

March 18, 1978

Deena Gwen, Gail, and Ben.

I thought all of you would be interested in notes on the memorial meeting for Sobukwe held at the UN last Sunday afternoon, March 12. First - Peter Molotsi had telephoned me very early the morning after he had heard the news of the death. I spoke with him again later, and he was very dramatic -- but Peter has always had a dramatic flair -- about the "state of emergency" in the PAC. Messages were pouring in. All factions had recognized "the Prof." PAC offices all over the world (New Zealand, etc.) had rallied tremendously. (All this from my telephone notes). A.S. Ngcobo and Nana Mahomo were arranging memorial services for St Paul's Cathedral in London. He himself sounded as if he was taking over in New York although he said that David Sibeko is still the representative. (I know that David has been irritated in the past by what he calls Peter's Arrogance.) -- The PAC has rallied tremendously. (And so on -- a new spirit of unity in these circumstances.)

Peter also explained that the funeral in SA had been postponed for two reasons: 1) when S. died, he was still a "prisoner" and a delay was necessary to get proper permission from the government, and 2) S's brother was ill in CT and would not be released until the 11th. My second conversation with Peter was the day after he and Iris had seen S's children off at the airport. Andy Young's family was there and Father Bob Powell.

I did not attend the service in the interfaith chapel at the UN on Sat. the 11th, at which Young spoke and which was attended by a larger crowd than last Sunday's meeting.

There were well over a hundred people in the Dag Hammarskjold auditorium, and the program started pretty much on time shortly after 3 p.m. (I had run into Peter and David when I arrived, and David said something about PAC time -- I've always remembered the point Peter made about this many years ago, that the PAC unlike the ANC would be punctual, and that timing was important at the inaugural meeting of the PAC. But I had originally been told that the meeting would start at 2, and there had been a change.) I had to leave shortly before 6 p.m. when the program was coming to a close with the reading of messages.

Peter was the keynote speaker, introduced by David as a founding member. He reviewed S's life with eloquence and also some humor, reading most of the speech. An excellent, even restrained presentation. There was an appreciative and warm laugh when he described S as the youngest child and an infant getting into everything in the house and seeking to change the whole household.

But to go back to the beginning. Sibeko hailed the brave young men who had expelled Buthelesi from the funeral. (The story about this had appeared in that morning's paper.) He quoted from S.'s 1949 speech: no collaboration, and went on to deny Buthelesi's statement in the NYTimes that the London office of the PAC had invited B. to the funeral. There is only one authorized PAC rep. in London, and he had not invited B. And if he had, he would have been unauthorized in doing so, since the PAC position has always been to have no truck with anyone who collaborates. Either you are for us or against us. You can't be half and half.

Sibeko made florid introductions of a series of speakers. His introduction of the PLO representative to the UN (Zehdi Labib Terzi) was especially dramatic because David made a stirring and fully approving reference to the PLO attack in Israel the day before and got up to give the PLO man an embrace, who also spoke proudly of the attack and of death as part of one's job (i.e., one's own death in the struggle). Carter and Vance had deplored the attack but had said nothing when Israeli planes and artillery had recently levelled a village and killed many and wounded many. An eloquent speaker -- Nazism, Zionism, and apartheid are all the same -- there is no difference between passes in SA and in Palestine, between Bantustans and local autonomy, etc.

The speaker from the Patrice Lumumba Coalition: if Whites want to be separate from Blacks, they shouldn't have come to Africa in the first place. There's a lot of water between Azania and Holland. Verwoerd wasn't born in

Azania. Sobukwe knew that you had to know not only how to die but also how "to kill" (very short and slight American black talking). End of talk and David got up to embrace him.

Representative from the CP (Marxist-Leninist) of the U.S., who referred to recent actions of a super-power in the Horn and concluded with slogans including "Super-powers out of Africa!"

Such ties have never troubled me -- they are quite understandable and don't detract at all, for me, from the SA nationalist patriotism of the PAC and ANC, but from the standpoint of ~~the~~ US public opinion, the PLO is not exactly a plus. What equally strikes me is the eager acceptance of any support. In addition to the reading of messages from Dick Clark and Diggs there was a very revolutionary-sounding message -- it turned out to be from Donald Woods, so clearly, no censorship or rather clearance of messages to be read -- but also audience silence in response to Woods's name. Incidentally, on the phone Peter had been rhapsodic about Anthony Lewis's column on Sobukwe. He was very happy and proud about it and said it was widely appreciated -- though Gail is right, of course, that it was a sentimental and a-historical and misleading column. (I enclose a copy for Ben.)

The woman who read the messages said that it would take "years" to read them all and that they had to be very selective, but the messages ~~which~~ included not only Woods but "Azania Committee, P.O. Box ..." etc. etc.

In another extravagant introduction, David said that no matter how many millions might go into the coffers of the PAC, nothing was more ~~important~~ valuable than the support of those who, like the PAC, were trying to make changes in their own societies -- and introduced the Vietnam War Veterans (who ^{had} representative. His message couldn't be found, to be read, but later he spoke extemporaneously and very engagingly -- he had been on the wrong side in the Viet-nam War and didn't want to be on the wrong side in SA, i.e., on the imperialist side. His organization is going to send to the PAC the equivalent of a company's supplies -- fatigue uniforms and equipment etc. Odd: several times he gently and slightly clapped his hands in response to the audience's clapping.

Sipho Buthelesi, of the BPC, was there and read an extremely brief message of solidarity. Afterwards David pointed out that the BPC derived from Sobukwe and the PAC, as was recognized the other day, said David, by the London Times and June Goodwin of the Christian Science Monitor. (Again this interesting reliance, I've often noted, on authentication by Whites. How many times has PAC literature cited the Brett survey on Black attitudes?) Later Buthelesi walked up to the stage to say goodbye to David and Peter and he left -- later Peter said that he had had to catch a 7 p.m. plane back to (I assume) Botswana. Incidentally, Peter phoned me at midnight to thank me for coming -- ~~and for the solidarity work.~~

Judge Booth of the ACA spoke in his usual booming voice -- an impressive black figure with a near Afro of greyish-white hair.

Johnny Makitini was introduced as the representative of the ANC exec. com. He stood in the back row and didn't speak. (Ben, a few weeks ago I attended the memorial meeting for Duma Nokwe, and when the floor was opened to anyone to speak, Peter got up and spoke affectionately of Duma and of their being in prison together.)

I've been looking at the scribbled notes I wrote on the train on the way home. David said at the beginning that the PAC charges -- and this charge is made by PAC HQ, with which David had been in touch that morning -- that cancer cells had been introduced into S's body. Peter, during his talk, said that the PAC asserts and he, Peter, now asserts that the SA Gov. "induced" cancer into S. We do not accept the government's word. We have our own WDS, pathologists, and nurses. Other speakers were rhetorical about S as a victim of apartheid. One speaker said that he had not been allowed adequate medical help that could have saved his life. The Patrice Lumumba speaker spoke of S as the victim of the "poison" of apartheid.

I wonder if this will become an established theme. This morning's Times has a story by John Burns reviewing the police repression and internal dissent that have made Black protest ineffective, and he said: "After it was known that the nationalist leader was dying, the security police kept a tight rein on his movements, forcing him to report to the police station even when walking had become an ordeal." He also reports that Christian Barnard -- that apologist -- was a friend: "some of his friends, including Dr. Christiaan Barnard, the heart surgeon, appealed unsuccessfully in his last weeks to Prime Minister John Vorster for the banning order to be lifted, to save his medical treatment." Ben, how much more did he suffer that can be blamed on the government, in a narrow medical sense?

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Note on Peter's talk -- the PAC had \$50,000 members (I assume he was referring to pre-Sharpeville) and this was verified by the OAU which has its own ways of verification and Peter ~~was~~ said he did not know how they had verified this but the OAU has its own techniques. It's always exaggerating, of course, to hear such nonsense, though if Peter himself had said: I have confidence that we had 250,000 "adherents", I'd listen with interest.

David: WBES will play next Monday a tape of Sobukwe which was smuggled out and could not be used before his death.

Alfred Moleah was there, from Temple. I sat next to Dick Hull, history at NYU, whose Peter has taught and studied, and he praised very highly Peter's participation on a radio or TV discussion on the Afrikaner that he, Hull, had moderated with Herman Gilomee of Stellenbosch, who's a Yale fellow this year.

Mphiwa Mbatha was there. Quite a sprinkling of whites, by the way -- whereas, Ben, I was the only white at the small service for Duma.

Aubrey Nkomo followed me out to thank me for suggestions I'd left with a secretary some days earlier of academics who might be helpful to a research team -- an ANC one, I assume -- which is doing a series of papers on the Palestinians. Ben Rivlin said he'd be glad to meet with him, and I also suggested Gil Alroy, a political scientist and Arabist whom I don't know at Hunter College.

And Iris and her very cute grandson was in the lobby and embarrassed me by reminding me that 1) I had never got together with them to tell them about my trip, and 2) I had forgotten to locate a print of the picture of Sobukwe that appears with the visa article in Africa Report.

To wind this up, I add: Collistus Ndlovu, the Patriotic Front rep. spoke -- one of the sharpest African representatives in town, I think, and Theo-Ben Gurirab of Swapo, and Ambassador Dramane Quatara, the OAU ex. sec. to the UN. There were songs sung, of course, and the same two drummers, one of whom is a poet, who performed at the Nokwe service. And an additional poet, short and stocky and bald-headed (either Apela P. Makhoba or Ali Lerefula) who read with a booming and deep bass voice a poem whose refrain made chills run up and down my spine: "How long? H o w l o n g ? H O W L O N G ?"

The program contained a quote from Sobukwe which was used several times by speakers: according to the program, he said from his hospital bed on the day Siko died: "They aim to finish us off one after the other. . . . We must turn our grief into strength."

Ben, I've not replied to your note of Jan. 9 saying that you'd be in the US in late April and lecturing in Washington, San Diego, Monterey, and Ann Arbor. Gwen would ask: can you make it to Orange City? Of course, I'm counting on seeing as much as possible of you. Please let me have all the details.

I enjoyed your "Slender Hopes in SA" article in the March 3 New Republic and of course appreciated your passing reference to Gwen and me as academics denied visas. Have you realized the slip -- that I'm not "of Columbia" but of City College, City U. of NY. -- Two days ago Christianity and Crisis, a small but influential journal founded by Reinhold Niebuhr, the late influential original sin-type-liberal theologian and member of Americans for Democratic Action, was

GREAT DRAWING of MURDER by G. . . .

I certainly hadn't intended to go on at such length but written to the three of you has carried me away. About Christianity and Crisis -- the associate editor told me that they are sending copies around to the obvious key people, and I was also interested that he's had a call about the issue from E.J. Kahn of the New Yorker, who's interested because apparently he is writing something for the New Yorker on SA. You will remember that some years ago he wrote a series on his trip to SA, later published in a book. So -- a copy was sent to you airmail when I mentioned that possibly the KDM might be interested in reprinting parts of the issue. Bob Hoyt, the associate editor said it would be OK as long as credit was given and that if any royalty, if that's the word, was paid regarding my article, it would be split between the magazine and me. I don't care about this -- I mention it only because I was given the clear impression that no payment is expected -- they are happy to have their articles reprinted, but I'm sorry to say that I'm not sure now if you would have to first get a formal OK, i.e., to say, reprinted with permission. Incidentally, the most recent issue was banned in SA and so the editor told me later that they were sending the March (a double issue -- they normally come out twice a month) to you in a plain wrapper with my name and address on the envelope. I still haven't picked up my copies but will do so this Monday.

I mentioned Niebuhr since my article begins and ends with quotes from him and uses him in between, and I imagine that few South Africans know about him. The quotes are all from The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness. He was born in Wright City, Missouri in 1892 and, according to the Columbia Encyclopedia, was pastor of the Bethel Evangelical Church in Detroit from 1915 to 1928, where many of his parishioners were automobile workers "with whom he sided in their struggle for better working conditions." He had an M.A. from Yale Divinity School in 1915 and in 1928 began teaching at Union Theological Seminary. "A liberal in politics, in theology he has abjured the liberal Protestant's belief in the essential goodness of man." I think an important element in the development of his thought was the rise of fascism and Nazism.

I cannot resist adding the following quote which I have just discovered for the first time when I looked in the various annual supplements to Colliers Encyclopedia to see when he died -- I haven't found out. The volume covering the year 1967 says: "As far back as 1932, the eminent theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, despairing of the cruelty of race relations in America, had written in his book Moral Man and Immoral Society that Negroes would never be handed their freedom voluntarily. 'It is hopeless for the Negro to expect complete emancipation from the menial social and economic position into which the white man has forced him, merely by trusting in the moral sense of the white race. . . .' Dr. Niebuhr wrote, 'However large the number of individual white men who do and will identify themselves completely with the Negro cause the white race in America will not admit the Negro to equal rights if it is not forced to do so. Upon that point one may speak with a dogmatism which all history justifies.'"

I've just had a letter from Mike Savage of the U of CT who says that the banning of volume 3 has now been gazetted. "However it is not banned from possession - i.e. if one had a copy before the gazetting one can keep it but one cannot import it, also University libraries if they make special application to the Minister can obtain copies and make them available in the library to bona fide students. . . . One can now appeal against the banning of particular works - at a price. Perhaps you should get the Hoover Institution Press to look into this, if they are interested in following this up I think that the best person to contact for procedural advice is John Dugard . . . He has been steering through the appeal that IRR is making against the banning of their document on Devotions in SA. I always have a slightly ambiguous view of such appeals for while they may work at the same time they give a spurious legitimacy to the banning system erected by the local savemen." Mike has also sent me by air the latest issue of Social Dynamics, which reprints the AR article on visas & passports & the IT. letter. Ben, my love to Ann.

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