

**Speech of A. Nzula at World Congress,
International Red Aid (MOPR),
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WORLD CONGRESS MOPR.

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Speaker: Jackson (South Africa)

Comrades, allow me on behalf of the working and toiling masses of South Africa to bring hearty greetings to the International Red Aid Congress. (Applause).

Comrades, we formed the Red Aid in South Africa in 1931, before then we had what we called groups of the Red Aid in Capetown and Johannesburg, but these were mainly groups of foreign workers, mainly workers from Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and such countries. And they mainly concerned themselves with the question of sending aid to Poland and these various countries, but did not participate in the struggle in South Africa. In 1931, on the initiative and suggestion of the Executive Committee of the MOPR, we decided that it was necessary to form a Section in South Africa which would pay more attention to the situation that was existing in South Africa, than these groups were doing. It was under these circumstances that the Section in South Africa was formed. It was also in the period of very sharp struggle in South Africa that we formed the Section. Comrade Padmore in the previous speech explained to you the terror under which the Negro masses live in Africa. It was at a period when we were able to mobilise the masses against this terror, especially the passports,¹ that MOPR came into the scene in South Africa and participated to a great extent in the struggle. We were able in the course of 6 months, that is from February to July 1931, to organise 500 individual members into the MOPR, as well as securing the affiliation of the revolutionary trade unions and also some reformist unions in South Africa. We were able also to render very much assistance to the victims of the white terror. In December 1930, we had a great campaign against the passes that Comrade Padmore told you about, when the natives in South Africa on December 16 came out in the street and engaged in mass burning of these passports which the bourgeoisie are forcing upon them. The result of this action was that the bourgeoisie carried on a whole campaign of terror against the masses. Especially in Durban, Natal, where we had

1. 'Passports' here refers to the passes which adult African males were required to carry in South Africa as a means of controlling their movements, places of residence, and employment history.

hundreds of arrests, hundreds of deportation and several workers being killed. The Red Aid was able to help not only with legal defence of the arrested comrades, but also was able to support the dependants of these arrested comrades.

We were also able to participate in the strike of the garment workers during the end of 1931, and we were able to draw in masses of workers into our struggle. Another action of the Red Aid was the coming out in defence of the struggle of the toiling masses in South West Africa, the former German colony, which is now part of the Union of South Africa, where because of the crisis and the unemployment, the masses of the peasantry are unable to pay their taxes and therefore refuse to pay their taxes. The Government of South Africa sent airplanes, tanks and machine guns to destroy whole villages of the natives because of their refusal and their inability to pay taxes. The I.L.D. was able to organise not only the native workers, but also white workers in defence of the people of South West Africa.

We have also participated in some international campaigns, like the demonstration against the execution of Baghat Singh,² the Indian terrorist, and also in the case of the Meerut prisoners,³ and recently to a great extent in Scottsboro campaign.⁴

We have weaknesses and these weaknesses are our failure to establish contact with the other countries in Africa. We have failed to established contact up to now with East, West and Central Africa because naturally we being in the position where we have some defence movement in Africa,⁵ it is clearly our duty to take the leadership in these countries.

We have also been weak in our mass work among the peasantry. We have not done as much as we could have done in this respect also. But the most serious drawback to our work at the present time is the sectarianism which has lately found expression in the South African Section where our comrades in fighting against renegade opportunists who have left the Communist Party of South Africa,⁶ have more or less carried out a policy which failed to convince the masses of the correctness and of the importance of their position against these opportunists. In other words, our comrades have tried to treat the Red Aid in South Africa as if it was the Communist Party and the people who are not fit to be in the Communist Party must also be expelled from the Red Aid.

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2. Bhagat Singh, a non-communist Punjabi militant convicted of murdering a British official. He was hanged on 23 March 1931 and subsequently became a nationalist hero.
 3. Thirty-three Indian Communists and trade unionists arrested in March 1929 on charges of conspiracy and tried in Meerut in a trial that lasted for two and half years. All 33 were convicted but by the end of 1933 almost all were released.
 4. Scottsboro Campaign: a campaign to save from an execution nine black Americans accused of raping two white girls on a train on 25 March 1931. The CPUSA and the Comintern rallied around their case and organised protest actions in many countries of the world.
 5. International Red Aid branch (Ikaka la Basebenzi) in South Africa.
 6. Obviously, the 'Buntingists' expelled from the CPSA.

While I am about it I must revert to the fact that we have also been able, mainly through the instrumentality of the International Negro Committee to establish a Section in Madagascar, a colony of French imperialism. Our section in Madagascar has been active in the struggle of the workers in Madagascar, carrying out mass campaigns for the release of political prisoners, etc.

Comrades, the crisis in Africa is very severe. Whole masses of Negroes are destitute, they have nothing. Whole masses of Negroes are today looking for a way out from the position in which the imperialists have driven them. Because of this, we have wonderful opportunity in Africa. Because of this, we see organisations springing up in Africa, and imperialists are trying to stem this tide of revolt of the Negro toiling masses in Africa by white terror. Comrades, we have spoken of terror in this Congress here. We know the imperialists are only able to maintain their position in the colonies by means of terror, by brutal violent terror. Terror which is intended to drive fear into the masses. To drive such fear into them ^{that} they will not protest against the most abominable practices the imperialists may impose upon them. This is the first terror we have to face in Africa. The open terror, the brutal terror which terrorises and makes people go in fear every moment of their existence. As I say, because of this the Red Aid comes as a light, an inspiration which will be able to show the Negro masses that in their struggle they are not alone, that in their struggle they have allies in various parts of the world, and they can be confident of receiving the support of these people.

Comrades, we must increase our mass work in South Africa and in this respect I must emphasise like the other comrades have spoken this evening, that the comrades in the metropolitan countries in England and France can do a great deal in assisting the Negro workers in Africa, they have much greater possibility as well as experience. They also have the elementary rights of moving about from one country to another in Africa. And they can make use of this better than the Negro worker in Africa, who is denied the right of movement because these passports are things that tie him down. They cannot move without these passports, they keep African isolated. It is far easier to get to Africa from Europe than to the various sections of Africa in Africa itself. And today we see a big delegation of Negroes here, not because of work that was done in South Africa, but mainly through the International Trade Union of Negro Workers operating in Europe. Because of this, our comrades must become aware that through their initiative we shall be able to establish contact with Africa and they must assist in this respect.

Comrades, long live the International Red Aid Congress! Long live the solidarity of the workers of all countries!

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Original in English.

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Steno.