

INKULULEKO Daily TRIAL BULLETIN No. I

CONSPIRACY CHARGE DROPPED!

Knowing the weaknesses of the capitalist press and its tendency to distort or suppress news that is not in accordance with its policy, the Communist Party newspaper "Inkululeko" has decided to bring out a special trial bulletin when necessary, so that the true facts brought out in the trial at the Johannesburg Magistrates Courts of 52 persons in connection with the recent strike of African mineworkers may become known to all.

On Monday, September 16th, the whole character of the case altered when the preparatory examination was converted into a summary trial. The case against Moses Kotane, General Secretary of the Communist Party, Braan Bunting, William Roberts, John Hertslet, Wilhelmina Skikoena and G. Naiker was withdrawn. The remaining accused pleaded guilty to a charge of assisting in the continuation of the strike after August 12th.

NO CONSPIRACY CHARGE!

As counsel for the defence, Advocate Shacksnovis, K.G., pointed out, this means that there is no longer any suggestion that the accused conspired, incited or initiated the strike, and there is no longer a charge under the Riotous Assemblies Act, the only charge being that a breach of War Measure 145.

Giving evidence on Monday, Lt. D. Botha, of the Johannesburg C.I.D. produced documents taken in a search of the Johannesburg Communist Party offices. He said he showed the documents to several members of the Johannesburg District Committee, who told him that the letter signed by du Plessis which was written to Kotane on May 28th, purporting to describe the strike plans, did not correctly represent the decisions and policy of the Communist Party.

Evidence of the CHAMBER OF MINES --
"POLICY NOT TO REPLY TO UNION LETTERS"!

The next witness was Mr. Limebeer, secretary of the Chamber of Mines, who produced several letters sent to him by the African Mine Workers Union since May 6. The letters acquainted him with the demands adopted at a conference of the African Mine Workers Union for 10/- a day and better food. Further letters informed the Chamber of the strike decision taken by the workers and appealed for last minute negotiations to avoid a dispute.

MR. LIMEBEER SAID HE DID NOT REPLY TO THESE LETTERS AS IT WAS THE POLICY OF THE CHAMBER OF MINES NOT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE MINE WORKERS UNION, WHICH THEY HELD WAS NOT REPRESENTATIVE.

Asked whether the Chamber had taken any steps to avoid trouble on the mines, he said that he knew of nothing, although the Chamber had had the possibility of disturbances under consideration for many months.

Police Intervention --
Though "all was peaceful".

The next witness was Detective Sergeant Steyn, of the Nigel C.I.D. who told how the police has stopped the strike on the mines in his area. At the Nigel mine on August 12, he described how he found the striking Africans sitting quietly in their compounds. There was no disturbance and all was peaceful.

When the five strikers were arrested, the remaining workers demonstrated and compelled the police to release the arrested men.

The next day he found about 1,500 workers camped on the railway embankment outside the compound on the same mine. He said they took up threatening and hostile attitude, and he ordered his men to encircle them.

"Threatening Attitude"

Asked to describe what he meant by "threatening and hostile", Stein said "some were standing, some were sitting, some were singing, some dancing and some waving sticks". Under cross-examination, he admitted that he came to the conclusion that the strikers were threatening without any evidence.

No attempt was made by the police or anybody else to address the strikers or to negotiate with them. The first group of police recruits who were sent into action turned tail when the natives retaliated and ran back to the main body of police, who then opened fire. The Africans then scattered, four apparently being trampled to death, while one subsequently died of bullet wounds. About fifteen shots were fired in all. (IT WILL BE REMEMBERED THAT THE OFFICIAL POLICE STATEMENT ON THE SHOOTING SAID THAT ONLY TWELVE ROUNDS WERE FIRED.)

PEACEFUL MEETING

Giving evidence on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning, Detective Sergeant Boy, described two meetings held by the African Mine Workers' Union at Newtown Market Square, the one on May 19th and the other on August 4th. Both meetings were orderly and peaceful, and it was his opinion that the decisions taken at the meeting were taken openly and freely without any attempt by the Union officials to dictate to the crowd what they should do. On both occasions the motion that strike action should be taken was moved from the floor and after discussion was carried unanimously. On both occasions the chairman, J.B. Marks, warned the miners not to resort to violence, even when confronted by the police.

The case will be resumed on Wednesday, September 18th at 9.30 a.m. to hear further evidence if necessary, from Mr. Limebeer, and will then probably be adjourned to Thursday, September 19th, at 9.30 a.m., when the defence case will open.

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