

**Letter from a Group of Johannesburg Communists to PB, CPSA,  
27 February 1934<sup>1</sup>**

JOHANNESBURG  
27th February 1934.

The Secretariat,  
Political Bureau,  
Communist Party (S.A.),  
JOHANNESBURG

Dear Comrades,

We the undersigned members of the D.P.C. and C.P. nuclei, District No.1. wish to declare the following: -

It is obvious that since the expulsion from the ranks of the C.P. of Mr. Bunting and other non-Marxian and reformist elements, the Party has been reduced to a sect and is completely isolated from the masses of South Africa.

It is our honest conviction that one of the causes of these setbacks to the Party was the existence of a clique, we have no milder expression, of chiefly three members of the Party, namely M. & D. Wolton and L. Bach, who by pursuing a wrong policy of a 'Leftist' nature, even since these mistakes were clearly pointed out in the Comintern letter published in the Communist Review of December 1932,<sup>2</sup> have succeeded in smashing <sup>what</sup> ~~up~~ Mr. Bunting, though not a Marxist-Leninist, had built up.

Since M. & D. Wolton are no more in the Party, we wish to confine ourselves to a statement about the third person of the clique, L. Bach. We have observed for the past year that Bach has manifested anti-Bolshevik tendencies of a dangerous character.

We accuse L. Bach of the following: -

1. Of being dishonest to the Party (false reports to the Party centre from Durban; also regarding the Garment Workers' Union and Baking Employees Association).

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1. This document refers to the internal party dispute between L. Bach and his supporters and an opposing group which included not only the 12 signatories of this letter, but also Moses Kotane, Edward Roux and others. The matter was discussed at special meetings of Johannesburg party members at the end of May and early June (see document 33, vol. II). Part of Bach's response to the accusation made against him appears in his letter of 9 August 1934 (document 36, vol. II).
  2. The reference is to the article, 'The Work of Communists of South Africa in the Trade Unions', attributed to Harry Pollitt, General Secretary of the CPGB, and published in the journal of the CPGB, *Communist Review*, no. 12, vol. IV, December 1932. Pollitt criticised both 'left sectarian' and 'right opportunist' practices in the CPSA. Most probably, the article was written on the basis of information provided by Eugene Dennis who was in South Africa during most of 1932. Publications in the journal were regarded as reflecting an authoritative Comintern viewpoint.

2. Of having strong adventurist tendencies (the Germiston affair – When there was a threat that Comrade Marks would be shot, Bach demanded of Party comrades, Coms. Basch, Voronoff, Levenberg, Margolius and others, that they go to the meeting with revolvers to defend Marks by shooting at those who would attempt to attack him; his intention of instigating guerrilla warfare in Natal in 1933; his demands that the Party should advise workers to strike when he knows full well that the existing conditions in these cases made striking impossible).

3. Of being a political crook (his intention of removing Comrade Pilane by methods of intrigue and wire-pulling; deceiving the Political Bureau into placing his own supporters as leaders of the Party fractions in certain mass organisations).

We consider these tendencies of L. Bach to be of permanent nature, and consequently of great danger to the Party. We therefore consider L. Bach to be an unfit member of the C.C. and P.B. and any of the District Committees, and urge the Political Bureau to remove him from these organs.

We consider our action in writing this letter to be in accordance with the communist principles, the principle of rank and file control over the leadership of the Party, and in exercising this right, we urge the P.B. to consider the good of the Party, and to remove L. Bach from the leading organs of the Party. Should this be done, the decision should be published in 'Umsebenzi' or otherwise that all Party members be advised in writing.

In the event of L. Bach not being removed from the leadership and leading organs of the Party, we feel, as honest and sincere<sup>3</sup> communists, that it will be impossible for us to continue our activities under the leadership of such a political crook and dishonest person.

We feel that, as this is a matter of vital importance, which affects the growth of the influence of the Party, this letter will receive the earnest and careful consideration of the Political Bureau.

With Communist Greetings,

1. M. Basch

2. Hilda Saks

3. S. Flior

4. A. Kagan

5. A. C. Spilkin

6. B. Abromowitz

7. S. Golomb

8. J. Shochet

9. B. Levenberg

10. P. Voronoff

11. J. Mpama

12. W.M. Lunt<sup>4</sup> (exc. last para. but one).<sup>5</sup>

3. There is a typed-over word after 'sincere' in the original.

4. The letter is unsigned. The list of names is typed.

5. The phrase in brackets means that W.M. Lunt did not accept the next to last paragraph of the letter, i.e., a threat by other signatories to resign from the Party.



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We request that copies should be sent to the Central Control Commission, Moscow; District Party Committees No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3.

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RGASPI, 495/64/137/18-19.

Original in English.

Typed. Copy.

Stamped: 13.AUG.1934 - 4709

Inscriptions: 1) Letter of Politbureau of the CP of S. Africa to all organisations.  
27/II/1934 (in Russian).  
2) CP 21/ t. (in Russian)

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**Letter from D.G. Wolton to ECCL,  
13 March 1934 (Extracts)**

REPORT OF COMRADE D.G. WOLTON (LATE S.A.<sup>1</sup>) TO ECCL.

March 13th 1934

Dear Comrades,

In September 1930, I received instructions in Moscow to proceed to South Africa and had the general political line to be pursued in South Africa laid down. I had spent some years in South Africa prior to this but was then working in England with CPGB.

I arrived in South Africa in November 1930 and found the Party in a very bad state. The Party centre was on<sup>2</sup> the point of being moved from Johannesburg to Capetown, the Party organ was being issued monthly and was produced in Capetown, the Party membership had declined to a mere handful of 40 or 50, and the white chauvinist Bunting leadership was firmly entrenched in the leading positions. Except for occasional loosely organised mass meetings, no activities whatever were being conducted. The Red Trade Unions had declined and<sup>3</sup> except for a small group of Laundry workers were non-existent. There were no mass organisations and the general influence of the Party was at a very low level, whilst organisationally the Party itself was in a chronic state of disintegration, and the few leading native Comrades were on the point of being lost.

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1. Until recently in South Africa.
  2. There is a typed-over word after 'on' in the original.
  3. There is a typed-over word after 'and' in the original.