

## Gora Ebrahim

PAC—Secretary of Foreign Affairs  
Member of the National Assembly  
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**Tor Sellström:** When did you, in your capacity as a leader of PAC, have your first contacts with the Nordic countries?

**Gora Ebrahim:** The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) was founded in 1959 and we were only eleven months old when we were banned as a political party in April 1960. Immediately after that we established the South Africa United Front outside South Africa with the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Indian Congress. We had a joint representation abroad until 1963. That paved the way for our contacts, because our ANC colleagues had already established them. As a result of the joint representation, we were also in a position to contact the Nordic countries.

Our official contacts, principally with the NGOs, started around 1965-66, in particular with the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF). It was part of the Nordic support move. We benefited greatly from the Nordic countries, who were the principal donors of the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF). That was an important element particularly for us, because from 1963 until 1967 we had about 110 of our people executed by the apartheid regime. Our present Secretary for Political Affairs, Johnson Mlambo, was sentenced to twenty years on Robben Island, but he did not receive the kind of assistance that was required to defend him. At that time, IDAF was not very clear about what aspects of the defence they would support. Would they support what we considered legitimate armed

struggle or would they support a non-violent struggle?

When the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established in Addis Ababa in 1963, one of the very important decisions taken was to create the Co-ordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa, the Liberation Committee, which recognized national liberation movements from the different parts of Africa that were still not independent. Altogether there were something between 16 or 17 organizations that were recognized in the non-independent parts of Africa. In South Africa, just as in Zimbabwe and in Namibia, you had more than one political organization recognized by OAU. I must say that in the case of Zimbabwe, in particular, and in South Africa OAU continued to the very end to support the two liberation movements that they had recognized. There was, of course, as far as Angola was concerned, and also Namibia, a process of de-recognition by OAU, but in the case of Zimbabwe and South Africa the original position was maintained to the very end.

We were recognized as a national liberation movement by the Organization of African Unity, by the United Nations—particularly by the Special Committee Against Apartheid—the Non-Aligned Movement and the World Council of Churches. IUEF recognized PAC and gave us scholarships. We were also to some degree beneficiaries of the assistance from IDAF. This, of course, paved the way for our contacts with the Nordic countries, be-

cause they were involved, particularly in IUEF and IDAF. The United Nations also set up a scholarship fund in which the Nordic countries played a very important role. In fact, they chaired the meetings most of the time. So, in that regard I would say that we also were direct beneficiaries and had contacts with them. But one of the things that surprised us very much is that whilst the Nordic countries had taken what we considered to be a very progressive step towards opposing apartheid, together with the Western countries they never participated in the work of the Special Committee Against Apartheid at the United Nations. They remained outside, only supporting that aspect which had to do with education.

If you look at the developments from our point of view, we had very good relations with IUEF and also with the Nordic countries. We had an office in Sweden. Count Pietersen was our representative at the time. Actually, the relations were with Norway and Sweden. We just had an official contact with Denmark and some contacts with Finland. I remember in 1982, when the late Nyati Pokela came out of the country and became Chairman of PAC. I was at the UN at the time, representing PAC, and I arranged a visit to Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. He paid a visit to all these countries. We got a lot of very consistent humanitarian assistance from Denmark. We also succeeded in getting some assistance from Finland.

**TS:** Was the assistance from Denmark channelled through the World University Service and DanChurchAid?

**GE:** Yes, it came through there. Not directly from the government. The Nordic governments had different policies. Some of them said that their parliament did not allow direct assistance. It had to go through an NGO and therefore we were asked to contact the NGOs. In other cases it was direct, in Norway in particular.

We received humanitarian assistance, particularly for our people in Tanzania, for example, for the development of our settlement in Bagamoyo, north of Dar es Salaam. We had quite a lot of assistance in that regard. Now, what happened was that PAC was involved in the 1976 Soweto uprising and there was a trial—known as the Bethal 18 Secret Trial—in which Zephania Mothopeng was the accused

Number One. 1976 was important in the sense that it reflected the opposition inside the country even at the level of the youth and the students, besides the political parties and the trade union movement. It also led to political isolation of the apartheid regime. One of the outcomes was that it lost its seat in the United Nations.

The South African government started its dirty tricks at that particular period and sent out a person by the name of Craig Williamson. I met him on two occasions abroad. He specifically campaigned against PAC. The three lines of action that he took were that a) to some he was saying that we did not exist in the country, b) to others that we were a racist organization and c) that we were a terrorist organization. Those were the kinds of things he was putting across. Of course, he joined ANC and the South African Communist Party and eventually IUEF began to take a position against PAC because of the influence of Craig Williamson. As a result, we found that we were no longer getting any assistance. But it did not stop with IUEF. It also influenced Sweden. Sweden took a decision against PAC based on the recommendations of Craig Williamson. That was the end of any assistance from Sweden.

Of course, we were accused of racism on the grounds that we said that he was a spy. We had our own information. Eventually, it was clear that he was, in fact, a double agent, and as a result you find what happened to Lars-Gunnar Eriksson. The consequences were grave. Having taken that decision, Sweden unfortunately did not reverse it after it was clear what Craig Williamson had done. To the very end, we received no assistance whatsoever from Sweden.

**TS:** Do you think that this was a Swedish decision or was it influenced by ANC?

**GE:** Well, I would say that the fact that ANC was prepared to use a man like Craig Williamson to fight against PAC meant that to them Sweden was an important ally. But I would have thought that the principle that Sweden was supporting was compromised, because the Social Democratic Party demanded that there must be multi-party democracy. Why did they then support only one political party? Secondly, at that particular stage I do not think that there was any justification for excluding PAC, politically or otherwise.

I think that the correct position for Sweden would have been the position adopted by Norway, namely to continue to support those liberation movements that were recognized by OAU and the Non-Aligned Movement, but more importantly the United Nations. Sweden did not take that position. Norway continued to take that decision as a government and continued to give us support. I remember that in 1992 we went with a delegation to Norway where assistance of about 200,000 US Dollars was promised. But there was an incident that occurred in 1992, known as the King Williamstown attack on a golf course. The Norwegians then decided to suspend all assistance to us. We went into the election campaign without any assistance from any source.

**TS:** You have been the PAC Secretary for International Affairs since 1969. How did you view the Nordic group of countries in the bipolar world?

**GE:** In PAC we believed that the internal struggle was the decisive factor. Then there was the question of international support, which from our perspective had two dimensions. There were those who were prepared to put pressure on the apartheid regime and there were others who were prepared to materially support us to wage the struggle.

We viewed the Nordic countries as important allies in the question of putting pressure on the apartheid regime, as opposed to making it possible for us to physically wage the struggle. That assistance came from OAU and other countries. Not from the Nordic countries. That was the role they played.

In the international campaign to politically isolate the apartheid regime and to apply sanctions against it, the Nordic countries were in the forefront. We could always count on them in international fora.

For instance, I was one of those who together with comrade Thabo Mbeki of ANC negotiated what came to be known in 1989 as the Consensus Declaration of the United Nations against South Africa. The Nordic countries played a very important role. Particularly Norway on the question of the oil embargo. I would say that from the point of view of humanitarian assistance to the liberation movements to the question of politically isolating South Africa and starting the sanctions campaign, the Nordic countries played a very important role.

**TS:** Do you think that the support extended to you, and more substantially to ANC, was given without strings attached or were there hidden agendas behind the support?

**GE:** Well, it will be very difficult to say. You cannot say that there was a common Nordic position on that question. I believe that Sweden had its own agenda. I think that the position of Norway was more to support the struggle, without necessarily saying what you must do and what you must not do. We never had that kind of problem with them, but from Sweden we certainly had conditions. As I said, decisions were taken against PAC.

I think that they were wrongly influenced and I am surprised that a country like Sweden could allow itself to be influenced in that way. It would have been very simple to say: 'We are supporting the liberation struggle and the liberation struggle is in fact spearheaded on the continent by OAU.' That is, to support those that OAU supported, which Sweden never did. Norway did.

**TS:** Over the years, ANC and Sweden became very close. Do you think that the so-called Swedish model influenced ANC?

**GE:** Well, when you talk about ANC you are not talking about a political party. You are talking about a front organization made up of very different political tendencies. The problem we have in South Africa at the moment is that we have ended minority rule and we have a democratic dispensation. Now, ANC itself is a front of different, very clearly defined political tendencies and it is also operating in another front in the Government of National Unity, so it is very complicated.

If you are asking whether ANC is a Social Democratic organization, I would say that within ANC there are Social Democrats, but I would not say that ANC is a Social Democratic organization. That is our view.

Secondly, I would also say that there is an influence from the experience of the liberation struggle. At least three political parties in South Africa, ANC, PAC and to some degree the Black Consciousness Movement, developed what we call an internal wing and an external wing. Their experiences were very different. The ANC wing that was internally based is predominant at the moment. Therefore, you find that these were not people who were directly involved. In my view, the policy that Mandela is pursuing emerges basically

out of the negotiations that he had over a number of years. That is the major influence. I would have thought that if Oliver Tambo had succeeded, there would perhaps have been much more influence. He was really a Social Democrat.

**TS:** You did not get much support from Sweden, but you must have had relations with the Swedish NGO community and the solidarity movement?

**GE:** No, unfortunately they followed the government policy, particularly SIDA. There were some small organizations that we were able to contact, but we never received any substantial assistance from them.

We would not have minded if the Swedish government had taken a position not to support PAC. But we feel very strongly about it at this particular moment. We are disappointed. We had all negotiated and we were going for an election. At that crucial moment, the Swedish government made a very substantial donation to ANC for election purposes. Naturally, that influenced the election result and we regard that as gross interference.

**TS:** Is there anything that you would like to add?

**GE:** Let me briefly say that the concept of the 'sole and authentic' liberation movement came from an organization that was created in the Cold War period known as the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organization, largely run by the Soviet Union. It was that organization that took the decision on 'authentic organizations'. In Zimbabwe, ZAPU was regarded as the 'authentic' one and in our case it was ANC. It is very interesting that in Namibia the original 'authentic organization' was SWANU. It was only subsequently that they changed and supported SWAPO. Of course, in the Portuguese territories it was clear that FRELIMO, MPLA and PAIGC were the organizations on the ground.

But I am prepared to say that it did not adversely affect the OAU decisions, because we received equal treatment. However, it did affect some countries that were aligned with the Soviet Union in one way or the other. Algeria, to give an example. After the independence of Mozambique they pursued that position. But countries like Tanzania committed themselves to the OAU position and supported both ZANU and PAC to the full.