

Sobukwe: On the afternoon of Saturday, 3rd May, 1958, I went, by arrangement, to see Sobukwe. We met in his office at the University. The discussion began with me giving a very quick outline of the political situation of the African people at the present time, at the same time stressing the necessity and desirability of establishing a purified ANC.

I had not spoken over-long when Sobukwe broke in and began to give his own views. This went on for a long, long time.

He said that it was important that one was not only aware of the present situation - something which the existing ANC leadership claimed was sufficient - but it was also necessary to have some understanding of the past. In very early times on the African continent, there had ~~not~~ ~~been~~ ~~any~~ ~~or~~ inter-tribal fights over matters such as land, etc., but this had not been so during the 19th century, the only exception being Chaka. Otherwise there had been fights between tribes over women, personal disputes, etc. With the coming of the White man matters changed considerably, and the Whites fought the Blacks and also encouraged the Blacks to fight amongst themselves. The English - and particularly the missionaries - were especially adept at this. But throughout this time, the Africans were being dispossessed of their ~~of~~ land, and the land question is still fundamental today.

At the start of the 20th century, there was the beginnings of an African consciousness - but it was entirely along tribal lines: Xhosa, Zulu, etc.

Matters staggered on during the early part of the 20th century; there was the ICU and other similar attempts to create a working organization. But the most important development occurred in the mid-1940s with the establishment of the ANC Youth League by Lebedda (spelling?). ~~Some~~ People like Sisulu and Tambo were among the early founders. It was Lebedda who developed what are today called the Africanist ideas.

~~Unfortunately~~ Unfortunately, he died fairly young, but ~~his~~ his ideas have been maintained. These ideas were best expressed in the 1949 P programme of Action adopted by the ANC. One of the points in the programme was non-collaboration with the oppressors, but this was set aside in practice by the Reds, who claimed that the situation did not allow this policy to be followed as had been envisaged. Once entrenched in office, the Reds have maintained themselves in office by resorting to all manner of devices.

The word Africanist was not coined specifically by Lebedda, but developed later. Lebedda's original statement was: "Africa for the African Africans for humanity, humanity for G-d". Africanist has perhaps not been a very good word - it has been subjected to misinterpretation and distortion.

Basically, what it means is that the Africanists believe that in order for the African people to ~~develop~~ develop an effective political organization, it is primarily essential for them to develop a national consciousness. This is the only way to unite the African people, and the only means of achieving this is to build up Black Nationalism. At the same time, Sobukwe stated that the Africanist concept of the future South African society was one in which all would ~~be~~ have equality of ~~opportunity~~ opportunity, and all would be Africans - irrespective of race - by virtue of the fact that they had either been born in Africa or else they had made their homes in Africa. He pointed out that South Africa was an integral part of the African continent, and that the continent as a whole must be "African". We had a short, but animated discussion about the idea of equality, both Sobukwe and I agreeing completely that it was not really equality which counted - because as he pointed out, everybody in a society could never be

completely equal, and it was therefore more correct to speak in terms of achieving equality of opportunity, and of course, this to apply to everybody.

I asked whether what he had said was not a contradiction (PR PS Please forgive my shocking grammar here) - on the one hand speaking of an unracial society while at the same time pushing the idea of Black Nationalism. Sobukwe said that it was a only a partial contradiction as once the new South & Africa was created, there would be no more racialism. At the same time, he said, Black consciousness must be fostered, and he felt that he had no alternative but to accept that the inevitability of an armed conflict between White and Black. He said that, much as he did not like the prospect, he felt it to be inevitable. The Whites would not freely and willingly relinquish their position - and the history of oppression throughout the world showed that no ruling class ever willingly had of its own accord conceded rights to the oppressed. But he said that the Whites had been killed where Black Nationalism had been sufficiently exacerbated against the Whites would constantly be.

and when the Blacks were prepared to offer total opposition, then a process of education would start in order to ensure that after the revolution, there was no anti-white feeling. Sobukwe quoted the example of Red China to illustrate his meaning, pointing out that as the Red Armies conquered an area, the political educators moved in, and established an ideological basis. I questioned his reasoning pointing out that peoples' emotions could not be turned on and off like a tap. He agreed with me that in order to obtain total opposition on the part of the Blacks, it would first be essential to get them to hate the Whites with every bit of their being. How then could this be changed overnight Sobukwe - albeit somewhat uncertainly - said that it could be done, and that in any event, there was no alternative open. I also pointed out that S.A. was a 20th century complex industrial state, and what would happen when a large number of Whites were indiscriminately killed? Who would administer the country, industries, commerce, farms, etc? Because by the time a revolution came about - if ever, that is - the Africans would not yet in all likelihood have been allowed by the Whites to acquire any skills on a mass skill. Sobukwe answered that he believed that a substantial number of Whites would be prepared to remain in South Africa in order to help to run the country, and that in addition, people would almost certainly be prepared to come in from overseas. I asked him whether he really thought that in a situation where a great number of people had been killed merely because of the colour of their skins, others of the same skin colour would be willing to stay around waiting for employment. He said that he supposed not, but came back again to his original point that the only way in order to build up the African political movement was to push the idea of Black Nationalism.

I then stated that I believed that there was indeed an alternative. I did not reject the Whites outright, but believed that there was a substantial number holding views of various shades of liberalism. At the same time, the White community as a whole could be forced - over a period of time - to go back step by step in response to increasing demands by the non-Whites. In my view, the key to this lay in the proper use of economic power, starting in a small way and gradually building up and entering new fields. In all this, the leaders of the Africans

would have a heavy responsibility in ensuring that their membership did not become anti-White, but that there was constant cooperation and discussion - as apart from domination by - with sympathetic Whites. Sobukwe I said that perhaps I was being over-naive and idealistic in advocating this sort of programme, but no, said Sobukwe, it certainly seemed to be practical and of merit. He was, however, rather uncertain about the point of cooperation with Whites, and I emphasised that this could only be proved in practice - deeds would show which were the genuine friends, and which were those who were merely out for themselves or attempting to divert the African people. To justify his fears, Sobukwe pointed out that in 1936, when there was a large scale movement underway by the African people to oppose the Native Representation Bill, they leaders had been persuaded by liberals such as Molteno not to pursue their campaign. After my statement as above, he seemed a bit easier about the matter.

I told him that the new editor of Contact had authorised me to say that if Sobukwe and his group ever wished to have any articles published, Contact was at their disposal. He seemed to be impressed by this, and said that it was something which would certainly have to be remembered. I asked him what had happened about Tsele, as I had heard only the barest details. He replied that he was not too certain himself, as all that he knew had been culled from the scanty newspaper reports, and he had not yet seen anybody with whom he could discuss the matter. I asked whether there was in fact a definite Africanist organization from which Tsele could be expelled, but he said no, not really, the group was not properly organized. It was more a matter of people being spread out all over the place. He asserted that practically every ANC branch in the Tvl. had varying proportions of Africanists amongst the membership. What he supposed had actually happened in the case of Tsele was that Leballo - as the leader of the strong Orlando - Africanist branch - had more or less taken it on himself to publicly expel Tsele from the Africanist general Africanist movement. I asked about the newspaper, "The Africanist". He said that he was supposed to be Editor, but being at the University, he found it very difficult to get in touch with people, and thus he did not do so very much on the paper. He added that being at the University was in itself a great obstacle to his political work, as there were many things about which he had to be extremely careful. He was in fact thinking of trying to go into business so as to be able to do more political work. We briefly discussed Leballo, with Sobukwe saying that he was an interesting person, who was not really a racist but was someone who had been greatly misunderstood. In addition, he was not well-educated, and was therefore unable to express himself clearly, this giving rise to much misunderstanding about his views. I said I would like to meet him, and we therefore drove out to Leballo's home in Dube. On the way, we had a very short discussion about Socialism, Sobukwe saying that he was probably essentially a Fabian Socialist. In regard to Tsele, he said that he was a fine person, but was inclined to be rather outspoken and tactless, and that other people - not having had his education - tended to resent this, as they felt that he was being arrogant and superior because of his education.

We arrived at Leballo's home - a small, neat but sparsely furnished house. As Sobukwe pointed out, the garden was the only one in the neighbourhood which was completely uncultivated - an obvious politician lives here! Two fellows were with Leballo - I could not catch their

names, but one's name began with an L, and he was introduced as the Secretary of the Africanist movement, while the other personage was introduced as the cartoonist of "The Africanist". Sobukwe gave a short resume of parts of our conversation in regard particularly to the use of Contact as a platform. Leballo gave a long ~~xxx~~ spiel about South Africa, and to be quite frank I was quite unable to get at what he was trying to say. I caught the gist of it, however, and thought that he was preaching that this was a pure-Black struggle, with the Whites having nothing at all to do with it. I took up this point, asking if this was really what he meant. L. broke in and bluntly said that "Mr. Potlakko" had not expressed himself "clearly" and that they really wanted a South Africa free from discrimination of any kind. I was anxious not to get into any involved discussion, as I wanted a full evening for the purpose, so I constantly tried to get back to ~~x~~ arranging a proper get together. Leballo was obviously not keen on the idea, but finally - and rather suddenly - said all right, and we fixed on Tuesday week. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ He said that they did not like to have "personal interviews" and gave some reason which for the life of me I could not understand, much less fix in my mind. L. added ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ something to the effect that if only one member of the group was present he might say something which would not be completely correct, and therefore others had to be present also (NB I would not swear to this being exactly what he said, but I am reasonably certain that this represents the general drift of his remarks). There was also a confused discussion about Contact, ~~Txxx~~ Leballo saying that they would not have themselves ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ committed to any other group, and pointing out that Tsele had done this in associating ~~xxxxxx~~ himself with the LP, and had suffered expulsion as a result. I said of course this would not happen as Contact was simply a platform and personally I could not care less ~~if~~ they made use of the offer or not. There was again a confused discussion on the matter, with only Leballo and Sobukwe saying that they had seen the paper, and the former - having only seen one or two issues - agreeing that it ~~was~~ was quite good. I suggested that I bring them a few copies and they could see for themselves what the paper was like. ~~x~~ Sobukwe and I then left, and the others walked us to the car. As I was driving away, Leballo turned back and in a rather more friendly manner, said that I should bring 2 and at the most 3 other people with me in order to join in the discussions.

Comment: I am not over-impressed by Sobukwe - I find his thinking tending to be patchy. At times, he is sound and shows good understanding of the situation, and at other times, he is remarkably unversed and naive. I was especially struck by this latter point in our discussion on this so-called revolution, where I considered him to be totally unrealistic in his view of the after-effects - both psychological and material - of a bloody and violent upheaval. In addition, I faulted him badly on the economic aspects of struggle against White domination, and it was clearly a matter on which he had not thought very deeply. I do not think he is much of a practical tactician, but his strength lies in being able to express - clearly and fairly forcibly - the so-called Africanist fundamental ideology. And yet, when near the end of our discussion at his office, he showed me an article of about 200 words, which had been written by Leballo on the Africanist idea, I was struck by the enormous similarity between the article and what Sobukwe had been saying.

It was not merely a matter of a similarity of ideas, but ~~the~~ more in regard to the actual phrases and expressions used. The immediate reaction came to my mind: Hell! This fellow has studied this short article and he knows it by heart, and he has simply recited it all out. I might add that I ~~experienced~~ experienced something very similar at Leballo's house, especially from L., where the phrases used had very familiar sounds. The reason? In my view, and this I said after very short meeting with those concerned, intellectual poverty leading to rigidity of thought. In Sobukwe's case, I would add to this great timidity of personality. He was several times referred to his rather academic role in the movement, and did not speak with any real conviction in saying that he wanted to go into business in order to indulge more freely in politics. Which does not of course mean that he will not do this, as external pressures may be too great. In other words, I do not think that he is a very strong man, and in my view, could be fairly malleable. In this regard, I might add that I think that what I said about the economic angle and also White cooperation went down well, and quite deeply. But here again, his timidity - in my view - might not allow him to step out of line. At Leballo's place, I was listening to him recounting our conversation, when I was suddenly struck by his attitude. I was certainly not looking for anything, but it was so noticeable that I sat up and gave attention to him. In speaking, he directed all his remarks to Leballo and seemed very anxious that no disagreement should be found with what he had said earlier in the day to me. It would perhaps be going too far to call his attitude subservient, but it was pretty close to it. I was also amazed by two other points: Tsele had told me that he and Sobukwe were close to each other, and were practically ideological stable-mates. Thus I was taken aback when Sobukwe said that he did not know the full story about Tsele (and I do not think that he was covering up for anything). Secondly, at Leballo's home, he did not raise the case of Tsele's expulsion, and also did not say anything at all when Leballo referred to the matter. The first point I am at a loss to understand because this after all is supposed to be a leading light in the Africanist group, while the second point I ~~can~~ can only attempt to explain by virtue of his timidity and obvious lack of confidence in himself when in the presence of Leballo. As regards Leballo, as I have already mentioned, I found extreme difficulty in understanding what the hell he was trying to say - he speaks in this odd manner - regular explosions of words, and in addition, there seems to be a highly rambling, confused mind. But I was not really concentrating on him at the time, being primarily interested in trying to arrange a proper meeting, so perhaps my initial hasty judgement of him will have to undergo drastic review.

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