

sympathy. The privileged upper stratum exists in the form of the Negro intelligentsia, very weak numerically and, on the whole, backward in its political development. It was at first the leader of the struggle against whites, but was very soon converted into a tame opposition. There are of course, even now native intellectuals, for instance, teachers, in direct touch with the mood of the masses, and themselves true to the traditions of hatred to the whites. But all of them are, in some form or other, engaged in government service, they have had an English education in English schools and, apart from fear, they are all the time under the influence of the corrupting policy of British imperialism, the government apparatus and the church. Their vacillations are due to the fact that they are not interpreters of the will of an already firmly established class (bourgeois, working class or peasant). Because the Negro proletariat is developing and growing more rapidly than the bourgeois (which practically does not yet exist), it will become the class which will lead the national-liberation struggle and will bring many intellectuals to its side. But hitherto this absence of a leading class in the struggle has affected the character of the national organisation. In this situation, the bourgeoisie thinks it will be able to manage just with a thin layer of a native bureaucracy. Into its subjugation-apparatus, it includes chiefs of tribes, bestowing on them illusory administrative functions, – in the Transkei<sup>2</sup> territory a national council (Buncha)<sup>3</sup> has been established which has no attributes of power whatever, black priests are given every possible encouragement and a staff of paid Negro politicians is being gradually selected. The Chamber of Mines has even a special newspaper in the vernacular, 'Umtatele Va Bantu' (The People's Lawyer)<sup>4</sup> which is run on lines in keeping with the interests of the mining industry and British imperialism. Of the national organisations, the African National Congress (ANC) reflects the above-mentioned influences more clearly than any favourable complexion by fine words about national liberation. Considering that at the conventions of the African National Congress, chiefs (i.e. of tribes), white bishops imperialistically minded Britishers set the tune, one can well imagine what kind of 'progressive' role the ANC can play now. Its 'left' section and leaders (of the Gumede type) are entirely in the leading strings of these people, and are of some use only when oppositional language is required against the government and the Herzog Party. This explains the insignificance if the influence and popularity of the African National Congress.

There is practically the same story in regard to the national 'labour' organisations. The organisation established by Kadali, the ICW (Union of industrial and commercial workers) was the first attempt to organise the

2. Transkei.

3. Bunga.

4. The correct transliteration and translation: 'Umteteli wa Bantu' ('People's Voice').

black proletariat. But even this organisation did not spring up as a labour organisation but rather as a general-nationalist organisation, carrying on agitation in a general-nationalist spirit. This explains the extraordinary influx of members in the ICW. That Kadali developed very rapidly into an adventurer and that nearly all the leaders of the 'union' followed suit, is of course due to the fact that the Negro section of the working class is not yet a force capable of producing from its midst (or attracting from the midst of other social groups, for instance, the intellectuals), steadfast leaders with a definite ideology.

RGASPI, 495/64/82/73–5. For the full text of the document see: RGASPI, 495/64/82/44–75.

Original in English (Comintern translation of the Russian original text).

Typed. Copy.

Stamped: 4694 – 4.IX.1929

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**Note by B.I. Idelson,  
10 August 1929**

10 August 1929

Dear Com. ...<sup>1</sup>

Despite the fact that the report<sup>2</sup> came out long, it could only<sup>3</sup> general.

Please inform me if comrades who deal with these issues have questions.

I have not written in the report what my activities were because I pointed to the shortcomings in work.<sup>4</sup> My task was to improve these shortcomings, as well as to carry out the main instruction, i.e. to check the implementation of the resolution of the C.I. The latter is now being implemented, of course, still at an early stage

Louis.

1. The name of the addressee is cut out in the original.

2. This document is an accompanying notice to the original Russian manuscript of Idelson's report (see document 71 for an extract from the English translation of this report).

3. [be?] Illegible word after 'only' in the original.

4. Most probably, Idelson means the work of the CPSA.



I had to write the second part of the report in a hurry and in an inconvenient situation. I am afraid that it will not be possible to read it without typing it beforehand. (There are no secrets there, except for the part about the Party).

RGASPI, 495/19/189/1.

Original in Russian.

Handwritten.

Stamped: No. 2415 10.AUG.1929

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**Circular of League of African Rights,  
1 September 1929**

LEAGUE OF AFRICAN RIGHTS.

Address:-  
41a, Fox Street (Box 4179),  
Johannesburg.  
1st September, 1929.

**President:**

J.T. Gumede.

**Vice-President:**

A. Modiagotla.

**Secretaries:**

A. Nzula.

E.R. Roux.

**Chairman:**

S.P. Bunting.

**Vice-Chairman:**

N.B. Tantsi.

M. Kotane.

S.M. Kotu.

**Treasurers:**

C. Baker.

S.P. Bunting.

**Committee:**

B. Molobi.

T.W. Thibedi.

Dear Sir,

We desire to call your attention to the objects of the above league, as set forth in the enclosed copy of its constitution. As you will see, it has been formed with the definite object of launching a 'Petition of Rights', to which it is hoped to obtain a million signatures, embodying some of the most elementary demands of the Native, Coloured and Indian people of the Union, to be

supported by meetings, processions and demonstrations, all culminating on Dingaan's Day<sup>1</sup> next.

The League's appeal is to the entire non-European population, whether organised or not, but it is desired to enlist the support of all non-European associations, etc., whose organisational machinery can be of great assistance, especially in obtaining signatures for the petition and in calling public meetings.

We may add that the League is in no way designed to supplant or interfere with any existing bodies; it only invites their co-operation in this particular campaign, which, we may add, is a perfectly constitutional one. It is felt that the demands are common to practically all the bodies concerned and are such as to command absolutely unanimous support from all non-European and even from the more liberal European elements. The promoters of the League have no other object in view than to see that its task is successfully carried out on a pan-South African scale, if possible before General Hertzog's Native Bills are put through, for it is contemplated that such a demonstration of solidarity on the part of the subject races cannot but give the Government pause in its reactionary proposals.<sup>2</sup>

In the hope that you will assist in the work, we enclose ..... forms of petition (Nos. .... to .....), and ask you, and with you any organisation with which you may be connected, to take up actively in the interest of yourself and your countrymen the task of getting signatures and arranging meetings of support. The signature of every adult African (including Coloured and Indian) should be solicited (and also of any European sympathiser), whether educated or illiterate, voter or non-voter, men and women, in town and in country. Signatures can be written on both sides of the sheet. In the case of those who cannot write, the name and address should be written out for them and they should affix their mark ('X') immediately after the name.

As soon as five sheets have been filled up they should be returned to us, and so on, five at a time. The matter is urgent, especially in view of the Nationalist Party demand for immediate anti-native legislation and of General Smuts' proposal to tighten up the Native Administration Act. The petition must therefore be proceeded with AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE. In order to produce the desired effect we look not to the mere presentation of the

1. Dingaan (Dingane) Day – the day of the Battle of the Blood River (16 December 1838) when advancing Boer commandos defeated Zulu warriors under their ruler Dingaan (Dingane, 1795–1840), slaughtering thousands. The day became a symbol of victory for the Boers, commemorated as the 'Covenant Day'. The CPSA and later the ANC turned it into the day of protests and a symbol of struggle, commemorating it as the 'Heroes' Day'. After 1994 it became a public holiday, the 'Day of Reconciliation'.

2. There is a single line in pencil in the left margin opposite this paragraph.