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Five months after breaking away from the ANC, the Africanists have set up their own organisation - the Pan-Africanist Congress. The formal decision was taken at the first-ever national conference of the Africanist movement, held in Orlando, Johannesburg, from April 4 to 6. Nearly 300 delegates from all parts of the Union attended the conference.

Self-appointing, friendly, Mr. Robert Sobukwe, a Bantu Languages lecturer at Witwatersrand University, for long the back-room ideologist of the Africanists, was unanimously elected president.

The major surprise of the executive elections was the "dropping" of Mr. Josias Madsunya, the Alexandra Township black-~~xxxx~~ bearded, over-coated "fire-eater". Mr. Madsunya polled just over half the number of votes received by Mr. E. Mafaka for the post of national organiser.

Despite this, Mr. Madsunya publicly pledged his support for the new Congress. "I am at the disposal of the president. He can call upon me at any time of the night or day and I will respond," he said.

The other elections were uneventful, and all the top-ranking Africanists continue in charge of the movement. National secretary is Mr. Potlako Leballo and treasurer is Mr. A. Ngcobo. The three other executive members are Mr. E. B. Mopheng, Mr. C. J. Fasi and Mr. H. S. Ngcobo.

Welcoming delegates the chairman, Mr. E. Mopheng, warned that "those who want to remain and live in Africa must resign themselves to the inevitable end of being ruled by Africans". For there to be peace, there must be one nation - the African nation. We say this because the Africans own every square inch of Africa. The land belongs to us and we must rule in our land," he said.

Mr. Sobukwe - the main speaker - said that there was again a "scramble" for Africa, with both the Soviet Union and the United States trying to win the loyalty of the African states. Africanists endorsed the views of leaders such as Nkrumah and Njoya in believing in "positive neutrality".

Thunderous applause greeted the conclusion of a speech which was the first comprehensive public declaration of Africanist ideology.

There can be little doubt that this conference was a resounding success from several standpoints. The number of people who attended ~~xxxx~~ was certainly far greater than had been anticipated. Africanist officials stated that there was a total of 634 delegates. This figure is undoubtedly exaggerated, and is at least twice as large as the facts reveal.

The reading of messages from Nkrumah and Toure was clever, and in this respect at any rate, the Africanists scored a signal triumph over the ANC. Not that they seemed very concerned about the ANC - there was not over-much reference to the "rival" organisation and in fact, any discussion of the ANC was almost discouraged by the chairman, R. Mthopeng. His attitude was "we have our own organisation. We have ~~ix~~ work to do and we are not interested in the ANC".

But the fundamental difference between the two organisations lies clearly in their approach: whereas the ANC openly vows multi-racialism, the Africanists as vehemently reject it. Their emphasis on African nationalism as a binding force is the basic element in their make-up. At times in the past, this has tended to include what appeared to be an anti-White and anti-Indian outlook. Their conference, and particularly the statements of the new president, have gone some way towards dissipating this idea. There is, however by no means final clarity on the subject, and the Africanists therefore continue to be somewhat of a mystery in this respect. It is worth recording that this aspect has been inflated by adverse- and often completely inaccurate Press reporting.

Basically, this is a new movement with enormous potentialities. Many of its ideas and policies are still in a rough and unformed state. The Africanists now face the task of clearing up the confusion and of proving and justifying themselves to the world at large. They have set as their target a paid-up membership of 100,000 by July 31 - a day to be celebrated as "African Forces Day". The extent to which they attain this figure will be clear proof of the degree of their development and maturation as an effective South African political organisation.

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:-* **Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand**

*Location:-* **Johannesburg**

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***DOCUMENT DETAILS:***

*Document ID:-* **A2618-Cf1**

*Document Title:-* **Contact magazine, about the formation of th PAC by the Africanists (draft)**

*Author:-* **Contact**

*Document Date:-* **18 April 1959**