

**Letter from ECCI to Central Committee, CPSA,
20 June 1931 (Extracts)¹**

Confidential
20.VI.1931

Dear Comrades

I.

Your congress has brought the whole Party on the line of the Comintern, driving out the opportunists from the Party leadership and carrying on a struggle against all those who did not recognise that 'the chief ^{right} opportunist mistake made by the Party was its failure to understand the decisive importance of the hegemony of the proletariat and the complete independence of the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat, the Communist Party, in the national liberation revolutionary movement, and a failure to understand the importance of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the socialist revolution' (See previous letter of the ECCI to your Party).

The formation of a Party leadership which keeps to the line of the Comintern signifies that now the whole of the Party, from top to bottom, can carry out the Comintern line, whereas previously the majority of the Party was trying to carry out this line in spite of the opportunist leaders under comrade Bunting.²

A successful struggle for the line of the Comintern in the ranks of the Party has assured certain successes by the Party in the leadership of the mass movement.

1) During 'Dingaan's Day' and May 1st, the Party succeeded in mobilising a considerable number of workers under independent leadership. In this activity, the Party passed on from parliamentary and petition forms of action to revolutionary methods which break through slave law and order, as was the case in the campaign for burning passports. Such a struggle against slave laws, the breaking of these laws by the masses themselves under the leadership of the Party, has already pointed out the path of struggle for the broad masses against the oppression of imperialist serfdom. The first attempts at a real mass resistance to serf oppression has already given greater results than dozens of parliamentary petitions and liberal appeals for justice. The first mass actions of the native proletariat has already given direct results for the toiling masses, as

1. This letter was prepared by the Eastern Secretariat of ECCI with the participation of Safarov and Nasonov.

2. For the essence of attacks on Bunting see document 90 (vol. I).

the representative of the gold mining companies has made a proposition to revise the passport system.

2) The Party is becoming converted into a Party of the native proletariat, although it is not yet connected with the basic strata of the native proletariat – the workers in the gold and diamond mines.

3) The Party is becoming to an increasing extent the leader of the struggle of the masses of the people against imperialist oppression, and its influence and popularity is growing among the toiling masses of South Africa.

4) There have been some successes by the Party in the work among the white proletariat, which is shown by successfully carrying out joint actions of the white and the native workers under the slogan of the struggle for an independent native republic.

5) The Party is becoming an important political factor with which the ruling classes are even more compelled to count, increasing the terror against Communists and the workers' movement, preparing and applying prison laws, depriving the native masses of even the small relics of legal rights. The attacks of the national reformists are increasing against the Communist Party, and they openly state that the aim of national reformism is the struggle against the Communist Party.

The Party was able to obtain these successes only on the basis of a determined struggle against the Right opportunist group of Bunting for the line of the Comintern. Your congress has shown that the supporters of Bunting have formed a definite political group opposed to the whole Party on the fundamental questions of the struggle. The 'left' views of this group at one time have long since become openly Right views, and now, as the struggle develops, they have an objectively a renegade character. Objectively, the Bunting group is an agent of the imperialist white labour aristocracy, and its views are incompatible with membership of the Party. The CP must continue the struggle against the Right opportunist group and bring about its complete disarmament.

While fighting tirelessly against white chauvinism and the Right opportunist deviation as the chief danger, while carrying on a struggle against 'left' deviations such as the underestimation of the importance of winning over the majority of the working class, underestimation of the necessity for work and the formation of trade unions, contrasting the activity of the masses to the task of organising these masses, the Party must at present time pass on to the conversion of propagandist slogans into slogans of action, the conversion of the Party into a Party of action, which leads millions of workers and peasants, into a Party which organises the struggle of the proletariat and the toiling masses of South Africa for a revolutionary way out of the crisis, for the overthrow of imperialist oppression, for carrying out the slogan of an independent native republic as an intermediate stage to a socialist republic.

[...]

VII

Your Congress correctly emphasised the importance of the 'African Federation of Trade Unions' as the revolutionary trade union centre of South Africa. However, to carry out this point presupposes a struggle against attempts to consider the white trade union federations as trade union centres, or to consider the trade unions of native workers and their federation as a branch of the Negro Committee³ in Hamburg. The struggle carried on in the Party press against these attempts was insufficient. The Party has not cut itself off from these elements who for some reason, call themselves Communists, such as Andrews, who carry out a chauvinist policy with regard to the native workers and the native trade unions.⁴ By forming trade unions from below and increasing work in the factories, we must strengthen the African Federation of Trade Unions, making it a genuine centre of the trade union movement. All oppositional work in the existing trade unions must be linked up with this centre, and every revolutionary oppositional group in any trade union whatever must look on itself as a branch of the African Federation of Trade Unions. Communists who sabotage this line must be driven out of the Party as white chauvinists. In view of the exceptional importance of trade unions, the Party must give its best workers for trade union work.

Secondly, the rallying of the native population and the inclusion of them all into a separate organisation can be brought about only in the trade unions. The economic struggle of the proletariat, the leadership and independent direction of economic struggles, the conducting of strikes and all other conflicts is one of the basic methods of the native proletariat as an independent class force. THIS IS WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO WORK OUT CONCRETE DEMANDS FOR THE CHIEF BRANCHES OF INDUSTRY AND FORM INITIATORY CENTRES FOR THE FORMATION OF TRADE UNIONS IN THESE BRANCHES OF INDUSTRY. This should be done first of all with regard to the workers in the mines, where the organisation of trade unions is of exceptional importance. Attention should be paid to the organisation of dockers in Cape Town, which is at present time the basis for the activity of the independent African National Congress, and a start must be made with the organisation of the agricultural workers, welding them together into trade unions.

THE PARTY MUST DECIDE IN THE NEAR FUTURE WHERE THE INITIATORY CENTRES FOR THE ORGANISATION OF TRADE UNIONS MUST BE FORMED.

Thirdly, fractional work in trade unions must be improved, rallying all the Communists into fractions, carrying out the directives of the Party, through the

3. International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers.

4. Andrews was at that time Secretary of the South African Trades and Labour Council which did not admit African unions.

DOCUMENT 4

fractions, and making all Communists who occupy posts in a trade union responsible to the fraction.

VIII

In conducting the economic struggle, building up the trade unions, and fighting against the slightest underestimation of trade union activity, the Party must attract both the trade unions and the working class into the struggle for an independent native republic. However, the Party must propagate the Soviets among the workers, even at the present time, as the form of the revolutionary government.

In struggling for the independent native republic, the workers must be educated in the spirit of understanding their tasks, and therefore is necessary to commence immediately with the propaganda of Soviets.⁵ [...]

X

British imperialism is trying to enlarge the basis of its domination by extending the powers of the rival chiefs. It will utilise the national reformists to an increasing extent for the struggle against revolutionary movement. The conditions are being formed for completely discrediting and undermining the influence of the various national reformist organisations, such as the Industrial Commercial Union, Kadalie, Prof. Thaele, etc. The national reformists are being compelled more and more to come forward as the agents of the imperialist slave owners, although in words they hide behind the interests of the toiling masses.

The process of the exposure of national reformism will not go on automatically. They will be exposed in proportion to the strengthening of the independent role of our Party, the systematic struggle of our Party against all shades of national reformism and its merciless exposure. The exposure of the national reformists as agents of imperialism is the condition for the development of the revolutionary movement. The Party must systematically increase its struggle against national reformism, liberating the masses from the influence of national reformism and coming forward itself as the champion of the national revolutionary liberation movement.

XI

The conversion of the CP into a mass active Party leading the struggle presupposes orderly preparations and the organisation of all the Party activity, the

5. A line in pencil is drawn in the left margin opposite the two last paragraphs starting from 'In conducting...'.

organisation of the influence of the Party and the formation and the consolidation of the organisation through which the Party can lead the various revolutionary struggles. A merciless struggle must be carried on against tendencies to draw contrasts between the actions of the Party and the organising work of the Party. A breach between the actions of the Party and planned organisation of the proletariat into the Party, the trade unions and the YCL, will have fatal results and will convert the Party into a sectarian group without real organisational influence on the masses. It will be impossible to carry on the struggle for an independent native republic unless the formation, consolidation and extension of the influence of the Party among the proletariat and the peasants is assured, just as it is impossible to build up the Party and prepare the Party without standing at the head of the struggle of the toiling masses at the present stage of the movement for an independent native people's republic. All our instructions on the organisational work of the Party continue to be a condition for the successful carrying out of the slogans of the CP of South Africa (enlargement of the Party, the construction of the Party on the basis of factory nuclei, the uniting of Communists into fractions in all organisations, the strictest discipline in the Party, accurate work by the CC of the Party and the local committees, and also the strengthening of mass organisations and constant work in them – the trade unions, the formation of the YCL, peasant committees). The formation of a mass newspaper is a fundamental link at the present time in the strengthening and enlarging of the influence of the Party among the masses and penetration of the Party among all strata of workers and toilers. The present paper does not satisfy the demands of the Party work. It is time to undertake the formation of a newspaper, even if only a twice-weekly, of a larger size than 'Umsebenzi'. The formation of a mass bi-weekly as an intermediate stage towards a daily must be a central task in the agitational, propagandist and organisational activity of the paper. The future paper must be primarily a newspaper for the native toilers, i.e. a considerable part of the material must be in the native languages. There exist the necessary conditions for the formation of such a paper. By next Dingaan's Day, the Party must have such a paper, and in the intermediate time must organise the collection of funds, committees of assistance, i.e. a great movement to assist the paper, to help to distribute it, connected with the struggle for the native republic, for land, for unity of local and native workers, for a radical improvement in the life of workers with all fundamental slogans, converting the campaign for the paper into the central point of our activity in the near future. Special attention should be paid to agitation by distributing leaflets gratis in the local languages, explaining the immediate slogans of the CP. The issue of tens of thousands of leaflets should be carried out on such questions as: 1) how to fight against slave laws. 2) The agrarian slogans of the Party (marches for land). 3) Several leaflets with demands for various branches of industry. 4) Why trade unions should be organised. 5) Join the Communist Party. For this purpose funds must be collected.

The CP of South Africa is the vanguard of the struggle of all the African toilers, and this gives it special obligations which the CP will be able to carry out if it moves along the path pointed out by the Comintern, struggling against Right opportunist, chauvinist deviations and also against 'left' errors, consolidating its own unity, building up the organisations of the proletariat, standing at the head of the toilers and rousing them to a heroic struggle for freedom, for a people's republic, in defence of the USSR, for the world revolution of all proletarians and oppressed peoples.

RGASPI, 495/64/105/30-3, 41-3, 45-8. For the full text of the document see: RGASPI, 495/64/105/30-48.

Original in English (Comintern translation of the Russian original text. For the Russian original see: RGASPI, 495/64/105/49-65).

Typed.

Stamped: 2599 - 22.6.31

5

Report of A. Nzula to ECCI on Situation in CP SA, 5 August 1931

Confidential

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORT ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA (SUBMITTED BY M. JACKSON, S.A.C.P.)¹

The present organisational forms of the Communist Party of South Africa (membership about 5,000) have come into being² only this year as the result of the reorganisation that was carried out as a result of the last Party Convention (December 26 1930) decisions. Formerly the leading organ of the Party between Congress was an Executive Committee of 12, the members of which were elected mainly on account of their proximity to Johannesburg, the Headquarters of the Party. Under this Executive Committee came the different branches of the Party with their various committees.

The last Party Convention elected a Central Committee, consisting of 23 members. The number of natives to European members is 19 to 4. The Central Committee³ has met once since its election, in July. The Political Bureau, elected from the C.C., is the leading organ of the Party between the meetings of

-
1. This report was obviously written soon after Nzula's arrival in Moscow.
 2. There is an illegible crossed-out word after 'being'.
 3. There is an illegible crossed-out word after 'Committee'.