

Name: Samuel Malinga

Date of death: 1979

In summary: Samuel Malinga, a member of the [Pan Africanist Congress](#) (PAC), was an underground operative in the underground operations of the PAC following its ban in the 1960. His anti-apartheid efforts were terminated after he was arrested and tried under the Terrorism act in the [Bethal trials](#) of 1977. He was eventually killed in 1979 while being held in detention at John Vorster Square.

“Senzeni Na? Sono sethu, ubumnyama?” In English, the Xhosa and Zulu words of this African anti-apartheid folk song can be translated to: what have we done; our sin is that we are black. This song speaks volumes to the unjust nature of apartheid and the responses it elicited from the African people. Despite the non-violent intentions of many anti-apartheid activists, the South African government detained and killed many. Samuel Malinga was incarcerated and ultimately murdered in the year 1979 at the hands of the South African police for his involvement with the PAC.

Samuel Malinga was, ‘[an] underground operative and courier between PAC leaders in exile.’¹ As a member of the PAC, Malinga was a strong advocate for the development of a fair democratic South African government: independent of the ideals of apartheid and multi-racialism. In the words of [Robert Sobukwe](#), a former leader of the PAC,

“we PAC aim, politically, at government of the Africans, for the Africans, with everybody who owes his only loyalty to Afrika and who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of an African majority being regarded as an African.”²

Furthermore, the PAC fully acknowledges race as having been an excuse to, ‘[...] facilitate and justify [European] exploitation of the indigenous people of the land.’² Recognizing race as a tool

¹ David M. Sibeko, *The "Bethal 18" Trial*, Report (New York: United Nations, 1978): 1-11.

² Robert Sobukwe, "Robert Sobukwe Inaugural Speech," South Africa, April 1959.

for division and the perpetuation of white supremacy, the PAC acknowledges only one race: the human race. The rejection of these core principles by the South African government lead the PAC to conduct various actions of civil disobedience.

Robert Sobukwe played a key role in the organization and execution of the [Pass Law Protest](#) in 1960. Police reaction to the peaceful protest is now known as the Sharpeville Massacre. During the protest, ‘supporters [...] voluntarily [left] their passes at home and offer[ed] themselves up for arrest at the nearest police station on [the] 21 March.³ Despite meticulous planning and a non-violent execution, the police opened fire on protestors killing 69 and injuring 180 people. The state subsequently declared a state of emergency and many PAC and [African National Congress](#) leaders were detained. Furthermore, both the PAC and African National Congress were banned altogether on 8 April, 1960 in an effort to annihilate apartheid opposition.

Seeking to function despite having been banned, the PAC formed a secret communications network to connect exiled leaders to the underground activity of [Poqo](#). Poqo was an armed wing of the PAC that was formed in the 1960s. Poqo used violence as a central mode of opposition. Its primary objective was to overtake the South African government and replace it with socialism. Malinga and others served as links in this underground network of apartheid opposition. To make things even more difficult for individuals to organize movements against apartheid, the government passed the [Terrorism Act](#) in 1967. This act itself,

³ "Origins: Formation, Sharpeville and banning, 1959-1960." Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Accessed November 20, 2017. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/origins-formation-sharpeville-and-banning-1959-1960>.

'in relatively vague wording [...] defined someone as participating in terroristic activities if they acted 'with intent to endanger the maintenance of law and order' or if [he/she partook in] action which [...] encourages another person to commit such an act.'

Additionally, the people detained under this partial piece of legislation were under the complete control of the Minister of Justice and were denied the right to even see a legal advisor. The minister alone, 'retained the power to release any detainee 'at any time.'⁴ Following the release of a handful of PAC leaders in the 1970s, a concerted effort was made to, '*revive the internal underground [which involved] establishing contact with the external mission of the PAC, recruiting new members to the PAC, establishing underground cells, and sending recruits outside the country.*'⁵

By the late 1970s the vast majority of the liberation movement leaders had been either banned or exiled; subsequently, many new organizations, 'emerged [and] filled the vacuum created by the government [...] united loosely around a set of ideas described as "Black Consciousness," these organizations helped to educate and organize black people, particularly the youth.'⁶ Steve Biko was one of the key voices in the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). Biko's book entitled: *I Write What I Like* describes many of the beliefs central to the Black Consciousness Movement. Biko claimed that the BCM,

⁴ "1967 Terrorism Act, No. 83 of 1967." Accessed November 20, 2017.
<http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/1967-terrorism-act-no-83-1967>.

⁵ Thami Ka. Plaatjie "PAC's Internal Underground Activities." *Road To Democracy in South Africa-* Volume 2 2:669-701. Accessed November 1, 2017.
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/i0dife5eum7l53h/Thami%20ka%20Plaatjie%20-%20PAC%20underground.pdf?dl=0>.

⁶ "The Ideology of the Black Consciousness Movement." Accessed November 20, 2017.
<http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/ideology-black-consciousness-movement>.

*'seeks to [...] produce real black people who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society [and are unapologetic for this] because it is true that the white systems have produced through the world a number of people who are not aware that they too are people.'*⁷

Here Biko smites the idea of a single race being superior to another because of frivolous differences in physique, which aligns directly with the core beliefs of the PAC.

Young adherents of the BCM protested in what became known as the Soweto Uprising of 1976. This demonstration was largely the result of the introduction of both the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974. The Bantu Education act was a government attempt at enforcing the racial segregation of educational facilities. Many missionary schools closed in response to their loss of government support and funding; certain universities were labeled as tribal. The act also degraded the quality of education for Africans in an attempt to,

*'[...] create a separate and unequal system of black education [...] designed to teach African learners to be 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' for white-run economy and society regardless of an individual's abilities and aspirations.'*⁸

As if this act was not already enough damage to native African education, the Afrikaans Medium Decree made Afrikaans and English the sole mediums of instruction in black schools. Students and teachers alike were infuriated by these government attempts at the destruction of African schooling; consequently, on 16 June, 1976, thousands of teachers and students marched peacefully against the government. The government retaliated by meeting them with, 'heavily

⁷ Biko, Steve, and Aelred Stubbs. *I Write What I Like*. London: Bowerdean Press, 1996.

⁸ "Media for this essay." Bantu Education. Accessed November 20, 2017.

<http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/sidebar.php?id=65-258-2>

armed police who fired teargas and later live ammunition on demonstrating students.⁹ The students retaliated by attacking with whatever they could find: sticks, rocks, and even backpacks were used to assault the belligerent police officers. A series of barricades were even set up by students to keep police out. A series of protest actions spread throughout South African townships that lasted for several days after the demonstration. The PAC and other anti-apartheid organizations used this as an opportunity to recruit black youth, whom were fearful of another government attack.

The government was humiliated, as police were globally televised firing on children. In response, the government deployed mass police units to suppress radical opposition. In one instance, the police arrested eighteen suspected PAC members, including Samuel Malinga. These individuals were tried, starting in December 1977. The trials, which had already taken over 100 court sessions, had resumed in Bethal. Malinga and his comrades,

*'[...] faced two main charges under the Terrorism Act, and a number of alternative counts under other legislation. [They were eventually] convicted and jailed for their alleged role in fermenting revolution and for being behind the Soweto Uprising.'*¹⁰

In the meantime, Malinga was held in a facility known as John Vorster Square and subjected to vicious interrogation proceedings, brutal torturing sessions, and many other human rights violations. The detainees were held in prison cells with,

*'[...] constant, closed circuit, television surveillance [and] an intercom into each cell [and in effect] 'they [the police] are able to talk to you. So maybe if you are doing something they don't like they can tell you to stop.'*¹¹

⁹ "The June 16 Soweto Youth Uprising," Accessed November 20, 2017.
<http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/june-16-soweto-youth-uprising>.

¹⁰ "The Bethal Treason Trial resumes," Accessed November 20, 2017,
<http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/bethal-treason-trial-resumes>.

During the proceedings of the 1979 trial, Malinga and three others suspiciously died in police custody. The police, “alleged that all four had committed suicide”.¹² The nature of these supposed suicides is, nonetheless, highly questionable given the unjust circumstances of their detention and plethora of human rights violations therein.

In reconsideration of deaths associated with the Bethal trial, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Special Report Television Series (TRC) found

‘the former state and the minister of police responsible for their [Malinga and the three others] deaths and responsible for the gross violation of human rights [those involved were subjected to].’¹²

Many of the so called “suicides” at John Vorster Square may have been the result of an interrogation procedure known as the Timol treatment. A witness of the Timol treatment described it as follows:

[...] an office with large windows without bars in which there was a table which was pushed lengthwise against one of these windows and propped up on blocks so that it sloped towards the window. [The individual would] then [be] placed on the table, his hands tied behind him by a long rope, the end of which [would be] in the hand of one of his interrogators. The rope [would be] tied in such a way that if the end of the rope were tugged, the knot would slip free. [The individual would be] interrogated in this position and told that if he did not answer satisfactorily he would go out of the window [...] if [the person] had fallen, he said, the rope would have been pulled free so that when his body was found there would be no evidence he had been tied.’¹³

¹¹ Jennifer Davis, “Action Alert: Human Rights Watch,” American Committee on Africa (1984): 1-2.

¹² “TRC Final Report.” Truth Commission - Special Report - TRC Final Report - Volume 3, Section 1, Chapter. Accessed November 20, 2017.

<http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/reports/volume3/chapter6/subsection25.htm?t=%2BBethal%2B%2B18&tab=report>.

¹³ Treatment of Political Prisoners and Detainees in South Africa. Report. Library of African Studies, Northwestern University. New York: United Nations, 1979. 1-39.

PAC member Samuel Malinga was detained in December 1977 and murdered in the year 1979 while awaiting trial. Malinga was an accused in the infamous Bethal trials for his alleged role in the Soweto Uprising in violation of the Terrorism Act. Although Malinga was not one of the most prominent figures in the struggle against apartheid, he and others like him made lasting contributions that collectively took down the apartheid government. His involvement with the underground operations of the PAC helped to catalyze the mobilization of anti-apartheid activists following the ban of the PAC in 1960.

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