

JOHANNESBURG.

December 20, 1959.

Subject: Pan-Africanist Congress.

Source: Self and others where quoted.

The first annual national conference of PAC was held in the Comunal Hall, Orlando on Dec 19 and 20. The programme and the latest issue of "The Africanist" are attached.

On the first day, the conference, scheduled for 2 pm, began at 2.7 pm. About 200 were present, this later swelling to about 420. There were at least 15 to 20 children there - aged from about 6 to 10. Also noteworthy was the number of teenagers - most of them poorly dressed and looking very much like ruffians. I watched them closely. They seemed to listen to the speeches, and usually, but not always, reacted appropriately (cheering, laughing, etc). Many of them seemed to be rather uncertain about giving the PAC salute and slogan. (see later for this). There were at least about 40 of them. I asked Nkoana if they were PAC members and he said "of course." I asked Mabalie the same, and he said the PAC, especially in the Orlando area, had quite a large proportion of teenage members. He said their minimum age-limit was 16 years, and they had many school children and students in their ranks.

There were a few posters on the walls. These were: "Africa for Africans, Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Madagascar" (a large one), several "Africa for Africans", "Lead us to freedom Sobukwe", "Free Banda, Kaunda, Kenyatta," "Imperialists quit Africa."

Nyoose was in the chair. With him on the platform were the members of the PAC national executive.

At the start of the meeting, there were the speaker's remarks by Nyoose (the chaplain did not arrive - there was, I believe, some hitch in his travelling arrangements). He said: "We must rebuild the nation which has been destroyed for the past 300 years.

Stand on your feet to see that Africa is once united and is once more a free country as it was before. Our forefathers played their tasks to see that this country remains free. Our struggle is for the reconquest of Africa. There is nothing new in it. What is new is the methods to be adopted. Our forefathers had to fight with spears and shields to defend the sovereignty of their country - but the African people today are fighting for African nationalism. The people of Africa are not prepared to be ruled any longer....."

Molete now read the messages (this at 2.35 pm). There were 5 telegrams from PAC members in various centres (Durban, Ladybrand and Queenstown included) to give apologies for absence or late coming. One of the messages was from Jordan Ngubane. He regretted being unable to be present, and send good wishes. The 2 other messages were:

- 1) Dr Mkrumah (dated Dec 12 in a cable): "On the occasion of your first national annual conference, convey to all delegates my sincerest and heartfelt greetings. Africa marches on undauntedly to its cherished goal of independence and unity. May the spirit of unity, devotion and loyalty be in the cause of African redemption and the noble struggle against oppression and racialism triumph."
- 2) Sekou Toure, president of Guinea: (cable dated Dec 17): "The Democratic Party of Guinea grouping in the same fight for the real independence and true unity of the African motherland. All Guinean populations extend its fraternal and heartfelt greetings to your courageous Congress. It ardently wishes that in the outlook of a total rehabilitation of our peoples your proceedings could decisively contribute

to the triumph of our common struggle. The Democratic Party of Guinea determined to continue its fight until the total liberation of the African motherland particularly wants to demonstrate its complete ~~united~~ ~~solidarity~~ solidarity with you and to assure you of its total fraternity in the difficult and courageous action which you are conducting for the unconditional reconquest of your most legitimate human rights, the recovering of your national soil and of your property and the respect of your dignity. Aware of the fact that a loyal cooperation among peoples must be based only on an absolute equality of rights and duties and on the most total mutual respect. The P.D.G. reaffirms to you its determination to remain the conscious efficient instrument of the reconstruction of the African motherland."

The presidential address by Bob Sobukwe began at 2.45 pm. As he stood up, there was spontaneous loud clapping, and the crowd burst into song: We are unfortunate because all the nations are riding on us." (NB This is a new PAC song. Another new one sung was: "We Africans are crying for our land which has been taken by the Whites. Let the Whites leave our land alone.")

The speech, read in English, with one interpreter, ended at 4.35 pm. He spoke extremely ~~firmly~~ forcefully and strongly. At the end, there was an enormous burst of applause, but as the crowd tried to start singing, Nyaae stopped them, and a fellow got up and began to recite an oration about Bob's history and virtues - this was in fact the old-style "tribal orator". The drawback here was that the orator was pretty poor, and he read from a typed sheet. After about 10 minutes, the crowd became restive, and the orator was shunted aside by the platform whom started up a song.

Discussion now started. It was all very general, and mainly in the vernacular, so I did not stay around. The meeting went on till about 6 pm.

Next day, Joe Gqabi of New Age, ~~and a reporter~~ and a reporter from "The World" told me that the meeting had continued in closed session from about 7.15 pm until about midnight. It had started again in closed session at about 9 am. It went on non-stop until 2.30 pm, when those outside were admitted. The crowd was about the same size as the previous day - perhaps, if anything, slightly larger.

When I ~~was~~ entered, the resolutions - adopted earlier that morning - were read out. They were:

1) That the national executive be instructed: a) to call on the nation to take decisive and final positive action against the pass laws. b) that the PAC embark immediately on a campaign of intensive organisation in order to get the nation ready for this action at the very earliest time. c) that the nation be alerted and advised... (something about being ready for action). d) that the PAC members be taxed immediately to establish a national fund to finance the campaign - £1.2.6. from the beginning of January, 1960. e) that whatever form of action the national ~~executive~~ executive committee may decide on, the slogan of no bail, no defence, no fine, be strictly adhered to.

2) That the national executive committee be instructed to implement the status campaign as part of an ~~unfolding~~ ~~unfolding~~ unfolding programme. But the action against the pass laws be given top priority in the campaign.

3) That the continental salute of the African nationalist organisations, the wrist open hand (?) with palms facing outwards, be adopted as the official salute of the PAC.

A debate then started, all of it, while I was there, in the vernacular. The resolutions incidentally, were read in English, and translated into two vernaculars. The speeches heard were in one vernacular, and translated into a second one.

While the debate continued, I went up to the platform and began to chat quietly to Sobukwe and Mathopeng. R. Nzibe, an officious little tit with whom I have had previous dealings, jumped up in the audience and protested that I was disturbing the conference. There followed a round of clapping from the audience, and Nyaaose smiled at me. I retreated to the side of the platform, after first having asked Sobukwe why Nzibe didn't go and get himself stuffed, and sent Nyaaose a stropky note telling him that it was useless for PAC to accuse the "White Press" of not publishing things about them, if they did not give the Press information. He and I exchanged a series of notes, in which he accepted my criticism, and at my request, sent Leballo to speak to me.

Leballo told me there were 271 delegates from 152 branches throughout the Union. I asked about the membership, and he said he could not give it as the local reports had not been collated. I pressed him on this, and he finally said there had been an increase of 6/7,000 on the July figure of nearly 25,000. He told me that 75 delegates from the Border area - including East London, Queenstown, Stutterheim and Kingwilliamstown - had been stopped en route by the police for a traffic offence, and had only arrived at 2 am. He said that the ~~xxxxxx~~ details of the anti-pass campaign had been discussed in closed session and could not be revealed. It would start "early" next year. He confirmed what Gqabi had told me earlier: that the chief cause of disagreement during the closed sessions had been criticism from the floor of the executive for lack of action. The ~~xxxxxx~~ delegates had asked for a lead, and the executive had countered: give us a ~~xxxxxx~~ mandate. (see Sobukwe's speech in this connection.) Otherwise, said Leballo, there had been no disagreements of any consequence.

Sobukwe told me that the new salute - which was such in evidence - was that used in Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya, etc, by African nationalists in greetings members of other nationalities.

COMMENT: 1) Nyaaose spoke fluently and kept a tight hold on the meeting. He discouraged wandering around (such a feature of ANC meetings!) and also interjections and even singing if he wanted to get a move on with the programme. I spoke to ~~xxxxxx~~ Tamsen about him - he knows him well. He said that he believed that Nyaaose was primarily a trade unionist and was only in PAC because he wanted to build up his movement. Tamsen said he thought Nyaaose did not last long with the Africanists, but would break away fairly soon to concentrate on his own organisation. I do not ~~xxxxxx~~ know him very well, but I have the feeling that he is pretty square, and rates higher than the rest of the PAC leadership. He is of course on the PAC national executive. 2) Sobukwe was outstanding in his delivery of his address. Strong and extremely fluent. He has come a long way, if not from the relatively reserved and almost timid person he was when I first met him nearly two years ago. 3) The ~~xxxxxx~~ phrasing of the resolutions was interesting. None of the ANC's long-windedness or tackling of obscure subjects. These are crisp and to the point. ~~xxxxxx~~ It seems to ~~xxxxxx~~ indicate a more systematic and ~~xxxxxx~~ clearer approach. This idea was reinforced by the fantastic - for an African meeting - timekeeping. Comparison with last week's ANC conference throws this up especially sharply. Apart from the 1 hour late start on the Sunday am and the overrunning of time that morning - both understandable at any conference - the time keeping was outstanding. 4) Many of the speeches were in the vernacular - this is a trend in PAC which has been seen and noted before. In fact, when one speaker started in the ~~xxxxxx~~ vernacular, and the interpreter began in English, there were cries of protest. Could this be that there were many who did not understand English? I don't think this was the reason, because these people have made it clear before that they prefer the vernaculars as a matter of principle in line with their nationalism. 5) A striking feature of the ~~xxxxxx~~ audience was that by and large, and excepting for the teenagers, their clothing was of a high standard.

This applied also to the sprinkling of women who were present. Looking around, one saw very, very few really badly dressed men - this being in stark contradistinction to the position at ANC meetings. Not only were few badly dressed, but many were very well dressed. This applied especially to those on the platform - quite a collection of natty dressers, apart from Baboroko. This all could indicate that PAC has a membership whose economic level is generally higher than that of the ANC. I must look into this question. 6) The clapping of the audience when Nzibe objected to me was interesting. I had the feeling that they were clapping because I was White - not only White there - and I was being told off. Perhaps I was over-sensitive about this, but I don't think so. At ANC meetings, I am usually perfectly at ease - I am accepted there generally speaking, even though I am White. I don't feel the same at PAC meetings. I always get the feeling that there is some hostility towards me. Put it this way. At ANC meetings, I seldom fear any physical violence against me. ~~xxxx~~ At PAC meetings I regard it as a definite possibility. The reaction of the platform people to Nzibe's protest was also interesting. I was in fact not obstructing or disturbing. They know me personally and they knew I was doing my job. Yet they made no attempt to go against the audience. I have noticed this before. They seem always reluctant to cross their members in any way when it comes to outsiders, especially Whites.

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