened from 1981 onwards. This created serious problems of ill-discipline within the camp community. When examining the issue of discipline in the Ruvu camp, it becomes important to note that the camp accommodated groups of people who differed not only in terms of background and

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96 M. Twala and E.D. Bernard: Mbokodo, p. 47.
97 Ibid.
98 L. Mphahlele: Child of this Soil, pp. 103-105.
language, but had developed a host of traditions and norms over the years in exile which had to squeeze into the relatively tight confines of regulations initially designed for a small camp community.

The authority of political leaders was important in maintaining order in the camps. Quite often there were quarrels among the inmates, some were of a petty nature, resulting from “drinking and womanising over weekends” but others contained a serious political element. The nature of offences has been covered in the section above. This section examines the kinds of punishment meted out. Dating back to the pre-Pokela era, beatings were a common punishment in the camp and this involved sjamboking resulting in grievous bodily harm and sometimes death. This was administered under the supervision of the camp committee. “The critical period of this style led to the death of Mncedisi Sabatana, Mahoyi Mpondo and George Moletsane”. These people were labeled dissidents because it was believed they were advancing the political program of Ntantala’s APRP within the PAC. The leadership of the PAC denied these incidents in spite of the advices from overseas PAC members such as Dan Mdluli. This is illustrated in Mdluli’s letter to Mlambo where he stated “ I know you have not personally issued an order to beat up someone. What I am saying is that you have an opportunity to correct this tendency among certain sections of the leadership not to adopt the Idi Amin style of solving disagreements”. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, there were other “alleged cases of the elimination of “dissidents” and “undisciplined” APLA and PAC cadres including that of Chaka (real and full name not known) who was killed in the PAC camp at Chunya in Tanzania by High Command for “allegedly stealing and concealing” in his transitor radio a pistol used during his training in Conarky, Guinea and thereby “harming” PAC’s relations with the government of Guinea”. The manuscript of a book which was supposed to have been published in 1985 (written by Henry Isaacs) indicated that between June 1982 and January 1985 “at

101 PAC Archives: Dan Mdluli: Letter to the Chairman of the PAC, Johnson Mlambo, 1 June, 1987, p. 2.
least six persons were murdered, their physical elimination sanctioned or condoned by the PAC leaders who accused them or suspected them of being ‘dissidents’. Isaacs’s accounts are viewed with suspicion by some of the informants contacted during the research. They all emphasised that Isaacs’s relationship with the Party was strained and that he was extremely bitter, such that he would go to any length discredit the PAC. In the TRC report it was indicated that Isaacs confused in his account “cases of some PAC cadres who died in genuine accidents with cases of abuse of human rights”.

Other forms of punishment which were meted out at the Ruvu camp in Bagomoyo included being ordered to do various exercises on the parade ground which were accompanied by floggings. Because of the arbitrary manner in which punishment was administered and dissatisfaction with the general conditions in the camp and the failure of the PAC’s home-going programme, some of the cadres deserted to the ANC. It is not that the ANC was any better than the PAC in terms of administering corporal punishment. In fact the ANC was worse in the sense that abuses inside its camps were more systematic than in the PAC. Corporal punishment of alleged ‘dissidents’, was administered through the ANC Security Department, which came to be known as ‘Mbokodo’, a Xhosa term which literally means ‘the grinding stone’. Just as in the PAC camps, the ANC camps were characterised by bottom-down rigid instructions to cadres and refusal or failure to comply was enough to earn one the label of dissident. Dissidents were crushed brutally, hence a special camp called Quatro was set up in Angola, as a prison where all dissidents were kept. In Quatro, prisoners were beaten, subjected to hard labour and some would ‘disappear’ for ever. “The camp remained highly secret within the ANC. Even among the NEC, the only ones who had access to Quatro were Mzwandile Piliso, Joe Modise and Andrew Masondo”. This raises questions as to whether the entire leadership knew about this camp, sanctioned its

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103 PAC Archives: H Isaacs: ‘South Africa’s Pan Africanist Congress in the 80’s: Chronic Instability and Revolutionarv Ineffectiveness’, no date.  
105 See the case of Vusi Shange in Search Light South Africa: Vol. 3, No. 2, April 1993, pp. 31-33.  
106 For the details of organisation of ‘Mbokodo’ see M. Twala and E.D. Benard: Mbokodo: Inside MK.  
establishment, knew about the atrocities which were committed inside the camp or whether they had any control over treatment of inmates and how the camp itself was run.

In the case of the PAC the question which comes to mind is whether there was any policy on the administration of corporal punishment. Or were there any constitutional provisions in the PAC constitution, related to corporal punishment? The Disciplinary Code of the PAC was discussed in Chapter 2 as well as the loopholes which could lead to abuses by those in positions of power. What will be interesting to discuss in this instance is a draft policy position which was developed by the PAC in exile in order to deal with indiscipline among the ranks of its cadres. In December 1981, the Central Committee of the PAC took a decision authorising the army (APLA) “to take requisite action it deems fit in enforcing discipline in the army within the spirit of the Constitution and the Disciplinary Code of the Party”. Consequently, the leadership of the PAC decided in February 1986 on policy guidelines on “Corporal Punishment in the PAC as a Disciplinary Measure”. The documents laid down the following prescriptions with regard to punishment in the camps and within the ranks of the army:

“The breaking of PAC and army discipline shall be punishable by inflicting corporal punishment as a last resort after the following procedures have been followed:

- The alleged offender shall be duly tried by a Tribunal of Justice as provided for in the Disciplinary Code of the PAC to determine his innocence or guilt.
- No corporal punishment shall be inflicted on first offenders, at any rate, not until other forms of punishment, short of expulsion have been tried
- That corporal punishment is not repeated on any individual member of the PAC within a six month period
- That the principle of justice is observed. No judgement may be passed without the accused answering for himself
- That punishment is not humiliating to the individual member in front of his fellow members.

- A register of corporal punishment shall be kept and updated at all times.
- No female member of the PAC shall under any circumstances undergo corporal punishment of any kind".  

These guidelines seem reasonable, but from the incidences outlined in this section, the extent of gross brutality with which corporal punishment was administered, shows that the policy was not adhered to. Comrade Tekere, one of the interviewees of this research, argued “from experience that I have gone through no one can tell me that there was a policy followed when we were beaten by those guys. I lived in Bogomoyo before I went to China for training, those ‘Mecs’ were cruel and cold when it comes to corporal punishment and I was told how some people died in the process. Me, Broer I was traumatised, imagine I was young, having escaped from Unitra only to land in that kind of situation”.  

From a survey of PAC internal documents in the archives at Fort Hare, no reference could be found to PAC women who received corporal punishment. Hence one has no grounds to relate the experiences of women in this regard. The examination of incidences of corporal punishment in the PAC discloses that there was no possibility of adherence to policy stipulations, and especially given the wider context within which offences were defined. Dissidents were usually major victims because their definition was arbitrary. A dissident was in many cases a deliberate construction which showed the meanness of outlook on the part of those who had power or were connected to powerful individuals in the organisation. All one needed to do was to vilify the political opponent, “campaign for support against him and then he will be destroyed in the name of purging the organisation of the enemies of the revolution”.  

In summary, this chapter dealt with the living conditions within the PAC camps. The observation was based more on the PAC settlement in Ruvu. The chapter has traced the development of PAC settlements in Tanzania and examined the conditions of living inside the camps. It also examined health conditions within the Ruvu settlement, which

111 Interview conducted with Tekere, Langa Township, 21 December 2000.
112 PAC Archives: ‘T.M. Ntantala is Gone: But His Ideals Will Conquer’, Undated.
was supposedly the most well-developed of all the PAC camps in exile during the period covered by the research. It also discussed the manner in which camp residents established livable conditions in spite of the precariousness of their circumstances. The aspects of culture examined in this chapter revealed how the residents used sporting activities, music and poetry to give meaning to their lives. Despite these cultural activities, there were simmering divisions along tribal and regional lines but these never received the attention of the PAC leadership until the unbanning of the organisation in 1990. The chapter also discussed the issue of corporal punishment in the PAC. It highlighted the fact that there were policy guidelines on how to administer corporal punishment in the PAC. Like other policy guidelines developed and ignored by the organisation, such guidelines were never followed. Hence, persistent divisions and conflicts were a major feature of the PAC’s existence in exile. Ordinary PAC members who lived in the camps, were victims of the unguided authority of camp commanders who administered corporal punishment willy-nilly, without regard for organisational procedures and policies. The hope that one day “Azania’ will be liberated sustained the endeavours and loyalty of camp inmates. Some endured the camp conditions because they had no alternative. Others, who could not endure the situation anymore deserted the organisation, and joined the ANC whilst a few others declared themselves refugees in various parts of Southern Africa.113