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

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)

30

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

REPORT OF COMRADE D.G. WOLTON (LATE S.A.¹) TO ECCI.

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 on² 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 and³ 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.

-
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.

Immediately on my arrival an inner-party discussion was opened up to clarify the membership on the political line of the Bunting right wing group. Arising out of this discussion which was linked up with the reorganisation of the daily practical work of the Party, an enlarged plenum of the central committee was summoned in December with the result that the Right Bunting elements were removed from leading positions and new cadres of native members were drawn forward into active leading responsible work. Umsebenzi was moved to the centre and issued as a weekly organ.

The immediate result of the new activities of the Party was the 1930 Dingaans' Day demonstrations, which resulted particularly in Durban in tremendous revolutionary activities under the leadership of the Party.

After the plenum I was sent to Durban to consolidate the Party gains and a functioning apparatus was established comprising district and local units. A district training school was established and eight comrades were given intensive daily instruction for two weeks, afterwards being drafted to leading positions in the party units and mass organisations.

Party and Red Trade Union work was driven deeply amongst Dockers and Railway workers. An immediate programme of demands was formulated, the struggle for which later led to big mass actions.

At the centre, work was begun in the mines, at Laundries, Chemical and Garment Factories and amongst the unemployed black and white. A May First campaign was organised and intensively carried out by various groups of organised and unorganised, black and white. On May First a phenomenal demonstration was carried: 6000 black and white workers fraternising for the first time in the history in South Africa, uniting in common defence against police baton charges. Party recruits, new units, increased Umsebenzi sales, and the growth of the revolutionary industrial organisations were the gains. [...]

In February a National Congress was convened and representatives from various working class organisations black and white, established IKAKA LABASEBENZI (MOPR) on a national basis.

Capetown district committee was organised and Factory and Dock local units established. Intensive work was carried out at the Docks, and amongst the garment workers.

In August a strike of Capetown Garment workers was led by the Party and AFTU but through inexperience and political mistakes the reactionary leadership was able to secure control and throttle the strike.

All through this period the Bunting group was conducting⁴ factional work against the line of the Party, becoming more open as their supporters were drawn into practical work for the Party line. All through this period the sharpest exposure of their line was being made with growing success.

4. There is a typed-over word after 'conducting' in the original.

Finally in August the sabotage and open counter-revolutionary activities of the Bunting group threatened a crisis within the Party with the possibility of a splitting away of a group of the more politically confused members. The Political Bureau decided that drastic steps must be taken as it was convinced that the bulk of the still small membership was solidly behind it and these members were⁵ demanding action against the Bunting group. It was therefore⁶ decided to expel the group of five leading elements responsible⁷ – all of them leading and exceedingly dangerous members. It was decided that a vigorous campaign of enlightenment was to accompany this action throughout the whole apparatus. The expulsion was carried out in September and from then until December fierce opposition fights were developed, using gangster methods, raiding party premises, setting up a 'Communist League' etc., directed by Bunting. But on this basis of the systematic day to day work more and more unclear party members were drawn back to the support of the party line. Intensive training was given and the general political level of the Comrades was enormously raised.

In December an enlarged plenum of the central committee confirmed the line and the actions of the Political Bureau and drew more native cadres forward into leading positions.

During this period valuable connections had been established with Portuguese East Africa, Tembuland, Basutoland, Nyassaland, South West Africa and Tanganyika.

For the first time native students were able to leave South Africa and the acceptable 'obstacle' of the Buntingites 'it cannot be done' was broken down.

In September 1931 a National Congress was convened and a mass organisation 'Friends of Soviet Union' was established with active sections of combined black and white workers in various parts of the country.

In November Comrade Molly Wolton returned, with Comrade Kalk, from USSR and at the enlarged plenum in December at which they were present a central committee comprising 18 native and 5 white members was set up with new departments and an elaborate plan of work.

The mass work of the Party greatly increased and improved and in the immediate activities big gains in membership were registered, and great strides forward in the Red Trade Unions⁸ were made. The mass organisations grew rapidly and the political training conducted raised still further, the political level of the Party. [...]

May First 1932 witnessed big demonstrations in Capetown, Johannesburg, Durban and some rural centres in the Cape Districts.

5. There is a typed-over word after 'were' in the original.

6. There is a typed-over word after 'therefore' in the original.

7. There is a typed-over word after 'responsible' in the original.

8. Wolton's expression for the 'bolshevised' unions.

Immediately after this I was imprisoned for four months on a charge of criminal libel arising out of an article in Umsebenzi.

A training⁹ school of ten students from various parts of the country was conducted for a month during this period.

On my discharge I was sent to Capetown to organise a training school for the southern districts and I carried this through for a month with eight students – workers and peasants.

Work progressed especially favourably amongst the Tram and Bus workers. Party recruits were gained, a party depot unit was set up and functioned very efficiently. A Red Trade Union opposition¹⁰ was established which gained tremendous influence. Our demands became supported by the majority and in December a strike was declared by the Union, breaking through the opposition of the reformist leaders.

I was immediately arrested, but the units continued good activities, exposing the impending betrayal by the reformist leaders and rallying wide sections of workers against the cunning of the betrayers. The strike was betrayed, but the Party units and the Red opposition gained enormously as a result of the struggle.

At this period I was banished from¹¹ Witwatersrand together with four other comrades and my¹² deportation from the country (I was not born there) was openly called for by the Bourgeois press.

At the¹³ January plenum 1933, I was advised by the Political Bureau that it was not advisable to come illegally as my presence was not really necessary.

In November 1932 the Party had entered the general election field putting up demonstrative candidates at Germiston and Capetown. Tremendous mass actions were developed and great gains were registered for the Party and the mass organisations.

Following the January plenum, which recorded a tremendous advance in Party work and which recorded the real establishment of predominantly native leadership in the Party, new tasks were laid down of a far greater magnitude than ever before.

Work in the mines had become systematic and recorded great achievements. Membership was rapidly growing and was being stabilised on a dues-paying basis.

The plenum recorded an end to the individualist character of Party work and the real establishment of collective work, collective decisions, collective responsibility and the collective character of its mass work. No longer was it a

9. There is a typed-over word after 'a training' in the original.

10. Wolton's expression for groups of his followers within trade unions.

11. There is a typed-over word after 'from' in the original.

12. There is a typed-over word after 'my' in the original.

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

question of the vital importance of any individual as it had been during the preceeding three years.

In its Trade Union work the Party had made great strides the Red Unions and opposition and unemployed Councils having corrected many of the previous errors, and these organisations had a real independent proletarian existence.

In the mass organisations successful independent proletarian activities were being carried out. Revolutionary aid was growing whilst delegations had been organised to USSR, and practical assistance in struggle had been rendered to¹⁴ big sections of the proletariat, black and white.

Students were returning from USSR and a chain of new students had been established, and in general it was recorded that a decisive turn had been registered in the work of the Bolshevisation of the Communist Party of South Africa.

In June 1933, I was sentenced to three months imprisonment arising out of the Tram and Bus Strike. Whilst I was in gaol a delegation of workers visited the Minister of Justice to demand the withdrawal of a deportation¹⁵ order against me.

Owing to the necessity for submitting this report at once, I have briefly outlined the course of my work in South Africa during the three years.

No organisational details have been submitted as these will be available from other sources.

A supplementary report deals with the question of my leaving South Africa.¹⁶

D. Wolton

* * *

Owing to bad health Comrade Molly Wolton is unable to submit a report of her activities in South Africa.

In November 1931, she returned from the USSR, and after attending the December plenum, returned to Capetown where supervision of the District was carried ^{out}, mass work, training etc. In April she returned to the centre, took over Editorial control of Umsebenzi, conducted a national training school for a month, and carried through leading work in the Secretariat. She took a leading part in the general mass work and especially in the Germiston election campaign. She was a leading party propagandist and in addition did much mass work for the subsidiary organisations. She was arrested in the Germiston election campaign but released through mass agitation. She had

14. There is a typed-over word after 'to' in the original.

15. There is a typed-over word after 'deportation' in the original.

16. See document 31, vol. II.

tremendous influence amongst all sections of workers black and white and did a great deal to draw wide sections of black and white intelligentsia closer to the party. During this period the excessive strain caused a renewal of serious heart trouble which ^{had} manifested itself in the USSR, until finally she was beyond any further activity. (A copy of a letter from the P.B. to her is enclosed).

RGASPI, 495/64/132/17-19, 20-2.

Original in English.

Typed.

Stamped: 25.MAR.1934 - 1575

(in German)

31

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

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT OF COMRADE D.G. WOLTON TO ECCL.

March 13th 1934

Dear Comrades,

In this report I wish to put forward my reasons for taking the step I did in leaving South Africa, without having secured the authority of the Party for doing so.

It will be necessary to go into the question of my personal position, for although when my personal responsibilities were negligible, this question was never raised by me, yet when Comrade Molly returned with our child in November 1931, the question was forced upon me.

The Party had not been in a position to support its functionaries and this question had to be left to the Comrades themselves, whatever was available having to be utilised to the best political advantage.

My child was left in Capetown with Comrades which completely released Comrade Molly and myself for work.

During this period of exceedingly strenuous activity when in addition to physical neglect, the single-handed character of the work¹ at that time, resulted in a complete physical and mental breakdown of Comrade Molly. The Doctors had pronounced that unless she were immediately removed from the scene fatal consequences would be inevitable.

1. There is a typed-over word after 'work' in the original.