

27/9/58.

W.P.A.
AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS: X On t morning of Sat. Sept 27, I
chatted to Bob Sobukwe about t forthcoming ANC Congress.

He said tt there was a great deal of activity at present in connection with t forthcoming conference. Orlando has held 3 meetings at weekly intervals - these meetings had been called by t leadership, and their purpose was to have a resolution passed confirming t expulsion of Leballo and Madzunya from t ANC. T resolution, had, however, been consistently refused. T last meeting was held this week, when t confirming resolution was defeated by 32 to 27. Bob said that the number of people who attended these meetings was very good for a ~~xxx~~ branch meeting, normal attendance being about 30 to 40.

At a meeting in Sophiatown ~~xx~~ on this past Thursday, Siwisa lost t chairmanship of t branch (or region?). Bob said tt he had heard little about t meeting up to now, except for t fact tt Siwisa had been voted out of office. He said tt Msutu had also lost office, and several others besides. He did not know who had been elected in their places. He had heard, however, tt t meeting ended when someone drew a gun and fired a shot into t air. Apparently, at this stage, there was a mass exodus and t meeting ended. At t time, voting was still continuing for a new committee. Bob said tt he understood tt it had been t intention to beat up physically Siwisa and some of his followers. The fellow who pulled t gun had been among those intending to do t beating up.

Bob said tt t leadership had organized a set of "volunteers". This had been done by asking "loyal" branches to send 10 people to t conference, these people to ensure tt t conference was orderly and disciplined. X Bob said tt as far as he knew, ~~xxxx~~ volunteers had never been requested from branches such as Alexandra, Orlando or Mofolo. But even in areas like these, individual ~~xxxx~~ executive members were privately approached and were asked to ensure tt a few volunteers from t area came to t conference.- this X, of course, was done very quietly.

In reply to this, t Africanists ~~xx~~ had organized their own volunteers. Bob would not say how many there were, but he assured me tt in numbers, they would be "evenly matched" with t leadership volunteers. Earlier, he had said tt he thought tt t leadership would have at least 60 to 100 volunteers. He said tt t Africanists had obtained ~~xxx~~ their volunteers from a wide variety of sources. This included some "Russians." (PS Note t inverted commas!). When I expressed surprise at this, Bob said tt these people were also members of t Basutoland National X Congress, and many members of t Africanist group ~~xxx~~ were members and had close ties with t INC - eg Leballo. In addition, he said, there was a substantial number of Basutos in Newclare who had originally joined t ANC because of promises tt they would be assisted with t permit situation. They had not been given t promised support by t leadership, and were thereforex mighty disgruntled.

Because of the division of opinion in the branches, a number of branches would be sending two delegations to the conference. Among these branches were: Newclare, Springs, Western Native Township and Dube. Also, in a number of instances (and as already reported), membership cards of the ANC had been refused to persons known to be sympathetic to the Africanists.

The Africanists anticipated that both those who had been refused membership cards - and who intended going to the conference, and those "twin" delegations which were opposed to the leadership would be refused entry to the conference. So too would Madzunya and Leballo. In addition, the Africanists felt that in some areas, the leadership would allow one ~~strategic~~ delegation to be elected, but if it was felt that the delegation would support the Africanists, then about 2 to 3 days before the conference, members of the delegation would be disqualified from attending the conference, probably on the grounds of insolvency, i.e. that they failed to pay their full subs during the year. Thus the mere possession of a membership card would be held to be insufficient. They would also be required to have paid their 1/4 month provincial levy, the levy for Zeerust, Sekukuni-land, etc. At the same time, the leadership would ensure that their own people were up to date with their various payments, and they would then be put in as the official delegation for the branch. But these disqualified people would also be going to the conference.

Thus all these different groups would be determined to enter the conference hall. Their entry will be refused at the door, volunteers from one side or the other will attack someone, and a fight will start. Bob said flatly that he was certain that there was going to be bloodshed. Hex was sure that there would be a deal of knifing, and he said he was also certain that there would be shooting - because he said that he knew that both sides were coming armed with firearms.

He said that the official leadership was determined to have a showdown. On the Africanist side, the view was that for too long they had attempted constitutional means. These had failed, and they were now set on violence. "They did not intend to allow the leadership the chance to dis-~~miss~~ qualify any delegations or members". The idea was to get inside the hall, and to move an immediate vote of no-confidence in the chairman, whoever he might be. They then ~~intended~~ to have a "neutral" made the chairman - this "neutral" being Zek Mathopeng - and Bob described him as a "neutral" with a broad smile on his face. As soon as Zek was lected to the Chair (all this theory of course) he would immediately suspend the business of the conference, and would proceed forthwith with the elections, on the basis that the conference was merely a continuation of the last one.

Bob said that he had missed the meeting of the Africanist group at which the decision had been taken ~~to~~ to go in despite everything, but had attended the subsequent meeting. He said he had spoken against the decision but was the only voice in a crowd of about 20 drawn from the Africanist areas, such as Newclare, Alex., Springs and Dube.

Bob said that the Africanist group had also decided to attempt to kidnap some of the top ANC leadership the night before the conference. These people would include Luthuli, Mandela and Tambo. The idea behind this was to ensure that these people would not be able to run the conference from outside - i.e. that they would not be able to gather in Dan Tloome's house - as they had done at the last conference in Orlando - and send messages across on the conducting of the meeting. Bob first told me about this scheme by saying: "some of our people are even thinking seriously about kidnapping some of the leadership." He then went on talking, and it transpired that they were no longer thinking of it, but had in fact already been making active plans. The scheme was to be put forward at a meeting on Sunday, Sept 28 - a combined meeting of the Legwate and Africanist groups. The purpose of raising it at this meeting was to get Legwate and Co's support for it.

I told Bob that I thought the leadership was going to win. He said that he agreed, and that he also felt with me that most people were beginning to realize this. But he said, the Africanists were regarding this as a last ditch stand. He said that the one thing he was certain of was that two "ANC's" would emerge from this conference - whatever the actual result of the conference itself. Neither side would accept the other's leadership, and would break away to start its own movement. He pointed out that this was already the position in the Cape, where there were two all effects and purposes, two ANC's, with two national offices. He said that he felt that such a development in the Tvl. would not unduly displease the COD people, who did not at any costs, want to see the emergence of an independent, nationalistically-orientated ANC.

Comment: This was a most discouraging and depressing discussion. Not only because I felt sorry for Bob in his obvious disagreement with the plans of the Africanists, but also because of my own reaction to their reported plans. As far as I can see, they regard themselves as top level strategists about to sweep the entire ANC leadership from power through the brilliance of their schemes. To me, however, their strategy seems totally unrealistic and in no way designed to bring them success. Their apparent acceptance of violence is in itself sufficient to finish them. Whatever the merits or otherwise of the various warring sections of the ANC, one thing is certain: and that is that few of the members in the middle, so to speak, will be convinced by violence and strong arm tactics and nothing will be attained by violence. It just is not the type of political situation where violence will bring success - the only people who will benefit will be the leadership, because they are sufficiently astute and their propaganda organs are sufficiently well-developed, for them to be able to turn the situation to their advantage. The only others who will benefit will be the govt., because I tend to agree with Bob that whatever happens at the conference, there must inevitably be a split afterwards, with ~~xxxx~~ two comparatively weakened ANC groups warring against one another. To ~~xxx~~ return to the grand strategies of the Africanists: it all strikes me as being horribly puerile and immature. The stroking of a door, the attempt to install a neutral chairman - Mathopeng! -, and the kidnapping idea - all in theory designed to win the day for Ehen, but to my mind, every step inevitably to have the effect of driving the ordinary membership away from them. I think they have already lost this conference - perhaps they know it as well - hence their desperation.

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