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GROUP OF 100 AFRICANISTS BREAKS AWAY FROM ANC.  
OPEN PHYSICAL CONFLICT NARROWLY AVOIDED.

by Umhlabeni.

The clash of ideologies within the Tvl ANC, which has rocked and unsettled the organisation for the past twelve months, came to a head at the annual conference held in Orlando on Nov 1 and 2, when a group of about 100 Africanists dissociated themselves from "The ANC in the Tvl as it is at present constituted".

The break-away by the Africanists came in the middle of a tense two-day meeting. It followed a number of incidents in which open physical conflict was narrowly averted.

The first day of the conference was open to the public, and was attended by more than 600 delegates and observers. Mr. Oliver Tambo, sec-gen of the ANC, took the chair announcing that the National Executive had asked him to do so.

Delivering the presidential address, Chief Albert Luthuli, pre-gen of Congress, said that normally the Tvl president would be giving the speech.

"I need not, however, relate the sad story of why the National Executive had to come into the Tvl," he said.

The Chief told the Conference that ten years of Nationalist rule have meant an increasing agony in the lives of the people of the Union, especially the non-whites.

"There has been an appeal to the emotions of the whites," he said. "Some of us do not believe that it is in the interests of South Africa for one section to set out to dominate the other. Domination does not create friendship. Domination does not create common trust."

Accusing the Nationalists of fanning racialism and straining race relations, Chief Luthuli declared: "Into race relations they have injected the virus of prejudice and sectionalism. In the non-white and especially the African community, these ponderings to racialism are tending to resurrect tribalism and all that it stands for."

"Another factor affecting race relations is that it has caused some of us to attempt to emulate the Nationalists in claiming exclusive control of South Africa," said the Chief.

"We have seen developing - even though it is in its embryonic stage - a dangerously narrow African nationalism, which itself tends to encourage us to go back to a tribalism mentality."

Chief Luthuli said that he was grateful to the forces of liberation which were trying to stem these ideas and were trying to foster the development of a broad Africanism.

"We shall be glad when the time comes when all, including the whites, will be happy to be included with us under the title of African," he said.

Immediate criticisms followed the presidential address. The tone for the discussion was set by Mr. Z. Mathopeng, a leading Africanist. He declared that the people of South Africa are divided into two groups - oppressed and oppressor. "There can be no co-operation between them. Their interests are clashing," he said.

"Let us cease to deceive the people that they can get friendship from the whites - they are the oppressors. Africa is for the Africans, and the whites must go back to Europe," said Mr. Mathopeng.

As he spoke, it became clear that the Africanists were present in strength. A group of about 100 men, many of whom carried heavy sticks, sat or stood at the back of the audience. They punctuated Mr. Mathopeng's statements with concerted bursts of cheering, shouts of "Afrika!" and foot-stamping.

The succession of speakers which followed, many of them Africanist in sympathy, received equal encouragement. Those who rose to support Chief Luthuli's address were heckled and interrupted.

At times, Oliver Tambo had difficulty in maintaining order. Throughout the day, however, he was quiet and calm, and showed every sign of being conciliatory and co-operative.

The roll-call of delegates, which came immediately after the closing of discussion, immediately threw into sharp relief the basic problem facing the conference. In several cases, a branch had sent two delegations, one pro-Africanist, the other pro-leadership. Which one was to be admitted?

The difficulty was intensified by the fact that two of the branches concerned included in their ranks Mr. Jasio Madzunya and Mr. Potlako Leballo. Both had previously been expelled from the ANC and both had refused to accept the validity of their expulsion.

After some 150 delegates had been seated, Mr. Tambo told the meeting that he had made a note of the problem cases.

"We shall have to decide, with everybody's co-operation, which are the proper delegations. There can only be one from a branch," he said.

Mr. Tambo asked the audience to assist him in solving the problem. A proposal was immediately forthcoming. A delegate suggested a special committee which would study the matter while conference continued to sit, and which would present its report the following day. The next speaker supported the proposal, but added that the committee should be elected and not appointed by the chair.



The Africanists, however, vehemently opposed a special committee. They wanted an inquiry into their grievances.

With the Africanists becoming increasingly restless and vociferous, Mr. Tambo stated flatly that if a vote was taken, as for a credentials committee, only delegates already recognised would be able to participate.

Madxunya was instantly on his feet. "I cannot agree to any monkey-trick which has been carried out year after year. No further, no further," he shouted. "There is only one Alexandra branch. The others are splinter branches which simply say "yes"."

His words were followed by yells of support and opposition from all sides.

Calmly, however, Mr. Tambo began the calling of nominations for the credentials committee. The committee would comprise five people, he said. Two would be from the office, as they held the records, and three would be elected by the delegates and only those already accepted as delegates would be able to vote.

He was not deterred from his course by an Africanist statement that the delegates already accepted were people "who toe the line and if the whole credentials committee comes from them it will be biased against us".

Nor was he put off by Madxunya's challenge: "What will you do if this house refuses to co-operate with your credentials committee?"

When, however, one of the more moderate Africanists leaders was asked to assist in the counting of votes, and came forward to do so, uproar broke out. A group of Africanists surged forwards their colleague and dragged him back. In a moment, everybody was standing up, shouting and screaming.

Order was restored with difficulty, and the election of the credentials committee continued, despite the undiminished opposition of the Africanists.

Next morning, the atmosphere outside the hall was quiet but tense. The Africanists, still about 100 strong, gathered on one side in small groups. At the back of the hall, about 180 men - supporters of the leadership - stood under the trees. Like the Africanists, they carried weapons - truncheons, lengths of iron and sticks.

The credentials committee had sat earlier in the morning and had effected a compromise in the case of Western Native Township. Instead of the original ten members from each of the two delegations, it was agreed to admit five from each. The Newclare Africanist delegation and Newclare South were not accepted.

Orlando East and Alexandra did not present themselves to the committee. They felt the committee would be biased and they refused to acknowledge its validity.

As the last of the delegates entered the hall, the majority of the excluded Africanists delegations, together with their supporters, were left standing outside. With them were more than 300 others - "neutrals" - who had come to the meeting as observers and who were not directly concerned in the conflict.

This was the critical moment of the conference. In view of the previous Africanist declarations that they would not in any circumstances allow themselves to be excluded from the conference, it seemed certain that they would attempt to force an entry.

But apparently realizing that the odds were against them, they chose to withdraw. The group of 100 left the grounds and held their own meeting a short distance away. A statement was adopted and was sent to the chairman of the conference. It read:

"We have consistently advocated African nationalism, and whenever we have stepped onto a political platform, we have expounded that doctrine. In 1949 we ~~wanted~~ the African people to accept the nation-building programme of that year. We have stuck honestly and consistently to that programme.

"In 1955, the Kliptown Charter was adopted by the ANC. We thought it was in irreconcilable conflict with the 1949 programme and for that reason opposed it.

"In numerous conferences of the ANC we have put across our case.

"On November 1, at the provincial conference, we again put across our case logically and peacefully. It has, however, come to our notice that armed thugs have come to the conference today at the invitation of the leadership for the sole purpose of murdering certain Africanists who are thought to be the leading personalities in the movement.

"Ours is a political battle, aimed against white domination. We are not a para-military clique engaged in the ~~murder~~ murder of fellow Africans. We therefore wish to notify this conference that:

- (1) We are not a party to any decisions taken at this conference.
- (2) We have come to the parting of the ways.
- (3) We dissociate ourselves from the ANC in the Tvl as it is at present constituted.

"We are launching out on our own as the custodians of ANC policy as formulated in 1912 and pursued up to the time of the Congress alliances."

The delivery of the letter did not pass off without incident. The two Africanists who brought the letter were refused admittance to the hall. A scuffle ensued and a crowd of about 80 people chased the messengers away. The letter was snatched from them and was later read to the conference. The contents were "noted" by delegates.



At 6.30 p.m., this significant meeting of the ANC ended. A new executive with Mr. G. Sibande as chairman, was elected.

A highly important aspect of the conference was that, contrary to expectations, there was no co-operations between the African Nationalists and the Africanists. The Nationalists felt that their erstwhile colleagues were over-extreme in their demands and views. They therefore actively assisted in the running of the conference, and took a full share in the election of the executive.

In this lies yet another strength of the new executive. It includes within its ranks members of all the chief facets of opinion in the Transvaal ANC. From all accounts, the executive elections were harmonious and there was co-operation throughout.

The Africanists have left and the leadership does not seem to be unduly perturbed about their doing. At this stage, their future is uncertain.

It is clear that Oliver Tambo was a brilliant chairman. On the first day he was always conciliatory. Looking back, one can see that he was merely biding his time. He allowed the Africanists to display their strength and to state their views openly and frequently.

On the second day, with a strong group of armed men behind him, Tambo stopped the Africanists from going any further than he wanted. The Africanists had no alternative but to retreat. To have done otherwise would have precipitated a bloody clash.

This was undoubtedly Oliver Tambo's conference. He was the master throughout.

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