

THE recent battle between six Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) guerrillas and security police near Lichtenburg points to a significant revival in the Pan Africanist Congress's political and military fortunes.

The PAC broke away from the African National Congress in 1959, believing the latter had weakened African nationalism by adopting the Freedom Charter.

After a brief popularity in certain regions in South Africa it was effectively suppressed in the early 1960s. A long period of degeneration in exile followed.

Recent events, however, may indicate a revival—whether one believes the PAC's or the police's claims.

The PAC says its cadres have been responsible for a succession of attacks since 1986. A new phase of activity may have been initiated in 1985 when a group of PAC soldiers crossed the Botswana border, though they were arrested in Johannesburg and Mafikeng within hours of their homecoming.

Previously, Lesotho appeared to have been the center of PAC military activity, but this ended with the expulsion of nearly 50 PAC members from Maseru in May 1985. Its chief representative was among the six PAC people killed in March that year by a Lesotho army patrol in a border region used by the Lesotho Liberation Army.

After these setbacks, police say, APLA's veteran deputy commander Enoch Zulu arrived in Cape Town in September 1985 to begin the task of reviving old PAC networks.

In April the following year an effort to send in reinforcements from Libyan training camps was thwarted by Greek immigration officials who refused to allow APLA men on to an Air Zimbabwe flight to Harare. About the same time Zulu was arrested on the East Rand after a gun battle in which two guerrillas were killed.

Nevertheless, the trial of Aisdele Oshu in early 1987 testified to an apparently growing PAC presence in the Western Cape, a traditional area of PAC strength.

PAC publications claim that in 1986 an APLA unit was active in another historical PAC stronghold, Sharpeville. The unit reportedly killed 10 policemen in five operations.

PAC sources also assert that the assassinations in 1986 of Brigadier Andrew Molope of the Bophuthatwan police and, on a separate occasion, a Ciskeian consular official, were the work of APLA men. An Azany member, Mlangisi Langhondo, was convicted for killing the Ciskeian in November 1987.

The first PAC attacks to be partly confirmed by the police were the four actions attributed to the "Alexandria Scorpio Gang" between December 1986 and February 1987.

In these attacks, two soldiers and two policemen were wounded and a

Is the spirit of Robert Sobukwe rising?

The Pan Africanist Congress has some way to go before it can claim a mass following, but recent events indicate a revival in its activities and support



Robert Sobukwe's Pan Africanism re-emerges

taxi driver killed during a robbery.

Also in February last year, the police announced the capture of five PAC-trained insurgents who had just crossed the border, including two members of Qibba, the Western Cape-based Islamic Youth Group.

In August 1987, three young men were shot after a car chase which ended in Corbin Drive, Johannesburg. Two of these killed, New Khosi and Tahereh Lilile, were PAC trainees who had previously belonged to Azanyu. Khosi hailed from Gugulethu and Lilile from Sharpeville.

There may have been other incidents involving the PAC last year which were never reported by the press. Police have claimed at different times this year to have killed or captured in 1987 either 83, 34 or 20 PAC members.

The police also claim they have arrested five PAC people this year, apart from the one man captured and the four killed at Lichtenburg.

PAC strategists state that APLA actions are principally directed at members of the Security Forces and this assertion seems to be supported by these attacks and clashes. APLA soldiers appear to be trained and equipped for combat at ethnic quarters. Certainly, they must contend with ferocious courage.

By TOM LODGE

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Even allowing for scepticism about uncorroborated PAC claims there is enough evidence to suggest an upsurge of APLA activity.

PAC propaganda refers to an internal wing of the organisation. Its existence has yet to be attested to in court rooms.

However, in the last few years the activities of several legal groups have reflected the PAC tradition.

Azanyu and a number of other bodies employ Africanist phraseology. PAC iconography and the re-branded PAC salute.

In February, Azanyu was joined on the Sobukwe Memorial Coordinating Committee — to mark the 10th anniversary of the death of PAC founder Robert Sobukwe — by delegates from the Modus Workers Association of South Africa, the African Allied Workers, South African Black Municipal Workers Union and the African Women's Organisation.

Speakers from these organisations were also conspicuous at black consciousness's "homecoming" in

Soweto's Regina Mundi on June 16 last year.

The defection last November of two members of the Congress of South African Students from the United Democratic Front (UDF) affiliate to black consciousness, after spending six years on Robben Island, may also be a pointer signifying a future extension of PAC influence.

In addition, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Western Cape has served to strengthen the PAC politically. The PAC's Libyan backing endorses it in the eyes of Qibba members who admire Muammar Khaddafi as a Muslim statesman.

Qibba was formed in 1979 by dissenters from the Muslim Students Association; some of them black consciousness supporters.

Qibba members venerate Imam Haron — a Muslim priest who died in detention in 1959 — who argued South African followers of Islam should become more politically assertive. They believe during the 1960s Haron was close to a group of PAC members in Gugulethu and Langa who chose to convert to Islam.

One of the Qibba guerrillas currently on trial in Pretoria, Ahmad Cassiem, spent from 1964-1969 on Robben Island, which then accumulated a large number of PAC prisoners.

This history may have helped to bring about an agreement in November 1985 according to which, police allege, Qibba would support PAC insurgents in South Africa in return for PAC-sponsored military training.

Outside South Africa, there are also indications of increased PAC vitality.

Recently there have been modest diplomatic successes, including the "normalisation" of relations with frontline states, publicised meetings with senior officials in the United States state department and British Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, and discussions in February with a delegation from the National Council of Trade Unions (Naciu).

A PAC delegation has received an unprecedented invitation to visit Moscow. And the Nigerians and Zimbabweans have renewed the call for a united front between the ANC and PAC — which cuts across the ANC's efforts to achieve sole legitimate representative status with African governments.

Philip Kgosana has replaced Zulu in the APLA hierarchy. In addition to his military qualifications — which include parachute wings from Imperial Ethiopia — Kgosana has nearly 20 years' senior administrative experience as a United Nations official.

He was expelled from the PAC in 1962 and, unaffected by its years of decay, can be expected to provide energetic and competent leadership.

More generally, Johnson Mlambo's chairmanship seems to have survived an initial shake-up of the central committee, following accusations that some of its members were involved in drug-smuggling. Since then the PAC hierarchy has managed to contain any internal dissension.

After a long ideological eclipse, Pan-Africanism may win some territory. PAC theorists have always emphasized the historical injustice of land dispossession. This and their perception of whites as settlers may resonate with some rural activists.

PAC speeches also stress the old Unity Movement theme of "non-collaboration", a striking reappearance in PAC terminology from the 1950s.

Uncompromising socialism, hostility to the concept of negotiations, and the insistence that settler capitalism will be overturned only through a military victory — all these sentiments may draw support from the constituency which stands to the left of the ANC and the UDF.

The PAC's potential social base is by no means negligible.

At the moment, though, the PAC appears to remain dependent on historically entrenched networks of support on the Reef, in the Western Cape and the Transkei. It has a long road to travel before it can generate a nationalist culture powerful enough to sustain a following comparable to that of its rivals.

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