

JOHANNES BURG.
8th June, 1971.

Dearest Bob,

As I was saying to you on the phone earlier today, what is nationalism? And more particularly, African nationalism? A book I have been reading, by Hans Kohn, starts off by defining nationalism as "a state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due the nation-state." He goes on to talk about deep attachment "to one's native soil, to local traditions and to established territorial authority."

The definition, clearly, is adequate enough when it applies to established nation-states, and equally clearly, is derived from a study of European history (and European in the geographical sense) from about the 18th Century onwards. I suppose it could even encompass Jewish Nationalism, for the whole striving of this nationalism was for the creation of a nation-state, even though for a considerable period of years such a state did not exist in actuality.

But what of African Nationalism...which not merely covers people who exist within a particular nation-state (i.e. the African Nationalism say of Kaunda's party, or Nyerere's, etc) and whose striving occurs within the framework of their political nation-state; it covers, too, the strivings of the same people in regard to the continent of Africa as a whole. And it encompasses too the philosophic coming together of people both in the African continent and those who claim an historical link because of their forebears (eg, Du Bois and the early Pan-Africanist conferences which have modern African Nationalism its start).

Then too, I have been looking at a very poor book by Prof. Ned Munger on African and Afrikaner Nationalism. Poor as the book is he does trigger off some thinking because when he talks about African Nationalism in South Africa, he talks about all African striving, right from the start of modern-day political activity towards the end of the last century. He talks thus, later on, of African Nationalism as influenced by the communists, or of being influenced by US ideas of democracy, or by Nkrumah's African Socialism.

OK, you might say, African Nationalism in SA is the broad sweep of ideas confined to local Africans only (and that statement in ~~itx~~ itself raises problems: Africans -- Black-skinned peoples only??). But taking the point for the moment, what then of the different tribal groups? Particularly through the Bantustans, consciousness of one's own group, a shared land and ~~xxxxxx~~ cultural and ~~xxxxxx~~ historical tradition (which, clearly, must be ~~the~~ some of

the essential elements) is steadily coming to the forefront. So we have Xhosa nationalism, Zulu nationalism, etc. So where do these stand in relation to an African nationalism?

Have I irritated your mind enough to make you sit down and write me a long reply? I hope so.

I did not have the courage to mention this on the phone, but after blasting off at The Star last week about the description of you as the ANC leader, I was mortified to find that the Mail perpetrated the same error, the next morning. The matter was vigorously taken up! Anyway, as you will probably have seen, both papers published corrections the next day.

It reminds me, ~~xxxxxxx~~ painfully, of how in reading through English newspaper files of political events up to the late 50s I am constantly astonished at the lack of knowledge and the arrogance displayed in the reporting of the affairs of the "Natives".

This continuing cold of yours is worrying: why not take some ascorbic acid pills daily? They are very cheap and will give you ~~xxxxx~~ vitamin C. Anne has also been unable to shake off a cold so has just gone onto a diet of vitamin C tablets.

Otherwise all well here. I'm still limping around but it gets better by the day. But I shall have to be a White bass for ten weeks and not pick up even a chair in that time. This is the time that I appreciate having both a wife and Black labour.

Love from all of us.

PUBLISHER:

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

Location:- Johannesburg

©2010

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

DOCUMENT DETAILS:

Document ID:- A2618-Ba9-12

Document Title:- Letter (copy) to Robert Sobukwe and one transcript

Document Date:- 8 June 1971