

distinct from native) workers into its ranks is finding favour. Efforts are at present being made in that direction.

4) The Constitutional Democratic Party. One member in House of Assembly (M. Alexander) who has solid support of Jewish community in his constituency.

POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS OF NON EUROPEANS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

1) Indian National Congress membership derived from petty traders. Communist Party has no influence in this organisation.

2) Chinese Kuomintang Party² on very good terms with Communist Party. Sent strong fraternal greetings to recent Party Congress.

3) African National Congress (South African Aborigines). Is representative of all South African Native Tribes. A large but loosely organised organisation. Several native comrades belong to this organisation, but no nuclei have been organised within it to my knowledge. Communist Party steadily gaining influence with this organisation. The CP also greatly assisted them with dispatch of delegates to Bruxelles Conference.³

Bruxelles Conference. From statement made by the Vice President of African National Congress at Bruxelles Conference to this effect 'We have been a long while looking for our true friends in South Africa and I think we have found them in the Communist Party' and from other conversations it appears that the C. will have his support within this organisation.

INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATIONS OF NON EUROPEAN WORKERS.

The Industrial Commercial Workers Union (ICU) founded in Cape Town in 1919. At present has 32 branches spread over the Union of South Africa, with a membership of approximately 45,000. Its principal achievement was the procuring of a 50% increase of wages for the Dockworkers of Cape Town. This was obtained after a strike of fairly large magnitude. Its original militant policy has been very much diluted by the reactionary majority on its Executive, and strong Communist influence within this organisation has been responsible for the recent destabilisation – the expulsion of Communist officials and a further recommendation to the Annual Congress 'that no member of the ICU shall be a member of the Communist Party'. This act is totally at variance with the policy of the rank and file who are essentially militant and have on several occasions

2. No information on this party could be found. It could be a branch of Kuomintang, the party in China headed by Chiang Kai Shek and allied at this time with the Communist Party of China.
3. Congress of Oppressed Nations (see footnote 1) was attended by J. Gumede, at that time – Vice President of the ANC.

in different parts of the country demonstrated the fact by lightning strikes, demonstrations etc., without consulting the official leadership. Congresses of this organisation are held Annually in April.

Nucleus of the CP function within this organisation. In fact there has been a concentration of the Party's efforts upon this organisation to the exclusion of all others.

COMMUNIST PARTY ORGANISATION. The 400 members of the Party spread about the 4 provinces of the Union. The bulk of its membership being concentrated in the two cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg. The Johannesburg branch, where the Central Executive is situated being the larger.

The Johannesburg aggregate comprises three groups: 1) Central 2) Ferrieratown 3) Jeppes. A further No. 4 group Doornfontein was in process of formation. These are area groups. Members of these groups meet in their respective areas once per week when reports are taken from individual members, discussed and decided upon. The Organ of the Party (South African Worker) is also distributed at these meetings to be sold in warehouses and factories as the case may be.

[...]

RGASPI, 495/64/66/67-8.

Original in English.

Typed. Copy.

Stamped: 1) ORG. DEPARTMENT (in German)

2) Return to Secretary after completion

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Statement of J. La Guma to Presidium, ECCI, 16 March 1927

PRESIDIUM, MARCH 16 1927¹

Comrade LAGUME:

Chairman, comrades: No doubt you have already been informed that the Communist Party of South Africa is a very small one compared to many others

1. According to Minutes no. 88 of the Meeting of the Presidium of the ECCI on 16 March 1927 (RGASPI, 495/2/71a/120-1) members of the Presidium present during La Guma's statement were: Bukharin, Piatnitsky, Petrovsky, Lozovsky, Idelson, Manuilsky, Reesema, Duncan, Pepper, Katayama, Angaretis, Stepanov, Stasova, Humbert-Droz, Schatzkin, Bela Kun, Murphy, Treint, Kachan, Vasiliev, Shubin, Abramov.

but concerned with many conflicting problems. One of the problems of great importance to us is that at present before the House of Commons – the native question, embodied in Hertzog,² and I hope you will allow me in going over this situation to make a sort of general survey of those bills.

One of these bills is called the 'Enfranchising Bill' which if carried out will disenfranchise many people who have voted for the past 70 years.

Another is the 'Native Council Bill'. We look upon this not as a concession that is being made to the native population but we construe it to be an attempt on the part of the industrialists of South Africa to safeguard the capitalist expansion owing to the rapid industrialisation of South Africa and take into consideration the fact that all these measures are of an aggressive character which are being imposed upon the native worker. There is a state of considerable unrest and to save the expansion of capitalism we hear these measures are intended to remove at least 99% of the working class vote of the native. It is significant also to note that in this matter the so-called protectors of native peoples throughout the world are in accord. General Smuts, who represents the subject peoples of Great Britain, seems to be in accord with General Hertzog, realising as he does that these four bills are interdependent.

We know of another bill, the Land Bill, which simply means an expropriation of the native people from the land and there will undoubtedly be a large influx of this expropriated land workers into the towns intensifying the competition and bringing down the standard of living. We know this because Hertzog's intention in the first place is to get hold of the land and, on the other, General Smuts will get a hold of the land for these imperialists.

So there is an alliance between the Imperialist Party³ and the leading bourgeoisie of the Nationalist Party coming to a head in the very near future. Then there is another phase to this bill, and that is, that the big land owners want to get possession of this expropriated native owned land. These things are being brought about by restricting the areas in which the native people may live. If you read the bills you will find that the government is going to release certain areas for native occupation, but there is no mention of the fact that these lands are already occupied by the natives. There is nothing in these bills about this. At present there is a great agitation against this land bill and we find ourselves somewhat at our wits end to formulate the policy of the Party on these four bills.

The fourth bill is called the 'Coloured Peoples Rights Bill' wherein Hertzog intends to give certain concessions to the coloured people; i.e. instead of making the franchise that exists in the⁴ provinces universal, to allow them to

2. Most probably, La Guma said 'Hertzog's bills'.

3. La Guma must have meant the South African Party.

4. There is a gap after 'the' in the original; obviously, the stenographer did not understand the names of the provinces.

elect one representative in the northern provinces for the coloured people. If we take this in conjunction with the recent attitude of a certain leader, to wit, Mr. Ka ...⁵ we find that this is going to have a certain affect on the movement as follows: We know that Mr. K ...⁶ has come under the influence of the master class and his object is to split the coloured and native workers. This Coloured Peoples Rights Bill is going to assist him greatly in bringing about this decision.

Then we have another problem such as the division between white and black labour in South Africa. We have made several efforts to bring about a better understanding between the black and white workers but we have failed so far because of our small numbers in these two respective sections. Also, apart from the fact that the white worker feels that he is able to live on a higher standard there is also a malicious trend prevailing there somewhat on this fashion. He asks himself whether or not, if he allows the black labour to rise by organisation, he will not terminate the position to the detriment of the black worker himself. This is one of the most dangerous positions.

According to the decision of the Comintern recently, about two years ago, it was agreed that we should concentrate upon the native masses. We have been taxing our minds to formulate a platform that will rally the workers around the Communist Party. We have failed so far because we have all these conflicting elements to reconcile. The trouble is that if we formulate a platform to rally black workers there is a danger of alienating the white. My object in putting this forward is only to give you some slight idea of the position we are in South Africa and whether there will be any advice coming from the assembly this evening.

[...]

In answer to questions:⁷

As I said the South African Party⁸ is a small party and the majority of its members are concentrated in Johannesburg and in the town of Cape Town. The most activity is carried on in Johannesburg, i.e. we have sent at least two members to the Trade Union Congress, we have at least about 10 or 12 members in the Johannesburg branch, and in the small branches of the trade unions we have about 125 members in the black organisation and Industrial

5. Kadalie.

6. Kadalie.

7. La Guma was responding to questions by Bukharin and Lozovsky. Bukharin asked: 'How strong is our party? Nothing is said about this in the resolution [of the British Secretariat]. How many members do the native organisations have and how many members do the white organisations have? Is there an opposition in the white organisation, and if there is a left opposition, how strong is it? Then I request further information about the activity of the party'. Lozovsky asked: 'How many members does the party have and what is the relationship which exists between black and white communists? How many members does the Labour Party have?' See: RGASPI, 495/2/71a/121.

8. The Communist Party of South Africa.

and Commercial Workers' Union. We have committees formed of members of these two unions and they meet occasionally to discuss the problems that are confronting us in these organisations. We have formulated a policy for these members that they must push inside these organisations which they do the best of their ability. In Cape Town we have Sunday evening meetings as well as week day meetings. Large number of literature is sold and we recruit members at these meetings. We are hampered very much by lack of propagandists. Our speakers are comrades who work during the day and they find it hard to do so as much party work as is required from a member of a Communist Party. We also have a school for illiterate Negroes which meets twice a week. The teachers are white people. Our party has about 400 members of which 100 are Negroes and 300 are whites.

[...]

RGASPI, 495/2/71a/123-5, 131.

Original in English.

Typed.

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Remarks of N. Bukharin to Presidium, ECCI, 16 March 1927¹ (Extracts)

[...]

I am against the resolution² because it is wrong... even worse is the overall construction of the resolution, especially concerning the directives of the CI. The greatest fault is that there is no line on the most important questions. When Com. Lozovsky says that the resolution is too general, then I can say that, on the one hand, it is too general, and on the other, it does not give a general line. I now will consider individual questions. The national question, or in other words, the race question, the relationship between black and white workers, has not been worked out in the resolution. This is the most important question and for this question no line is given. There is a sentence about the Brussels congress, but where is the party line? There is no mention of it in the

1. This document is a full record of N. Bukharin's three comments on the South African question at 16 March meeting of the Presidium. La Guma presented his statement to the same meeting earlier and stayed on to participate in the rest of the proceedings. Bukharin's comments on South Africa were part of his general remarks on different matters discussed at the meeting.
2. The resolution under discussion was drafted by the British Secretariat and presented to this meeting (see document 39, footnote 1). For the text of this resolution see: RGASPI, 495/2/71/175-80.

resolution. This, however, is the most burning problem. To write a resolution without indicating the line for these questions is not appropriate. Then it is better not to write a resolution at all. Concerning the question of the nature of the state. The party must make demands, such as a demand for a Negro republic independent of the British empire,³ or in addition for autonomy for the national white minorities, etc. Again, there is no word about this question in the resolution. Overall the Communist International must say very clearly that in the struggle between the Negroes and the whites that it is on the side of the Negroes. That is the main problem and if one speaks of race prejudice of the Negroes one is turning the problem upside down. Then we would be in the mainstream of imperialist politics. Not to mention the nature of the state is non-permissible. Where do we take the struggle, along what line? That is not clear from the resolution. On the other hand, we are supposed to work along the line of partnership between the whites and the Negroes, but one has to understand that this problem must be considered in detail. This is a complicated problem and must be at the centre of questions considered in the resolution. In the resolution there are no specifics of the general line, indeed, there is no general line. Then I would like to note that the resolution which is meant for the party does not say a word about the communist party itself. To give a resolution for the communist party without saying a word about the communist party does not make sense. Then it is better not to write a resolution at all than a resolution where the party is not mentioned [...] I believe that the worst enemy could [not] work out a better plan to destroy our party. Therefore, the resolution is politically incorrect. It is opportunistic and we cannot accept such a resolution [...]

Com. Bukharin: I suggest that at this stage of development we only ask one question, namely the question of our policy with regard to the black trade union.⁴ What are we supposed to do with this issue, if we do not succeed in the struggle against the expulsions?⁵ This is a resolution about a concrete issue. Perhaps we should accept an additional resolution about the Brussels congress, but this is a directive which has already been defined in the general resolution about the Brussels congress. One could accept it as a separate resolution. [...]

3. This is the first mention of the slogan of independent native republic that has been located in the Comintern archives to date. It is unlikely that this question was raised at any earlier meeting during La Guma's stay: there is no mention of this in the documents. Unless there was yet another meeting which preceeded the 16 March meeting of the Presidium and which has not been traced in the Archive yet, or was not documented at all, Bukharin was the first person to mention independent native republic. This mention could have come without any preliminary discussions, casually, particularly since a similar slogan for the African-American population of the southern states of the USA had been discussed earlier.
4. Obviously, the ICU.
5. Here and further on Bukharin discusses the expulsion of communists from the ICU in December 1926.