

Pan Africanist Congress of Azania

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Dear Mr. Pogrud

I received your letter of the 6th December, 1984 in which amongst other things you indicate that both Mrs Zodwa Sobukwe and Mr. Z.B. Molete requested, you contact me. No doubt you can correctly assume that I would love to see and hear that more books are written about Sobukwe and his historic mission projected accurately.

I shall further assume that in relation to other areas both Mrs Sobukwe and Mr. Molete have sufficiently provided you with relevant primary material on Sobukwe, since both of them are in a better environment.

With regard to Standerton I can only account for our stay with him between 1952 and July, 1954. I cannot therefore speak for 1950 and 1951 except only in so far as he was a member of the Youth League and an Africanist within the ANC.

In order to understand his appointment at Jandrell Combined Secondary School Standerton I enclose a copy of his speech on the 21st October, 1949. When he delivered the speech he had already been accepted as new teacher at Healdtown High School. After he had made the speech, his appointment was summarily cancelled.

Standerton then became the beneficiary of his services as a result, and Mr. M'Gwabeni was instrumental in that since he wanted to establish ANC influence in that area, especially an ANC that was Youth League orientated.

When I was about to complete my University Education Diploma in 1950, Mr. M'Gwabeni once more appealed to a friend at Fort Hare to select for him someone who was Youth League orientated. I was chosen by his friend. But ~~it~~^{it} was not until 1952 that I was finally appointed. The reason being a tussle between Mr. M'Gwabeni and Inspector De Jager. De Jager was busy sowing seeds of tribalism amongst teachers. Messrs M'Gwabeni and Sobukwe won and I was appointed.

It is therefore clear I arrived in Standerton when the Defiance Campaign was beginning, so I was able to see both Sobukwe and Nthatho Motlana address the meeting you seem interested in.

Sobukwe spoke on that day and cited the Hints incident to which Mr. M'Gwabeni has already made reference. But he also made reference to two other incidents

- (a) The ~~Nongqaise~~^{Nongqaise} Episode and
- (b) The Small Pox Epidemic amongst the Khoikhoi

It was the interpretation to these events that seem to have offended Superintendent Viljoen and the Native Education Department. The interpretation given differed significantly from the traditional colonialist one.

To put his story in context, it will be remembered that Dr. Verwoerd, the Secretary ~~of~~^{of} Native Education had just come up with his idea that African children should be taught to serve the interests of the whites; also a decision by the ANC and Indian Congress had been made to defy unjust laws. Sobukwe was a teacher under the Native Education Department whose official, Verwoerd preached that African children should be taught to serve the white man.

In this situation Sobukwe's speech was aimed at clarifying the real issues and putting things historically to show not only the injustices meted out ~~to~~^{to} the Africans, but also the criminal deeds perpetrated against the Africans.

Sobukwe did not express new ideas he merely communicated ideas already expressed by an articulate segment of enlightened Africans of the time.

For example, on the Nongqause Episode, he indicated that when Sir George Grey became Governor of the Cape, there was an acute shortage of labour amongst whites since Africans refused to work for the whites; further that Sir George Grey stated he knew the customs and traditions of the natives.

By means of subtle suggestions through his agents he planted the ideas that were later attributed to Mhlakaza and Nongqause. The aim in deceiving Africans to kill their animals, was that if accepted and carried out they would starve. Once they starved, they would of their own accord provide cheap labour for the whites.

With regard to the Small Pox Epidemic he revealed that the officials of the Dutch East India Company brought from the Far East, clothing that was soiled with small Pox germs; that the clothes were distributed amongst the Khoikhoi; and as a result an Epidemic broke out and many were killed as a result.

When Sobukwe collected books and other relevant material he was actually providing himself with source material already researched by others; if I still remember he also sought extracts from a thesis in history prepared by a history teacher who was teaching at Lovedale. The consequences of the Small Pox Epidemic as given in his speech are today documented in some South African Hospitals and in the World Health Organisation.

As a result of the speech made in Standerton where he was preparing the people to participate in the Defiance Campaign of Unjust Laws, the Education Department acted fast and set up a Commission to investigate Sobukwe's activities as a teacher. The Commission therefore set in motion at once a process for his dismissal.

In addition to the relevant information he collected from friends and libraries he asked Mrs M'Gwabeni and myself to give evidence in his favour before the Commission.

Information had already leaked that if the Commission found against him he would not return to Standerton the following year 1953.

As a result of all this the African Community in Standerton took up his matter. This move was led by the Jandrell Combined Secondary School Committee. This Committee went to Pretoria to see the Chief Inspector for Native Education. If I still remember well his name was Frans or something like that.

The Chief Inspector allowed Sobukwe to continue as a teacher, on condition that he did not take part in politics.

So during that period of relative restriction from politics I acted as a link between him and the organisation. So in actual fact he never stopped taking part in politics. He merely changed tactics.

On taking up appointment at the University of the Witwatersrand, an African Professor, A.C. Jordan who was lecturing at the University of Cape Town, played an important, almost decisive role.

Sobukwe used to assist residents who fell foul of the law or who were victimised for one reason or another. He also assisted African workers at the Textile Factory. In both these areas he worked with Rev. Benjamin Dladla. Rev. Dladla was a very bold and intelligent person, and quite often was imprisoned for taking up cases on behalf of the workers.

At Jandrell Combined Secondary School, Sobukwe was music conductor who brought honours and awards to the school

You want to know about the "Bureau of African Nationalism".

The Bureau of African Nationalism was a roneed periodical. You see after the adoption of the 1949 Programme of Action, in Magasa Hall, Bloemfontein it was clear that most of those elected were going to water down the Programme. So some Youth Leaguers established the Bureau to be the watchdog. It was published in East London, under Alcott Gwentshe and others.

When later it ceased publication the Africanist took its place. Sobukwe and other Africanists contributed to both, since both of them were organs of the Africanists.

Let me now comment of the attached Draft of a section of your book.

But before doing so, let me say I know you have been very close to the Prof's family and even to the PAC. I should like you, therefore, to take my comments as sincere and with the aim of protecting the relationship you cultivated over a long period of time.

I have no problem with page 6 since there you have indicated clearly from whom you obtained the information. But in page 5 the story is blurred and in several areas is rather too obviously open to various interpretations.

When dealing with Sobukwe in Standerton I would strongly persuade you not to include the story on page 5 under Sobukwe in Standerton except only that part that refers to Nthatho Motlana and the reply by Sobukwe on line three at the top.

If you still feel strongly to retain the story in page 5 then it must form a separate section of its own and the source ^{must} be given. Of course if the story in page 5 gives your own views, you are certainly entitled to that.

Now dealing with a few comments in page 5. The expression "Sobukwe did not become a defier" will certainly be taken in bad taste by members of the PAC. In fact they may even construe it as an insult to their beloved leader. I would therefore plead with you to delete it altogether.

You see members of the PAC regard Sobukwe as the "defier of the undefiable" and they expressed it even in their writings. To suggest he did not become a defier might alienate many from your good intentions of writing about Sobukwe.

I would also suggest you accept Sobukwe's version that "The call did not come".

Again I am unhappy with the expression "There was a second reason". And the remark is made immediately after the expression "The call did not come." which is attributed to Sobukwe. ✓

Who then advanced the second reasons? I ~~let~~^{bet} you it was not Sobukwe. ✓

From that second reason I suggest you indicate clearly who furnished the information and I would further plead that, that part should not form part of the Standerton chapter. ✓

Since you are writing on Sobukwe a man who at the time was a member of the Youth League and an Africanist, I enclose an interview he had with The Africanist in January 1959 which summarises the controversies that raged in the period 1949 to 1959 and sums up what was basic.

On the concept "black" as used I doubt if it could have come from the mouth of an Africanist. Certainly they should have invariably preferred the concept "African".

With the adoption of the Freedom Charter and the formation of the Congress Alliance what we criticised was ~~its~~^{the} multi-racial character. And hence we said:

"Against multi-racialism, we have this objection, that the history of South Africa has fostered group prejudices and antagonisms, and if we have to maintain the same group exclusiveness, parading under the term of multi-racialism we shall be transporting to the new Africa these very antagonisms and conflicts. Further, multi-racialism is in fact a pandering to European bigotry and arrogance. It is a method of safeguarding white interests irrespective of population figures. In that sense it is a complete negation of democracy. To us the term "multi-racialism" implies that there are such basic inseparable differences between various national groups here that the best course is to keep them permanently distinctive in a kind of democratic apartheid. That to us is racialism multiplied, which probably is what the term truly connotes." This is the position that was always held by the Africanists, who espoused non-racialism from the beginning.

A little comment of the Liberal Association. It too initially spoke of multi-racial groups and it was influenced by the multi-racialism of the Central African Federation. It was only later as Liberal Party that it spoke of non-racialism. ✓

THANKS

J. N. Pokela

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