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JOHANNESBURG.

April 7, 1959.

Subject: Africanist Conference.

Source: Myself, and others where stated.

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Rogoff

The first national conference of the Africanists was held in the Orlando Communal Hall, Johannesburg, from April 4 to 6. I attach the following documents relating to the conference:

- a) Opening address made by R.W. Sobukwe.
- b) Manifesto of the Africanist ~~Movement~~ Movement.
- c) Constitution.
- d) Agenda.

A number of painted placards ~~were~~ lined the walls of the hall. The slogans they carried were: Forward to the United States of Africa; Free Banda - Kaunda - Kenyatta; Imperialists quit Africa; Service, Sacrifice, Suffering; Return deported leaders; Free Dr Banda; Africa for Africans; Izwe lethu I Africa (Africa belongs to us); Return deported African leaders.

A banner fronting the speakers' table on the stage was: Africa for Africans. Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Madagascar. This was repeated on another banner on the wall at the back of the stage, but on a larger scale.

Almost on 3 pm on April 4, the meeting began with prayers. These continued until 3.40 pm. A few minutes before the end of the prayers and sermons, Josias Madzunya ~~strde~~ strode into the hall - on his own. His appearance was greeted with loud ~~applause~~ applause. There were thumbs-up signs all round, and shouts of "Afrika".

At the start of the meeting, there were about 150 ~~px~~ people in the hall. By the time prayers had ended, the crowd had swelled to about 250/300. ~~There~~ Of this number about 20 were women.

On the stage were: ~~Z. Mathopeng~~ Z. Mathopeng, R.W. Sobukwe, P. Eaboroko, P.K. Leballo, N.N. Mahono, A.S. Ngcobo, P. Molotsi, S. Ngeudane, and a couple of others whose names I did not know.

At 3.40 pm, Mathopeng - who acted as chairman throughout the conference - and addressing the audience as "Sons and daughters of Africa", called on them "to rise to honour those martyrs who have been killed in Nyasaland and the Belgian Congo. We must remember those people lay down their lives in the cause of freedom - the freedom of our continent." He then called on the secretary - Ngeudane - to read the messages received. These were:

- 1) A telegram from a Mr Ntolo (?) in Durban stating: "Successful conference very firm behind you."
- 2) A cable translated from the French from Sekou Toure, Supreme President of the Republic of Guinea, to "the Africanist movement of South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa." It reads: "On the occasion of your inaugural convention accept the fraternal salute and greetings from the government and people of Guinea. We assure you our whole-hearted support and wish your efforts a success. Our aim is the rapid and complete liquidation of colonial ~~supremacy~~ domination. Drive relentlessly towards the federation of Southern Africa and Pan-Africanism. Our goal is a United States of Africa and the total liberation of our great continent. Fraternal sentiments."
- 3) A cable from "Kwame Nkrumah", reading: "On the occasion of your inaugural

convention conveying to delegates fraternal greetings wish meeting every success in uniting Africans in non-violent and constitutional struggle against colonialism and racialism for human rights and self-determination."

4) "Agendane said they also had a telegram "which had not yet been received - it will come on Tuesday - but we know its contents - it is from Joe Molifi, the only Africanist in the Reason Trial at present - he wishes this conference success towards the birth of a new Africa."

Mathopeng said that the central committee had invited Hastings Banda to open this conference - the president of the Nyasaland African Congress. We made alternative arrangements in case he was unable to come and we invited K. Kaunda, president of the Zambia ANC. We all know that these men are ~~being~~ behind bars. So they are not here among us. But they are here with us in spirit and in comradeship. It is my pleasant duty as the speaker of this convention to welcome the delegates from all parts of this country. Some ~~maxxxxxxxx~~ come very far - some Cape Town - some Durban. We thank them for all their efforts to attend this conference and to make it a success."

He then continued with his opening address, which was:

"After the discovery of America, European nations increased their slave raids on the African continent for the purposes of selling them to the sugar plantations of America. So they denuded Africa of its man-power for the purpose of exploiting American natural resources. It is common knowledge that all the slaves of different nations had failed to stand the rigorous conditions of America - it is the Africans who were able to and they produced the wealth for Europe, especially England. After Europe had acquired the wealth from America, it now acquired capital, giving rise to the Industrial Revolution. As a result of this, there was a demand for raw markets and also raw materials and Africa was invaded by Europeans who set up colonies for getting raw materials. So instead of denuding Africa of its man-power, they raped Africa itself - this is known as the scramble for Africa.

"The various nations of Europe, to avoid fighting among themselves for the spoils of Africa, devised an agreement that as long as some people had possession of land in Africa, they owned it. There were missionaries, traders....etc - everybody coming to grab.

"Thus Africa was colonised - it was the advent of foreign imperialism in Africa. Even small ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ countries had vast lands in Africa, for example Belgium. The main aim was to exploit Africa's material and human resources. As a result, the African people were purposely allowed to remain in ignorance so that these ~~xxxxxx~~ different countries of Europe could exploit Africa at their ~~xxxxxx~~ pleasure. But as they were doing this, they were competing among themselves for colonies and markets. They fought among themselves. As they were fighting, they besmirched each other. During the 1st world war, the Germans were pictured as the nastiest people in the world....but the people who said this forgot that they themselves were oppressing the Africans.Is there any worse fascism than the one taking place in Africa, especially South Africa? We are at a stage now where Africa has been oppressed and exploited and its people degraded and downtrodden. The first country to throw away the yoke of oppression is Ghana - we salute them - they are the torch-bearers of freedom in Africa. And Nkrumah is emphasising every day that Ghana is not free until every African is free.

(NB Mathopeng was now really warming-up, and the result was that he was speaking at an extremely rapid pace, and was also becoming increasingly incoherent. Thus, although his speech was being interpreted into the vernacular as he spoke, I had increasing difficulty in recording what he said.)

We have come to our organisation here. We have met as Africans. We have not come here to fight a doctrine or philosophy - we have come to launch our organisation. What do we stand for? To answer, we must take the objective conditions in this country and the material conditions of the entire continent. We believe the population of this country is divided into three national groups - the African people, the Europeans and the Indians. We do not believe in race - we only believe in the one human race. There are various strains of the human race which are not really material. We believe we are divided into national groups. So we have the indigenous national groups and foreign national groups in Africa. What is our stand as Africanists? We believe for peace in this world, there must be one nation, i.e. the African nation. We say so because the Africans own every square inch of Africa. (applause) The land belongs to us - it is ours - we must rule in our land. "We say this society in South Africa is divided into two main groups - the African people who are the oppressed and the Europeans - the ruling class. There are also the Indians who are a foreign national group. The question of cooperation..." (NB It was now 4.15 pm, and at this stage there was a disturbance outside, with singing being heard. For a few minutes there was uproar in the hall, people apparently thinking the ANC members were coming. However, about 20 people - from Alexandra Township - marched in, singing lustily, and were given a rousing welcome. Molotai stood up and announced that the first batches from Cape Town, Queenstown, Grahamstown, East London and the urban areas had arrived at the conference. He also referred to "brutal government pressure to stop them - under harsh fascist terrorism it is being waged in the country - a truck is coming from Peddie and Port Elizabeth through devious routes." Mathopeng now continued.)

"For cooperation with other national groups there must be material objectives.... The ruling class are guarding their material interest jealously and the ruled are working to get our rights in this country. We want to achieve what we believe - that every inch of Africa must belong to the Africans. Thus there are two irreconcilable categories and as long as they exist, there can never be cooperation. There must be resolution of these categories. At this stage of our history, there can never be any cooperation between us and those diametrically opposed to us - until finally we resolve these contradictions. The African people will resolve these contradictions by virtue of their numbers and because all the African people will unite. Then we will establish one African nation. In that way there will be no contradictions - we will be one big African nation.....will have to bow to the rule of the African people - it will be a democratic government of the African people. People say that it is racialism when the African people rule - but the present oligarchy (?) is called democracy. We will have a true, democratic government ruled by the African people.....And those who want to remain and live in Africa must resign themselves to the inevitable end - to be ruled by Africans. We are going to rule Africa - because it belongs to us - and it will be a democratic government. We are founding an organisation which is going to be independent and which is going to work among the African people to forward their cause. We are going to depend on the resources of the African people to further this work and because we are working our way towards freedom. Our slogan is: From Cape to Cairo, from Morocco to Madagascar." (loud applause).

At 4.40 pm, Mathopeng introduced Robert Sobukwe. His appearance was greeted by great applause. He began by thanking New Age for the publicity given the Africanists. "I hope one of the resolutions of this conference will thank New Age for the good work they have done for us." (laughter and applause.) He asked people to "behave as Africans - disciplined and responsible." He then delivered the opening address, a copy of which is attached marked (a). (NB I obtained his copy and typed it that evening, giving him the original thereof).

Sobukwe's speech ended at about 6.10 pm. Then followed announcements about conference arrangements and the fact that the next day's proceedings were to be closed to Press and public. These announcements were made by Molotsi.

Mathopeng then called for "short questions" on Sobukwe's speech, but when there was some objection to this as it was late, the conference was adjourned - at 6.30 pm.

On Sunday, 10.10 am, the conference re-assembled. About 180 were in the hall, but before an hour had passed, this figure had swelled to about 250/300. Again there were prayers and sermons, again conducted by African ministers, and this continued until 10.45 am. Mathopeng was in the chair. He invited questions on Sobukwe's speech. The questions and answers were: (NB I was not able to get names)

1) Asked for Sobukwe's economic opinions. - "I am not sure whether he is more inclined to Socialism or Communism."

Sobukwe: "The point I stated is that I believe in a planned economy. We do not have to give names to things. We do not have to follow particular ideologies if we do not accept them completely. I said that we do not accept totalitarianism in any form and that you have totalitarianism in all the so-called Communist states. So that while we appreciate their economic policy we definitely condemn their political set up. And we borrow from East and West - political democracy from the West and planned economy from the East. And this planned economy has no meaning unless it means finally equality."

2) The same questioner (from Durban): If our country is freed by violence how will the wealth be redistributed? (NB I am not too certain I recorded this properly) If non-violent, then the money will still be held by the Whites. What then?

Sobukwe: "Ours is a nationalist struggle in which we combine all classes - this includes the people of different political backgrounds holding different theories. I cannot speak on behalf of all those people on economics, especially on details. We can only state our belief in a planned economy. For myself, I think you see a difference between a plumber and a doctor because of the society in which you live. A doctor must have training for 6 or 8 years and he spends a lot of money, acquiring that training. A plumber's educational standard is not as high. So in paying them, you must take this into consideration. Whereas if we had a state where a man was trained as a doctor because of his brilliance and not because his father had money, and the plumber was trained because of his ability, they would both be parasites in school and university. (NB My wording here not 100% accurate). Therefore no one could claim to be better because the doctor had been supported by the plumber. I for one would not stand for any differentiation in wages. Violence and non-violence are methods of struggle. In a democratic society it is the people who finally decide what sort of society it must be. If you want to confiscate the property of those who have it now, that will be a decision for the people. It could be acquired by payment of compensation. But if it is not a totalitarian state it will be a decision for the people. (applause).

(see next page).

NB:

There is still a great deal more to be written about this conference, and it is obvious that I shall not be able to complete it tonight. By way of explanation, I would point out that the first opportunity I had to work on this outline of the conference came tonight (the conference ended yesterday after which I had to say newspaper stories on it). Unfortunately, I arrived back late from the office tonight and thus got away to a delayed start. I therefore propose to set out below a quick outline of the remainder of the conference, and to put a fuller report into next week's post, as I wish still to post this letter tonight. I might add that for next week I shall also be including a summary of the Liberal Party conference, also held over the past weekend. And further, under separate cover, I have sent two documents which came to hand this week.)

Please also find attached the copies of my newspaper stories. Part of the one of April 3 is repeated in the April 6 copy, as it was not printed originally.

The conference continued during the Sunday morning, with further questions, and later, discussion. Most of this was straightforward. Speeches were made by Madzunya and Leballo - I was unable to record much of either because they were incoherent.

After lunch, the conference went into closed session until 7.35 pm. The Manifesto of the Africanist Movement was discussed and adopted (attached document (b)). The text changes inserted are purely corrections of typing errors. I understand that the Manifesto was adopted, only a few changes being made.

Discussion then began on the ~~constitution~~ constitution (document (c) attached) and this continued until 3 am the next morning. The constitution was adopted, with the amendments reflected in the attached copy.

Next morning, the Statement of Policy was discussed and adopted. There is only one copy of this at the moment - an unamended version - and I have not been able to see it. I understand though that it includes "acceptance" of the UNGO Declaration of Human Rights.

Extra Reports were also received from the various committees. There were however no resolutions before the conference, due to the time factor. The resolutions are to be circulated to branches for discussion and voting upon.

The elections were held on the Monday morning. The results were (with the voting figures where known):

President: Robert Sobukwe (unanimous) - from Transvaal.

National secretary: P.K. Leballo. (this was a contested election - I do not know by whom). (Transvaal).

Treasurer: A.B. Ngcobo (unanimous) (from Durban)

3 executive members: (five were nominated - names of other 2 unknown).

Z.B. Mathopeng (160 votes) (Transvaal)

C.J. Fazi (132 votes) (East London)

H.S. Ngcobo (140 votes) Durban).

Secretariat: (contested by quite a number of people - details not known to me).

Pan Africa: P. Molotsi (162) (Transvaal)

Foreign Affairs: S. Ngendane (85) (Transvaal)

Publicity and Information: Z.B. Molete (76) (Evaton, Transvaal).

Labour: J.D. Nyasose (Transvaal)

Education: P. Raboroko (Transvaal)

Cultural: N.N. Mahono (Cape Town)

Economic Development: H.M. Hlatwaye (57 ?) (Durban).

National Organiser: E. Mfaka (144) (Border)

(also contested by Madzunya who polled 86 votes).

After the voting, Sobukwe made a short policy statement. Madzunya then rose and ~~xxxx~~ pledged his support. He said: "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 attacked ~~xxxxxx~~ newspapers which sought to sow dissension in the movement and those which made a personal attack on him.

Delegation figures given me by Molotsi are:

Cape 203 (includes Eastern and Western Cape and Border)

Natal 125

OFS 17

Transvaal 289.

Molotsi could not at the time give me a detailed break-down of these figures. I am still trying to obtain this.

COMMENT:

1) This was a good conference. A large number who came was a great surprise. It was a determined meeting, with a great show of militancy and purposefulness. My over-riding impression was that these people had a goal - however ill-defined it might be in some ways - and that they were to go full steam towards it. It was interesting that there was little interest in discussing the ANC - the attitude was that "this is our conference about our organisation - we want to have nothing to do with them." The meeting was extremely well-controlled, although later this degenerated into forms of officiousness, although in fairness I should say that this was largely due to the behaviour of some people who were seeking election (they were not elected).

2) It was undoubtedly a democratic conference, and the big boys did not have it all their way. e.g. I canvassed the executive personally about being allowed to remain inside, and they all agreed. Then someone from the floor objected to my presence, and although Mathopeng in the chair stood by me, the feeling in the hall was so strongly against the Press remaining, that he had to give way. This aspect of the conference is in itself a sign of strength in my view.

3) I do not accept the delegation figures supplied by Molotsi. There were never more than 300 in the hall, and I do not accept Molotsi's explanation that people came and went. I think this is untrue because there were definitely not two to three hundred people coming and going all the time. In addition, one of the Natal delegates told me that 22 came from Natal, and several other people confirmed this. My information also was that about 17 to 20 came from Cape Town.

4) Madzunya's non-election was interesting - it indicates that his over-fierceness and "extremism" were disliked by the majority. (ends for time-being).

- 1) Because of lack of time, no resolutions were presented to the conference. These will be distributed to branches who will discuss and vote ~~xxx~~ on them.
 - 2) On the question of violent or non-violent methods: "We have not yet discussed methods of struggle."
 - 3) On the "Declaration of Policy": "We are committed in moral law in ~~xxxxxx~~ accordance with the Declaration of Human Rights of UNO. On the question of human relations, we feel that what is contained in UNO's Declaration is good enough for us. We accept it."
 - 3) The New Age man said that Vincent Swart (of the Democracy of Content movement), in a letter sent to England, claimed that he was the "brains" behind the Africanists. When this was said, the Africanists looked around, some smiling, and one or two asked who Swart was. Sobukwe then stated that the allegation was "false".
 - 4) Asked about Ngunane, Sobukwe said "We do not permit joint membership. On political questions a man belongs either to the PAC or to another organisation. He can however join whatever social organisations he likes."
 - 4) Asked about cooperation with the ANC, Liberal Party, etc, ~~xxxxxxx~~ Raboroko said: "We have no common ground - their aims are not our aims." Sobukwe added: "Whatever cooperation there has been in the past has served to defend the sectional interests of the other groups, e.g. COD and the Indian Congress." After further questioning he added: "If we are satisfied that it is in the interests of the African people we would cooperate with the ANC, and with other bodies as well. We will consider the issue involved. We would cooperate because of the issue and not with the organisation concerned." (see comments).
 - 5) The colours of the PAC will be black, green and gold (same as ANC). Flag is a green background with the black map of Africa and a gold star radiating from the north-west of Africa. The anthem is "G-d bless Africa" and the slogan is also the same as the ANC.
 - 5) Asked about SABRA's recent proposal to hold ~~xxxx~~ talks with Africans, Sobukwe said: "We are prepared to hold discussions with everybody."
 - 6) And in regard to Bantustans, he said: "We reject them in ~~xxxx~~ toto. We grant to nobody the right to balkanise us."
 - 7) About extension of passes to women, intensification of police raids, etc., he said: "We condemn them." Asked about positive action, he replied: "Our stand has been that these things flow from Parliament. The same applies to all the other laws. To react to every law of the government is to dance to the tune of the government, instead of maintaining your own policy. We will pursue a policy of our own devising. The PAC will strive to change the fundamental structure of South Africa."
 - 8) Sobukwe said that they had set themselves a target of 100,000 paid up members by July 31 - which would be celebrated as "African Heroes' Day" - in memory of Lebede, a founder of the ANC Youth League, and the strong exponent of African Nationalism. He added that present figures of membership would not be released, but guaranteed that they would be available after July 31.
- Afterwards, I spoke to Mathopeng, and he told me: "It was a very ~~xxx~~ calm conference and very easy to manage. The people were determined to do their work properly. The delegates cooperated magnificently with me and we were able to finish our programme. We were able to found and launch our new organisation. At the close of the conference there was a great spirit of enthusiasm and friendliness among the members and they were all determined to go back to their various areas and to work hard and to recruit more members to the organisation. Judging from the spirit and also from the documents approved by the conference, our new movement is sure to succeed. We are convinced that the African people will rally to ~~xxx~~ our cause."

clear cut impressions of what sort of people they were, their economic status, etc This is something I am still trying to get at and will try to write further about later.

6) T question of who was a delegate seemed to be very vague, although as this was t first conference, it is possible not over-important. At first "Africanist Movement" badges were sold and afterwards, it seemed tt anybody who wore one of these badges could go into t hall. I gathered however, tt after t so-called "screening" - which as far as I could see was done purely by personal knowledge of who was an Africanist and who not - t wearing of badges by other than accepted "delegates" was ~~xxxxxxxx~~ frowned on. Guards were posted at t main door, and only t delegates were allowed in.

7) At t press conference after t meeting, one thing stood out very clearly. This was ~~xxxx~~ tt t Africanists atill have to clear up a lot in their own minds in regard to their policy. Again as this was an inaugural conference, it is perhaps something which should not be regarded too seriously at this stage. Except tt in t past, in my comments on Sobukwe and others with him, I have often stated tt ~~there~~ there was a large degree of confusion in their outlook, and aspects of their policy which they happily accepted could be seriously challenged by purely logical argument, without them being able to offer any satisfactory answer. Tt this was still largely so became very clear during t press conference when t people from New Age (Robert Resha and another) tied Sobukwe and his colleagues in knots on t question of cooperation with other organisations. My outline of Sobukwe's answers are not a completely accurate account - for t simple reason tt t discussion was so confused tt it was impossible to know t PAC's views exactly. First they said no cooperation. Then they qualified it slightly by saying yes, perhaps ~~xxxxxxxx~~ cooperation with t ANC. Challenged about working with a body like t Liberal Party, they shilly-shallied. Then they said tt they would cooperate on t issue and not with t organisation, and despite intensive cross-examination from Resha, [^] do not think tt anyone really knew what they meant by this.

8) Sobukwe's speech speaks for ~~itself~~ itself. I think it is an excellent piece of work. While there are loopholes in his thinking and perhaps also some double talking, on t whole, I consider it one of t finest speeches I have heard from an African politician. About t man ~~himself~~ himself: when I first wrote about him - it must be a full year ago now - I said then tt while I thought him intellectually capable, I also considered him timid and did not think he would ever come out ~~openly~~ openly. Sobukwe is a changed man these days. He has fought within himself, and has decided tt he cannot forsake what he regards as his duty - to establish and to lead this new ~~movement~~ movement. In t process, he has gained strength and stature. He is an outstanding speaker - fluent, strong and with passion at t right moments. But underneath it all, he is still a wonderful personality, and one of t finest men tt I know. He is essentially retiring, with deeply innate feelings of kindness and gentleness. He stand head and shoulders - intellectually and personally - above t other leaders of t Africanist movement. T only other one who comes at all near him - and even then is very far away - is Maphong. Without Sobukwe, I would not bother to give t Africanists much of a chance of achieving anything. But with him at t helm, and with him insisting daily on discipline and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ controlled hard work, and also largely directing policy, these fellows might just get some where.

ends.

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