

Questions and Answers by R.M. Sobukwe.  
(January, 1977)

Q: Who are the Africanists?

A: A simple answer would be that they are the members of the Africanist Movement. But, if one wishes to go deeper into the question, one would say that they are those Africans who believe that African Nationalism is the only liberatory outlook that can bind together the African masses by providing them with a loyalty higher than that of tribe and thus mould them into a militant disciplined force.

Q: How long has your movement been in existence?

A: The germ of the Movement was there even before the advent of the European. When Moshobese brought together the scattered remnants of various African tribes and moulded them into a patriotic Sotho tribe, he was engaged in nation-building. Similarly Shaka's wars whereby he sought to establish a single authority in place of the many tribal authorities of Natal, were, in effect, steps in the direction of nation-building. In the Cape the House of Gcaleka was recognised as the paramount authority. There is no doubt that the pressure of social and economic conditions would in time have given rise to the Union of these territories. As a political organisation, however, we trace our origin to 1912 — the year the ANC was born — with 1944 the year our movement was given that purposiveness which helps to give clear direction and power to a mass struggle. It is in that year that Lembede and those in his immediate circle demanded from the ANC —

1. A clear outlook — African Nationalism and Africanism;

2. A basic policy outlining our fundamental principles with respect to our social intentions, especially of the ultimate future; and

3. A Programme.

The first two demands, Lembede himself met, while the third was met in 1949 when the Africanist (known as the KwaZulu Youth League) provided the ANC with the popular Nation-Building Programme of 1949.

Q: What are your differences with the ANC leadership?

A: First of all we differ radically in our conception of the struggle. We firmly hold that we are oppressed as a subject nation — the African nation. To us, therefore, the struggle is a national struggle. Those of the ANC

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who are its active policy-makers, maintain, in the face of all the hard facts of the SA situation, that ours is a class struggle. We are, according to them, oppressed as WORKERS, both white and black. But it is significant that they make no attempt whatsoever to organise white workers. Their white allies are all of them bourgeoisie!

Secondly, we differ in our attitude to 'co-operation' with other national groups. Perhaps it might be better to say we differ in our understanding of the term 'co-operation'. We believe that co-operation is possible only between equals. There can be no co-operation between oppressor and oppressed, dominating and dominated. That is collaboration, not co-operation. And we cannot collaborate in our own oppression! The ANC leadership, on the other hand, would seem to regard collaboration and co-operation as synonymous. They seem to believe that all that is required for people to be 'equals' is that they should declare that they are equal, and let the trick be done. As the present moment the A.N.C. leadership regards anybody and everybody who is against the Nationalist government (for

whatever reasons) as allies.

This latter attitude is the result of a mentality that continues to speak of South Africa as though it were an island, completely cut off from the continent and, therefore, able to fashion its own policies and programmes, unrelated to and unaffected by those of the other African states. We, on the other hand, have always been acutely aware of the fact that ours is a particular front in a battle raging across the continent. We claim Afrika for the Africans; the ANC claims South Africa for all. To the ANC leadership the present Nationalist government is the properly elected government of South Africa whose policies, however, it does not approve of. And the ANC's main struggle is to get the Nationalists out of power. The fact that the Nationalists are a logical product of past South African history and that what they stand for is approved and supported by the overwhelming majority of whites in the country has apparently escaped the notice of ANC leadership.

We, however, stand for the complete overthrow of white domination. That means that the SA Act of 1909 — that fossilised relic of the whiteman's exclusive privileges and prejudices — must be scrapped.

Q: What is your answer to the accusation that you are anti-white?

A: Our reply has been officially given in a statement appearing in the Golden City Post of Sunday 7th November, 1958 signed by Mr. P.K. Leballo (Chairman) and Mr. S.T. Ngwenane (Secretary). On the material level we just cannot see any possibility of co-operation. To say that we are prepared to accept anybody who subscribes to our programme is but to state a condition that one knows cannot be fulfilled. From past history, not only of this country but of other countries as well, we know that a group in a privileged position never voluntarily relinquishes that position. If some members of the group appear to be sympathetic to the demands of the less-privileged, it is only in so far as those demands do not threaten the privileges of the favoured group. If they (the

### Return to the sources (continuation)

ago, when South Africa's presence in Namibia was declared illegal. It was in 1978, six years ago, when Resolution 435 was passed. South African apartheid is regarded as a crime against humanity, yet to this very day, the racist regime has not been forced out of Namibia. It was in 1968, sixteen years ago, when SWAPO first took up arms against the regime and SWAPO fought inside their country. The military wing of SWAPO was pushed out and is now being denied a reliable adjacent rear base, with the aim of reducing it virtually to an external organisation pre-occupied with the mobilisation of international support. But that is only a temporary setback.

Both the examples cited emphasise one fact that a Liberation Movement should at all times do everything possible to entrench itself internally so that when it suffers reverses such as those PLO and SWAPO experienced, it can all the same continue internally. In short, when all is said and done, our most trusted allies are our people — the African masses.

### Developments on the Enemy Side

The racist regime is doing everything possible to woo the people of Asian origin and the so-called Coloureds to participate in the tri-cameral parliament; it is bent on dividing the black people. There are talks that machinery is being worked out to give urban Africans a top. The nature of such arrangements is still unclear but speculation has it that it might be along similar lines as the dispensation given to Indians and so-called Coloureds. Also, since it will be worked out in consultation with some ethnic leaders, concepts such as confederation espoused by P.W. Botha and federation espoused by the ethnic leaders shall form the basis of such exercises in constitutional dispensation. Or these concepts might appear in modified forms as yet undisclosed. It is clear, however, that there is something in the offing. And, with the seeming successes Botha's regime has scored in detente, the ground is set for his so-called 'reconciliation'.



officials) offer assistance, it is for the purpose of "directing" and "controlling" the struggle of the underprivileged and making sure that it does not become "dangerous".

Q: But are you anti-white or not?

A: What is meant by anti-whiteness? Is it not merely an emotional term without a precise significance? Let me put it this way: in every struggle, whether national or class, the masses do not fight an abstraction. They do not hate oppression or capitalism. They concentrate these and hate the oppressor, be he the Governor-General of a colonial power, the landlord or the factory-owner, or, in South Africa, the white man. But they hate these groups because they associate them with their oppression! Remove the association and you remove the hatred. In South Africa then, once white domination has been overthrown and the white man is no longer "white-man boss" but is an individual member of society, there will be no reason to hate him and he will not be hated even by the masses.

We are not anti-white, therefore. We do not hate it - I rejoice because he is white! We hate him because he is an oppressor. And it is plain as honesty to say I hate the sjambok and not the one who wields it.

Q: Do you regard all whites as oppressors?

A: We regard them all as shareholders in the SA Oppressors Company (Pty) Ltd. There are whites, of course, who are intellectually converted to our cause, but because of their position materially, they cannot fully identify themselves with the struggle of the African people. They want safeguards and check-points all along the way, with the result that the struggle of the people is blunted, stultified and crushed.

Q: Do you include white leftists in your indictment?

A: There are NONE! And there have never been any in South Africa - white or black. All we have had are quacks, ~~du~~ fact, like Christianity, Communism in South Africa has been extremely unfortunate in its choice of representatives.

Q: Do you think the Africanist Movement will last?

A: Not only will it last, it will flourish. History is already vindicating our stand as far as the continent is concerned. We are in step with the continent. And the reason is that we correctly interpret the aspirations of the African people. We are not exaggerating when we say that the demand for membership is more than we can cope with.

Q: Why can't you cope with the demand?

A: Because we lack funds. You see we do not want a blind following. We want an intelligent, informed and politically educated membership. We, therefore, require a full-time information service, full-time organisers and above all, well-run offices. We don't want undisciplined branches mushrooming all over the country. And to maintain the necessary contact, discipline and co-ordination, we need funds.

Q: Do you think the African people will tolerate a splinter movement at this stage?

A: The African people want freedom and they are extremely anxious to find themselves

as a Nation. They are aware of the facility of the post-1949 struggles of the ANC with more and more emphasis on spectacular activity as distinct from principled programmatic action. That is why they have welcomed our emergence.

Q: What is your attitude to the ANC?

A: We say, "Let the best man win". If the A.N.C. launched campaigns which we believe are for the good of our people, we will support them wholeheartedly. But we are not going to get ourselves involved in muddled, clumsy, senseless activity. We have the 1949 Programme to implement, and as it unfolds and its dynamism is revealed, the A.N.C. will cease to exist. Perhaps the Congress Alliance may take out a precarious existence for some time. But there will be only one organisation for the African people - and that will be the Africanist Movement.

Q: Have you decided on a name yet?

A: No - not on a national level. Such matters as a name, policy, the Constitution, etc. will be finalised at the National Convention which we hope to hold in April. From then onwards we shall operate on a National level. And from then onwards we will sweep the country.

#### Notes

(i) The Africanist Movement was founded out of necessity by our fore-fathers who were faced with the marauding activities of the European Colonialists who invaded our country in search of land, labour and largesse. The immortal principles of that ancestral movement can be identified in the writings of the Africanists of modern times. Dr. Pixley ka Izak Seme, Anthony Muziwakhe Lembeke, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe and Stephen Bantu Biko who have all refuted the false allegations of reverse racialism in our struggle for National independence and social emancipation and to show, beyond the peradventure of a doubt, that Africanists are not racialists but are realists and revolutionaries. The validity of those principles has been profoundly vindicated in the theses of the Universal Right of Nations to self-determination.

(ii) Sobukwe clearly points out here that our differences were originally not with the ANC as such but with the ANC leadership as a consequence of its deviation from the basic policy of the movement and the betrayal of fundamental interests of the African people. The South African Native National Congress was founded in 1912 as a direct result of the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 on the basis of the South Africa Act of 1909 which barred the indigenous people from the political process in the country of their birth. The fundamental differences have in recent years manifested themselves in the refusal, by the ANC leadership, to insist that the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) take a definite stand on the issue of the legal international status of racist South Africa after the United General Assembly had rejected credentials of the delegation of South Africa as being illegitimate and therefore unworthy of representing the majority of the people of that country as the

United Nations. The ANC leadership thus consciously accepted the legitimacy of the status quo in South Africa and thereby demonstrated that all it wanted was ineffectual reform to carve, for itself, a role to play in the present set-up so that the South Africa of today remains the South Africa of tomorrow. No revolution!

(iii) The white allies of the leadership of the ANC have already repudiated that position. Breytenbach, the famous Afrikaans poet who lives in exile in Paris with his Vietnamese wife, was a founder member of OKHELA, an organisation of whites, which had origins in the power struggles within the ANC. Breytenbach has said that the ANC was then almost - and is now (totally) - in the hands of the South African Communist Party. OKHELA had come to the conclusion that it was an illusion to think that whites could be completely accepted by blacks as part of their struggle against white domination due to the wide gulf created by generations of apartheid. OKHELA sensibly pleaded for an alternative policy in which the liberation of blacks would be conducted by blacks while OKHELA concentrated on the white society to liberate the whites from their fears and Narrow-Mindedness.

(iv) We have three immaculate and impeccable testimonies in support of this contention from individuals who could not be accused of parochial prejudice. These are Sydney Bunting, James La Guma and Moses Koaane. Bunting argued that the setting for a successful revolution was not yet present in South Africa because of the apathy and backwardness of the blacks who could therefore not be Communists in their own right. He said that blacks were in the majority in the SACP but ordinary whites had to be employed to carry out work for which no black leadership had emerged to undertake, and he therefore concluded that "Africans had long since come to regard white leadership as an inevitable though disagreeable necessity".

James La Guma replied to say that Bunting's contention was repudiated by everyday experience so that the blacks were forced to come to the conclusion that the executive committee of the SACP considered that the mass movement of the "Natives" should be held back until such time as the white worker was ready to extend his favour. But it was Harry Haywood, the black American Communist, who had been with La Guma in Moscow who related how Rebecca Bunting burst out in one of the committees of the Comintern asking: "Who will guarantee equality for whites in a black republic in South Africa?" Their policy, she enlightened the startled revolutionaries, is to throw the whites into the sea. At last, Harry Haywood sadly observed the political cat of the SACP had been let out of the bag, and it was a many chauvinistic creature. This was something the black secretary of the SACP was to express himself bluntly upon in 1934.

Moses Koaane noted that "Our white party members are ideologically not South Africans. They are foreigners who know





*PAC Chairman and Yugoslavian Foreign Minister exchanging experiences*

...nating above, and are not interested in, the country in which they are at present living."

In 1933 Kautze pursued his argument by accusing the whites in the SACP of "destroying every effort from mass organisation by blatantly taking control and dominating its policy". He was accused of "bourgeois revisionism" and temporarily expelled from the organisation. When the Central Committee of the SACP dissolved the party without consulting the membership in 1950 it was pointed out that "the rank-and-file was not prepared or able to face the dangers and difficulties of Underground work".

The present position of the Congress Alliance which is dominated by the SACP is that "in a single National state the demand is for equal democratic rights and not for secession or self-determination" hence the formation of the United Democratic Front inside South Africa in the pursuit of a broad humanism "which claims equality but not domination for the African people" so that their interests are "judicially balanced against those of the whites to achieve equality and justice."

(v) The banning of the PAC in 1960 was followed by the emergence in 1969 of the Black Consciousness Movement and associated organisations which were summarily banned in 1977 and were followed in turn by the founding of the AZANIA PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION in 1978. The latter spearheaded the establishment of the NATIONAL FORUM in 1983. All these successive organisations have one basic thing in common, their understanding and interpretation of the National Mandate of our people which is fundamentally based on the principles of the AFRICANIST MOVEMENT. No force on earth, nuclear weapons included, can destroy the roots of such a profound and dynamic movement.



*Coordinator of Women's Section Comrade Joyce Sifuba at an International Conference*



*PAC Chief Representative in Nigeria Theo Bidi, emphasising a point in his discussion with Nigeria's High Commissioner to Tanzania, the PAC Chairman and Administrative Secretary*

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