

Patrick Duncan & the PAC

My first contact with Patrick Duncan was early in 1959 shortly after my admission as a student into the University of Cape Town. As you may know, the University of Cape Town, during those days, admitted African students but, under the racist laws of South Africa, African students were cut out of the social life of the University (i.e. sports, and other social associations such as dances etc). Much more serious was the fact that Africans had to be non-resident members of the student community - we were not permitted into the Halls of Residence.

I therefore had to seek accommodation in Langa township, some seven miles from the University. I therefore had to content myself with sharing a room with a migrant labourer who worked in <sup>a</sup> Cape Town glass works factory. The rent for the room was £1.3/- per month.

As my loan scholarship awarded by the South African Institute of Race Relations covered only my college fees and no more, I therefore had to fend for myself to meet other basic expenses (books, rent, transport, clothes and food). This was a trying time for me. My former High School Principal had given me some clothes and it was clear that I was heading for a crisis.

I wrote a letter to Pat Duncan who was then Editor of Contact Magazine and sought his assistance to pay, at least, for my rent. He replied to say that he could not assist me but could, as an alternative, offer me a job to sell his Magazine on a Commission basis. I accepted.

This was sometime in April/May 1959, soon after the formation of the PAC of which I was not yet a card carrying member. I continued to sell CONTACT until the last weekend preceding the launching of the PAC campaign on March 21, 1960.

Pat never knew that I was a PAC member, let alone Regional Secretary of the Party. I sold the paper in order to keep body and soul together despite the fact that the paper was anti-PAC. This did not bother me very much since the paper was in any case incapable of halting the activities of the party.

Pat considered the PAC was an anti-white party. His paper went into great lengths to identify in the PAC what he considered were racist undertones in the party policies. His position was very clear: he would not support PAC and yet less still, he would not go for the ANC which was, to him, a communist-controlled organisation. His ideal choice was therefore the Liberal Party.

I recall that it was on Saturday the 19 March 1960 when I stepped into Duncan's office with a few unsold copies of CONTACT. When I informed him that I would not accept to sell the next edition of the paper since on the following Monday 21 March the PAC of which I was a member was launching the Anti-Pass campaign, he was taken aback and immediately summoned the Executive members of the Liberal Party who were in his office to an emergency meeting.

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These included a certain Mr. Daniels (coloured), a member of the Liberal Party.

<sup>Pat</sup>  
He seemed agitated and wondered why I never told him that I was a member of the PAC. He advised me not to participate in the campaign as he thought the attempt was doomed to failure. I told him that his advice was of no value to me since I was in fact one of the senior members of the PAC in the Cape Peninsula. We parted in that mood.

As is now known, the anti-pass campaign was successfully launched in Cape Town on that Monday 21 March 1960 with not one soul lost. At lunch time, as the news of the tragedy at Sharpville reached Cape Town, the SABC described the campaign organised by what the radio station called "the militant offshoot of the ANC" as partially successful in Cape Town.

That very afternoon, I received independent messages from Pat Duncan and Brian Bunting who urgently, wanted to see me. When I met Pat at his office, he was excited, (not delighted) that the campaign had been successfully launched in Cape Town. He gave me £50 as donation towards support for the campaign. He asked me to describe the events of that morning for publication in his paper.

In his presence, and unaware of his irreconcilable relations with Brian Bunting, I telephoned the latter and informed him that  
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I was calling on him shortly. I did not complete my telephone conversation with Brian when Duncan jumped onto his feet and literally pounced the telephone receiver from my hand and cut it off with a bang, in great furry. He was furious that I had any deals with "communists" at all.

I took him coolly and left the office. I rushed into the nearest telephone booth and called Bunting as I did not know the exact location of his office.

When I reached the office, Bunting burst into laughter on seeing me. He could not imagine that I could have dared ring him in Duncan's office.

This was the Duncan I was beginning to know more and more. But the events began to unfold as the Sharpeville week wore on.

On the 25 March 1960 (Friday) I led the first major march of about 5,000 into the city of Cape Town to demand the release of 100 of our Task Force (Youth Wing) boys who had been arrested the previous day.

I was immediately arrested on arrival at Caledon Square Police Station and locked in a small room on the fourth floor of the Police Headquarters. After half an hour or so I was taken down to the ground

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floor of the building where I found Patrick Duncan talking to Gen. Rademeyer, Commissioner-General of the Police and Col. Terblanche Commissioner of Police (Western Cape).

That was one moment when I was terribly furious with Pat Duncan. I found him "negotiating" with the Police chiefs for the suspension of the pass-laws for "at least one month". I told him that he had no right, no business whatsoever to talk on our behalf and it was disgusting to see that the same Duncan whom Sobukwe had warned us against hardly a month before, had become our "spokesman".

That Duncan found it worthwhile to speak on our behalf was the most annoying thing indeed. We had thrown in our lot to see that passes were completely abolished but there he was, Pat Duncan, pleading for a one-month suspension of the pass laws. What was even absurd was that at the material time, the passes had already been suspended. I have no doubt Pat was just seeking for publicity or God knows what.

He withdrew quickly in utter shame, saying some apologetics but hardly could stomach his downright interference. Later in the afternoon he telephoned me and apologised for the incident.

Saturday 20 March 1960, Duncan sent a message to me to come to his place to meet some people (he did not identify the people) who wanted to discuss the PAC campaign with me. I agreed.

That evening, I found some of the most startling characters in Duncan's house, prominent among <sup>them</sup> ~~which~~ was Dr. Anton Rupert, the arch-Nationalist Party racist and Chairman of the Rembrandt Group of Tobacco companies, and the local chairman of the ANC in Cape Town, Mr. Ngwenya. Dr. Rupert 'lectured' to me about the futility of our campaign and described to me how Europe went through two thousand years of evolutionary change before reaching the present level of advancement. I told him that the PAC was set on a revolutionary path and his "theories" had no part to play in our struggle. The arguments dragged on until I left late that evening.

In retrospect, I believe that the great march into the city of Cape Town on the 30 March 1960 was one of the historic moments in the annals of the struggle of our people to regain their lost rights.

The march clearly demonstrated the power of non-violence, which, in a democratic country would have triggered off positive reaction to the cries of our people. But much more than anything else, the 30th March 1960 march closed the chapter of non-violent struggle in South Africa and opened the way to violent revolution in South Africa.

That revolution has not yet started but it is a certain possibility as long as the racists hang on to power and continue to suppress our people.

I think we did our best to demonstrate our opposition to white domination and oppression. We were shot at, we never fired back; we were killed, we never killed a soul. I recall that when later a

police officer was asked during the Inquiry into the shootings at Sharpeville whether he had learned anything from the ghastly massacre, he replied. "Oh, yes, we will use better weapons next time".

On 30 March 1960 I don't recall seeing Pat Duncan at Caledon Square but the publicity he gave to the march was lavish and the particular issue of Contact was actually banned. He later faced a court case for publishing 'malicious' and 'inflammatory' articles. And Duncan seized the opportunity to deliver a long statement castigating the racist regime. I don't see why there is too much *talk about* my friendship with Pat while we were in jail. People should know that white prisoners don't mix with black prisoners in South Africa and it follows that I never met Pat while we were in jail.

Of course he came once, before his arrest, in the company of Advocate Molteno Q.C. who came to inform me about the Commission of Inquiry into the shootings at Langa Township of 21 March 1960 which was due shortly.

In 1963 Pat Duncan made a statement to the Chicago News Agency in the US that he became interested in the PAC when he was my "adviser" in Cape Town in 1960. Surely no self-respecting person could swallow such nonsense especially in the light of the facts, which I have described above. Pat was simply mischievous and in a sense revealing some of his evil motives during the 1960 campaign. That is why in my attack on him in 1963 I wondered why some people

in the PAC had found it fit to bring Duncan <sup>into</sup> the PAC fold - the only white man that ever joined the PAC and fantastic to think that he had to represent PAC at Algiers - the training ground of many liberation movements. It was funny then and it is still funny today that it ever happened.

I have no doubt, that Pat Duncan saw in me a little boy (I was only 23 years old then) whom history had thrown into the lime-light, a little boy borne out of and created by the oppressive system of South Africa whom he thought he could direct by some <sup>form</sup> of remote control. He saw another chance to shine in an African revolution - a nasty role which has for dozens of years been played by the 'good white liberals' and "communist friends" of our struggle in South Africa.

Before he died, Pat Duncan sent me a book entitled "South Africa's ~~rule~~ Rule of Violence" and an accompanying note saying the book was a "peace offer".

Pat is now no more and the above description is intended to put the record straight rather than fight a battle with a man now in the grave.

Politically I would have continued to oppose him and all other so-called good whites who always interfere with our resistance against white oppression in South Africa.

On the eve of the campaign in Cape Town our total registered membership was about 900, but popular support encompassed all the



African townships in the Cape Peninsula. Our meetings were attended on each occasion by no less than 10,000 to 15,000 people. The principal party branches in the Cape Western region were Langa Flats, Langa Township, Nyanga West, Nyanga East, Windermere, and Crawford.

To the best of my assessment, PAC had no defined strategy after Sharpeville. The Party fell victim to the short-lived South Africa United Front and the consequent mass expulsions of the Party members. The leadership 'sickness' of the PAC continues to plague the Party, but so is the ANC, and yet time is not on our side.

~~AKG:one~~  
14/11/75  
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