

DOCUMENT 22:

Manifesto of the Communist Party of South Africa adopted at the Cape Town conference held on July 30-31 and August 1, 1921.

The Communist Party of South Africa, which has been formed by the union of the former International Socialist League (S.A.), Social Democratic Federation of Capetown, Communist Party of Capetown, Jewish Socialist Society of Capetown, Jewish Socialist Society (Poalei Zion) of Johannesburg, Marxian Club of Durban, and other Socialist bodies and individuals, and which expects shortly to be affiliated to the World Communist International, makes its appeal to all South African workers, organised and unorganised, white and black, to join in promoting the *overthrow of the capitalist system and outlawry of the capitalist class, and the establishment of a Commonwealth of Workers* throughout the World.

What does this mean?

All recorded history is the history of class struggles and consequent evolutionary changes in the form of society; the class divisions and institutions varying from age to age according to the current economic basis, and each form being superseded by another when its mission is fulfilled. Today this is more true than ever. Under the form of society dictated by modern capitalist production, the means of life are concentrated in the hands of a small privileged class, which exploits the propertyless working masses, appropriates all the product of their labour, reduces them to the lowest and most servile level of existence that will permit them to continue working and reproducing their kind, and in addition obtains, by virtue of that economic supremacy, control of the entire State Power. This regime of contradiction between 'social production' and 'individual appropriation', of irreconcilable

antagonism between masters and man, employers and employed, property owners and proletarians – the *class struggle* of today – has brought mankind into unprecedented conflict, misery and chaos – a veritable abomination of desolation and terror. But it is fast approaching a crisis entailing its *overthrow by the revolting masses in favour of a New Order*, the transition to which will be masterfully controlled by a politically victorious working class, but the eventual outcome of which will be an emancipated world, a society of economic and social equals wherein class divisions, privileges and disabilities will for the first time in history be impossible; a system of social ownership of the means of production industrially administered by the workers on an organised and harmonious plan, ensuring from every man according to his capacity and to every man according to his needs, under the motto ‘All for each and each for All’.

This *Social Revolution* is the essential objective of the Labour Movement, the end towards which every step it takes must directly tend. The task is no mere pastime; it is a fight, a grim, often a dangerous, sometimes a mortal fight. It is idle to deny the war between the classes, or to pretend it can somehow be composed by a drawn battle or an armistice. So elemental a conflict – which a defeat of Labour obviously only prolongs – can be solved by nothing short of the world wide destruction of the capitalist power; and it is in that direction that the world is actually evolving, for Russia is only the first country where the working class has realised in practical fashion that industry needs no exploiters, and agriculture no landlords, by *locking them out*. That pioneer victory has set the pace for the politics of the whole world today; everyone feels that others are bound to follow the Russian lead. The governments representing the bourgeois power, having *strained every nerve to strangle that young Workers’ Republic*, are now all the more determined to prevent its example from spreading, and are ready to adopt every method to that end, from diplomatic chicanery, false propaganda in press, school, pulpit and platform, economic pressure and intimidation, artificial trade depression, hypocritical appeals to snobbery, patriotism, religious prejudice and racial fear or pride, to the brute force of the *Mailed Fist and the Iron Heel* wherever they dare. Lately they have instituted a determined campaign all over the world to reduce wages. They are *criminally conspiring* to maintain as long as they can their decadent, outworn, slave-grinding system with its political expression, the so-called democratic state, notwithstanding that, as a glance at any day’s newspaper will show, it has not only failed to fulfil a single one of the promises still held out for it, but, by crushing the workers with the perpetual dread or actuality of unemployment, starvation, repression, massacre and war, it is driving mankind ever deeper into the abyss.

It is time for the Labour Movement in South Africa to hearken to the call of the times, to discard its futile reformism, its misleader’s careerism, its petty middle class opportunism, its subservient snobbery and cowardice, of the past – all typical of the ‘social patriotic’ Second International which failed the workers so miserably at the outbreak of the great war, and which is even now being rehashed as the ‘2½ International’. It is time to recognise the historic and titanic nature of the fight,

and to unite all our forces in countering the enemy's palpable activity with an even more active *Red forward movement, political and industrial*, of all the workers; a Great Push so militant, well organised and unified by solidarity as to deliver, in co-operation with the advanced Labour Movement of the rest of the world, the knock-out blow to a hated class and system. To this standard the United Communist Party of S.A. bids *all class conscious workers* rally, whether previously adherents of any other party or not.

For the immediate future, indeed, the main duty of the party and of every member of it is to establish the widest and closest possible contact with workers of *all ranks and races* and to propagate the Communist gospel among them, in the first instance among the industrial masses, who must provide the 'storm troops' of the Revolution, and secondly among the rural toilers. Even that path will not be smooth. Immediate repression in the form of raids, prosecutions, mob attacks and bloodshed by 'Black (and Tan) Hundreds' or '*White Guards*' may be looked for as the propaganda is seen to be working among the submissive *helot races whose enlightenment and organisation the ruling class dreads above all*. The Communists will therefore proceed neither timorously nor tactlessly, losing no opportunity of demonstrating that, inasmuch as the cheap docile labour is what attracts the world capitalist investor to South Africa, so its understanding of and conscious entry into the working class movement is the most deadly blow South Africa can deal to world capitalism.

But propaganda 'is not enough' in these days of rapid change and action, and the party will be alert to turn to the advantage of the Labour Movement wherever possible any phase of discontent or disaffection, any opposition to imperialism, any indignation at the accepted 'skiet skiet' native policy, any genuine revolt of the masses against tyranny; striving always to hasten, sharpen and shorten the inevitably conflict, to guide and inspire the struggling workers in times of stress and trial like the present, and generally to act as the revolutionary vanguard of the Labour army of South Africa.

In any sacrifices it may be called upon to undergo the party will derive great strength and inspiration from its connection with the *World Communist International*, at present headed by the Russian Communist Party, with which is also closely identified the Red Trade Union International; besides which circumstances will bring it from time to time into specially close touch with the movement in Britain, where the struggle of the miners has recently disclosed unexampled heroism and endurance. Heartened by this sense of solidarity and support, and by the exhilarating comradeship known only to fellow workers in a militant movement, we advance to do battle with the capitalist Goliath, confident that if we play our part unflinchingly we shall in our lifetime see the robber and butcher class brought low and the *workers' 'Soviets' in power*. We hold aloft the glistening banner of the World Commune to be, when the class war shall have been for ever stamped out, when mankind shall no longer cower under the bludgeon of the oppressor, when the necessities and amenities of life, the comfort and the culture, the honour and the power, shall be to him who toils not to him who exploits, when

none shall be called master and none servant, but all shall be fellow workers in common.

Down with the Capitalist System!

Up with the Workers' Commune!

Speed the Social Revolution!