

different result. It is still time to stiffen up the negro masses in Africa by work on the spot.

D. Ivon Jones

RGASPI, 495/155/3/4-5.

Original in English.

Typed. Copy.

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Report of EC to Second Congress, CPSA, 28 April 1923

THE COMMUNIST PARTY. (SOUTH AFRICAN SECTION OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL) REPORT OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE. FOR PERIOD AUGUST 1ST., 1921 TO MARCH 31ST., 1923.

Comrades,

At the inaugural Congress of the South African Section of the Communist International it was decided to hold the next Congress in Durban during Easter, 1922.

This decision the Central Executive was unable to carry out owing to the strike and subsequent proclamation of Martial Law, involving death to one of our members and arrest and imprisonment of others, including the general secretary-editor.

The Central Executive, after taking the feeling of the Branches and members in the various centres, decided to use the power given it under Rule 6 (b), to call a Congress at the end of April this year. We therefore have a period of twenty months to review.

This will be done as briefly as is consistent with the importance of the period under examination. We are handicapped somewhat in making this report by being deprived of the use of our Minute Book, which is in the hands of the C.I.D., Johannesburg; consequently, we are unable to give so detailed an account of the activities of the Party as would otherwise be the case.

The Central Executive.

It will be noticed that of the original members elected to the Central Executive only four remain, viz: - Comrades H. Lee, R. Gelblum, R. Rabb and the general secretary-editor. Comrade J. Den Bakker, A. Goldman and T. Chapman resigned, G. Arnold left the Party during the martial law period. Comrades S.P.

and Mrs. Bunting vacated their seats when they left on delegation to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. Comrade Sydney Ward assumed the treasurership in place of Comrade Bunting, but the office of Chairman of the Party has remained vacant since the resignation of Comrade C.B. Tyler when he was appointed national organiser of the B.W.I.U.¹ E.M. Pincus never took his seat on the Committee as his society, the Paoli Zion, refused to become part of the Communist Party. Comrade Mrs. Bourke, who was elected to the Executive under Rule 5 (c), left for Australia.

The members of the Committee which presents this report are Comrades J. First, C.F. Glass, H. Lee, R. Rabb, R. Gelblum, S. Schurin, J. Righthouse, B. Blumkamp, S. Ward, J. Oates, S. Barlin and W.H. Andrews.

The attendances of the Committee cannot be given for the reason above stated.

It may be noted that from March 10th. until May 12th. 1922, the period of Martial Law, no meetings were held of which minutes were kept, although several informal meetings were held between those dates.

The work of the period has been, as heretofore, largely of a propaganda character, and we in South Africa have felt the effect of the general offensive of the capitalist class and of the subsequent retirement of the revolutionary wave which started in 1917.

The stagnation in trade has not been without its effect, not only on our finances, but also on the personnel of the Party.

The shrinkage of the number of subscribers to the Party organ and of our membership, resulting in the disappearance of the Durban, Krugersdorp and Springs branches during the early part of the period under review, culminating in the cessation of our activities on the Rand during the Martial Law period, marked the most critical period of the Party's history.

Since then there has been a gradual recovery. The list of subscribers to the 'International', always an index of the state of the Party, again shows an upward tendency, and the increasing membership is a reflection of the greater activity of the Party and the growth of revolutionary opinion of workers.

Russian famine relief.

The Russian Famine in 1921-22, and the consequent appalling suffering and loss of life, led to the formation of the Russian Famine Relief Committees, with headquarters in Johannesburg.

The very greatest difficulty was experienced in getting an organisation going, but mainly owing to the efforts of the Communists and a few friends a considerable amount of mealie meal, beans and some clothing was despatched to the starving Russian people. £1,300 in cash, besides 867 bags of Maize, 820

1. Building Workers' Industrial Union.

bags of Meal and 3 bales of clothing was sent during the period the committees were in existence. Also CT Sent £390 aimed to Friends.

Comrade J. First ably carried out the duties of hon. secretary to the headquarters' committee.

Just at this time, August 29th. 1921, the Party lost by death Comrade J. Colin Wade, who was one of the ablest and most loved of the comrades. He was, at his own request, cremated at Brixton, where all sections of the community attended to do honour to a fearless fighter and a loveable man.

Congresses of the Communist International.

The Party has had representatives at the last two Congresses of the Communist International. In 1921 Comrade D. Ivon Jones and Comrade Sam Barlin, and in 1922 Comrades Mr. and Mrs. S.P. Bunting. At the last Congress Comrade J. Campbell acted as alternative delegate during Mrs. Bunting's absence through illness. Comrade W.H. Andrews, General Secretary of the Party, was elected as a member of the E.C.C.I. for 1923.

Propaganda.

The Communists of South Africa have not escaped the persecutions of the ruling class which has been directed against them in all countries. In August 1921 Comrades W.H. Harrison, W. Green, D.L. Dryburgh and W. Dryburgh, members of the Cape Town Branch, were arrested for publishing a leaflet and making speeches denouncing the brutality of the Government at Bulhoek, Cape Province, when a large number of unarmed natives were slaughtered by the police under Colonel Truter. Comrade Harrison was fined £75 or six months' imprisonment, Comrade W. Dryburgh £10 or two weeks' imprisonment and Comrade W. Green and D.L. Dryburgh £40 each or four months' imprisonment. The fines of the two latter were paid by the Cape Town Branch and on appeal the decisions in the cases of the two former were set aside.

At Benoni Comrade T. Chapman was summoned for a breach of the Municipal bye-laws, it being alleged that he caused an obstruction to traffic by holding a public meeting at Perry's corner, Benoni. He was found guilty and sentence suspended for six months. An appeal was lodged but owing to the neglect of the solicitors and counsel who had the case in hand, the appeal was dismissed without an hearing. The meetings, however, have been continued regularly since at the same spot and no further action has been taken by the police.

In October 1922, Comrade D.L. Dryburgh and H.M. Fridjohn (the latter a new recruit of the Cape Town Branch) were hauled before the court and charged with 'delivering a public address in a street, without permission'. Both were found guilty and reprimanded. The meetings still continue and no further action has been taken by the authorities.

The most noteworthy effort of a propaganda character was the visit of Comrade Tom Mann. A Johannesburg joint committee of Trade Unions and the Communist Party took the initiative and, backed by the Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria and other committees, wired Comrade Tom Mann an invitation for a three month's tour.

The tour started in October 1922 and finished in January 1923, and was an unqualified success. Crowded meetings were addressed in every considerable town in South Africa and in the larger towns repeat meetings were held with good results to the Labour Unions and the Communist movement.

Comrade Mann was prevented from accepting the invitation of the workers of Australia to visit them owing to the refusal of the Australian government to grant a passport until he had sailed for England.

United Front movement.

Arising from the changed political atmosphere resulting from the strike and its brutal suppression by the authorities, an attempt was made to promote some degree of co-operation between the various sections of the labour movement. Several meetings were held and in Johannesburg and Benoni United Front Committees were formed.

The chief activity of the Johannesburg Committee was a campaign for the reprieve of the condemned strikers and a general amnesty for all martial law prisoners. A petition, containing over 30,000 signatures was sent to the Government, and large demonstrations and meetings were held with this object in view. All efforts failed to save Stassen, Long, Lewis and Hull,² but by persisting in the agitation the sentences of death passed on Garnsworthy and his ten companions were commuted to various terms of imprisonment. It is probable that the gigantic demonstration at the funeral of Long, Hull and Lewis had much to do with this decision of the Department of Justice.

The Benoni United Front Committees ran several Municipal elections, both Labour and Communist Party members co-operating to defeat the capitalist nominees.

This movement, although inducing a more friendly feeling and the removal of much misunderstanding, has not resulted in any permanent organic union of the parties concerned, and is frowned upon by Creswell and most of the political labour leaders. Nevertheless the Central Executive is of opinion that an attempt should be made for close co-operation between all sections of labour and has therefore placed the question of affiliation to the S.A. Labour Party on the order paper. Unofficially, the policy of the United Front continues,

2. Four strikers, Carel C. Stassen, S.A. (Taffy) Long, H.K. Hull and David Lewis, were hanged in November 1922. The last three went to the gallows singing 'The Red Flag'. The Comintern sent an official protest against the execution, published in *The Independent*, 5 January 1923.

and, when opportunity occurs the Communist Party identifies itself with all working class movements. For example: On February 28th, the anniversary of the killing of three members of the Boksburg Commando by orders of Captain Fulford, the Party took the initiative in a joint workers' demonstration at Boksburg. Again, Communist speakers were prominent at the demonstration in memory of the shooting in cold blood by the Transvaal Scottish of the three brothers Hanekom and Dowse and Smith on March 16th. 1922.

The Benoni Branch of the Party arranged an anniversary social on March 10th. this year, to commemorate the proclamation of Martial Law; but, after all arrangements had been made, and a hall at the Hotel Cecil booked, the proprietor refused to carry out his contract, and the social had to be abandoned as no other hall could be obtained. An action for damages against the hotel proprietor has been started.

Trade union activity.

The part played by members of the Party during the strike opened up opportunities for activity in the industrial organisations, and there is a gradual movement of the rank and file of the unions in the direction of industrial unionism.

The arch confusionist and yellow leader, Archie Crawford, has lost his hold on the workers, and the S.A.I.F.³ which was his tool and that of the Chamber of Mines during the war period, has collapsed.

Attempts have been made and are still being made to construct some co-ordinating body which will be able to speak for the Unions as a whole, but the personnel of those who are attempting this is not such as to inspire confidence in the workers, and so far their efforts have failed.

It seems clear that new representatives of the workers are needed, men who are untainted by opportunism and careerism, to build up a sound and militant organisation.

In several unions, members of the Party have been elected to official positions, notably in the B.W.I.U. and Witwatersrand Tailors' Association. Generally, our members are permeating the membership and branches with more modern ideas.

Every opportunity should be taken by our members to increase the influence of the Party by working heartily and unselfishly in the Unions, and assisting even in the small, everyday demands of the workers.

3. South African Industrial Federation of which Crawford was General Secretary and which was particularly active during World War I. The Federation advocated negotiated settlements and abstained from strikes. It opposed the declaration of the 1922 Rand strike.

The Rand strike of 1922.

There is not much to add to the statement contained in the 'Red Revolt' on the subject, written by Comrade S.P. Bunting and published by the Party last year. At the time of writing we have two of our members serving two years' imprisonment, viz: Comrades Dan Colrairie and Donald Snowden.

Others who have suffered for the Cause are Comrade D. Nortje killed by natives in the fighting (probably provocateurs, as they have never been brought to book);

S. Goldman:	6 months, reduced to 4 months
H. Glazer:	6 "
T. Chapman:	6 "
E.J. Brown:	7 "
R. Rabb:	£25 fine
Jack Allen:	£25 "

Besides these, S.P. Bunting, W.H. Andrews, Geo Mason, E. Shaw, Mrs. Rabb, E. Nield, F. Shaw and A. Goldman were in gaol for periods varying from one to three months, and were either not charged or their cases, after being committed for trial by the magistrates' courts, were not proceeded with.

In regard to the activities of the Party during the strike and March action, the report of the Martial Law Commission states (Par.127) that upon the Augmented Executive losing effective control of the strike movement and its subsequent development, two bodies usurped its functions:

(1) A group known as the 'Council of Action'.

(2) The Communist Party in Johannesburg,

and in paragraph 136: 'It is clear to the Commission that the Council of Action was closely connected with the Communist Party of South Africa. Indeed it is highly probable that the name assumed was merely a blind, in order to attract recruits who might not wish to belong to a body of avowed Communists.'

It is not necessary to discuss the degree of justification that there is for this opinion.

On March 10th. Martial Law was proclaimed and at 10 a.m. a detachment of mounted police surrounded the Trades Hall, Johannesburg. The C.I.D. arrested everyone found in the building. About thirty officials of Unions and the Communist Party were bundled into a military lorry and taken under armed escort to the Fort. The Party office and literature was afterwards ransacked and all the books and office records, besides the whole of the literature stock, was removed to police headquarters.

The I.S.L. Press was entered by the police, the motor smashed, the plant put out of action by the removal of vital parts and the premises closed down. For ~~ten~~^{two} weeks the whole of the general office and the printing plant of the Party was closed.

The 'International' resumed publication on May 26th., but owing to financial stringency the Central Executive had to curtail the issue to once a fortnight from the beginning of August 1922 to the end of December 1922 when, as a result of retrenchment in other directions, it was found possible to resume the weekly issue of the paper.

Young communist movement. (I S.S.S.)⁴ I represent)

The Young Communist League has come into existence since the Party was formed and has carried on a certain amount of open-air propaganda, one of its members being arrested in connection with the demonstration held to protest against the execution of Long, Hull and Lewis. Its chief work, however, has been the carrying on of a weekly study class and the printing and distribution among the youth of the town of leaflets, etc. The amount of attention and hostile criticism that the press has given to its activities is an indication that they have been doing useful and effective work, which we hope will continue and increase in the coming year.

Organisation.

At the beginning of March this year, Comrade C.F. Glass, who has put in a great deal of voluntary work for the Party, was appointed Business Agent and Organiser on a commission basis. Since his period of office the Springs and Jeppes Branches have been opened.

Steps are being taken to reopen the Durban and Pretoria Branches and it is hoped that during the year branches will be running in every considerable centre in the Union.

Wishing the delegates and the Party every success in the ensuing year.

Fraternally yours,
For the Central Executive Committee,
~~~~~  
W.H. Andrews<sup>5</sup>  
General Secretary.

RGASPI, 495/64/16/4-8.

Original in English.

Typed. Copy.

4. The meaning of this abbreviation could not be ascertained.
5. Carbon copy of a handwritten signature.

**Report by S.P. Bunting on 4th Congress of Comintern,  
[29 April 1923]<sup>1</sup> (Extracts)**

REPORT OF THE DELEGATE TO THE FOURTH CONGRESS  
OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

To the Communist Party of S Africa

Dear Comrades

At the time of leaving S Africa for Europe my wife and I had already been appointed, in February 1922, as delegates to the Fourth Congress, but it was not known when the Congress would be held. Later on, when the date was announced, it also appeared that only one delegate from the SA Party was invited, and it seemed likely that Com. Ivon Jones would be the one in the question. I wrote to him asking whether in the circumstances we were likely to be welcome in Russia. He said that Lenin had taken great interest in the Rand Revolution, and that it had been proposed that he Com. Jones should proceed to S Africa to report on it, but that as his health was not too good, and as we were already in Europe, that plan had been given up, and in fact Zinoviev had expressed a wish that I should proceed to Russia. After considerable delay in Berlin, therefore, we got our visas, having already got our passport endorsed by the British Foreign Office, and spent the months of September, October and November 1922 in Moscow. Owing to my wife's ill health we were obliged to leave for London on Nov. 30, thus missing the last week of the Congress, but I attended nearly everything which was of special interest as S African delegates. In the meantime the Party had appointed Com. Jack Campbell as alternative delegate, and in the absence sick of both Com. Jones and my wife I wrote to Com. Campbell to come to the Congress, which he did, arriving about half way through, and remaining after we left, I believe until the end of the Congress; and I think he also attended the Congress of the RILU. I do not know whether he has sent report. I may explain that the Credentials Committee allowed S Africa one alternate delegate after all, which enabled Com. Campbell to take his seat at the Congress. Our greatest regret throughout was that we missed Com. Jones who left for the Crimea two days before we reached Moscow, and owing to his comparative inaccessibility, far even from regular posts, our communications with him were all too scanty.

[...]

1. The document is Bunting's report on the 4th Congress of the Comintern to the 2nd Congress of the CPSA, 28-9 April 1923. The report is not signed. Bunting's authorship and the tentative date were established on the basis of the contents of the document.