

**Letter from E. Roux and Others Communists to ECCI,  
20 September 1935 (Extracts)**

Johannesburg  
20 Sept. 1935

To the ECCI and all members of the CPSA:

Comrades,

The PB decided on 12 Sept. to expel the following comrades from the Party:— Issy Diamond, Hilda Saks, Anna Spilkin, Levenberg and Kagan. At the same time Comrade Roux was removed from the PB and the Secretariat.

We, the undersigned, wish to make the following statement on the present situation in the Party.

We refute the charge that the present disagreements in the Party are based on personalities. They are due to the persistent failure of the present majority on the PB to carry out the urgent tasks of the revolutionary movement in this country. They have failed to organise a broad united front of the toilers and oppressed peoples against imperialism. By their narrow sectarian tactics they have effectively prevented the growth of a Native membership in the Party, so that we still have a predominantly white Party. By their leftist tactics in the mass organisations they have alienated from the Party many good working class and revolutionary elements, and they have lowered the prestige of the Party in the eyes of the workers.

The decisions of the Seventh World Congress of the CI have now made it abundantly clear that the line of our leadership has been at fault.<sup>1</sup> But when, on the basis of these decisions of the Congress, we demand the immediate summoning of a Party Conference to correct the mistakes made by the Party, these so-called leaders not only refuse to call a conference, but begin a campaign of expulsions of all who presume to criticise them and to support the CI line. At the same time they have been carrying on a slanderous campaign among non-Party elements in the mass organisations directed against Party members who have dared, within the Party, to criticise their wrong tactics.

At the time of the discussions last year Bach and others declared that the existing differences within the Party were due primarily to our wrong interpretation of the slogan of an Independent Native Republic. By these means they sought to cover their continual leftist and sectarian mistakes which we were trying to remedy.

When the present leadership took over from Kotane they issued a resolution, which failed to deal in any detail with the left sectarian mistakes

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1. See footnote 4 to document 43, vol. II.

which are at the root of the present split in the Party and confined itself to the interpretation of the slogan of an Independent Native Republic. Thus Bach's manoeuvre to divert attention from the fundamental questions at issue was completely successful and there remained within the Party a deep feeling of dissatisfaction which has continued to this day.

We have been fighting since the beginning of 1934 against the narrow sectarianism which here, as in other countries, manifested itself 'under cover of a formal recognition of the Bolshevik theses'. This 'self-satisfied sectarianism' reached its highest expression under the leadership of the Wolton's and Bach (1931-2). But our present leaders have perpetuated this sectarianism in the Party. [...]

With regard to Party organisation we were told by Comrade Bach that Comrades Roux and Kotane wanted to abolish the Bolshevik form of organisation. This was said because, in their endeavour to revive the district organisation which was not functioning, they decided as an emergency measure to hold weekly aggregate meetings to be attended by all members, and also proposed to develop a Party school offering general educational classes to Native workers. The plan for the night school in particular was criticised as a liberal idea and treated with hostility and contempt. One PB member (Comrade Ramutla) went so far as to say: 'You will only have your school over our dead bodies'. In spite of this attitude on the part of leading Party members, Comrade Roux and others have gone ahead with the night school, utilising the hunger of Native workers for the education denied them by the imperialist oppressors to bring many Natives closer to the Party and to provide a basis for further contacts with workers. As a result of the activities of the school, at which political propaganda is carried on together with general education, several Natives have joined the Party. More are ready to join but we fear to draw them in while the present disputes disrupt every Party meeting. On the question of nuclei, it is an interesting fact that the Party still has no factory nuclei and that even the location groups are not functioning.<sup>2</sup> In Sophiatown where many of the leading comrades live there is no group at all.

In general we may say with regard to the whole situation in the Party, that, in spite of shortcomings, progress has been made in the work among Europeans. It is in the work among the Native masses that the left sectarian mistakes and passivity have been most strongly exhibited. This is largely due to the mechanical way in which Comrade Kotane was displaced from the leadership. Those who took his place have shown themselves lacking in precisely those qualities of persistent work and attention to detail which he possesses.

The dissatisfaction in the rank and file of the Party has been enormously aggravated by the inactivity of the leadership. Had the leadership, in spite of its inadequate and, in some respects, incorrect resolution, yet been active even to

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2. 'Location groups' here: party nuclei in townships.



a slight degree, it might have been able to consolidate the work of the Party, so that differences of opinion would have been resolved in the course of practical work. As it is, the dissatisfaction of the membership has grown from day to day, inner Party quarrels have become intensified, so that we now have an impossible situation in the Party.

We are unable to agree with the present expulsions from the Party. We maintain that these are not in the best interests of the Party and, further, that they are being attempted with the sole object of stifling Bolshevik criticism and covering the serious mistakes which are being committed by the leadership.

We have confidence in Comrade Kotane.

We demand the immediate summoning of a Party Conference for the reformulation of the tactical line of the Party in South Africa in conformity with the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the CI.

We deny absolutely that such a demand constitutes fractional activity. Further, we categorically deny that at any time, in any of the mass organisations or elsewhere, in any way, we have carried on fractional activities against the Party line or slandered the Party or our leaders. (Any criticism we have brought has been made within the Party.) On the contrary, in the face of the utmost provocation and in spite of campaigns of slander carried out against us by leading members of the Party, we have at all times and to the best of our ability worked for the Party line, at the same time loyally supporting those same leaders.

We ask the CI immediately to intervene. We pledge ourselves to abide by the decisions of the CI for the building of a mass Communist Party in South Africa.

We send this statement to the CI, to the PB, and copies to all members of all branches of the CPSA.

We hereby appeal to all honest members of the Party, to all members who have the interests of the revolutionary movement at heart, to rally now in defence of the line of the CI which alone can lead the struggle of the workers and toilers of this country to the successful overthrow of imperialism, the setting up of an Independent Native Republic, the establishment of a workers and peasants Soviet government and the building of socialism.

Yours fraternally,  
(signed) E.R. Roux  
Josiah Ngedlane

Chas. Baker  
Winifred M. Lunt  
B. Levenberg  
Hilda Saks  
Anna C. Spilkin  
Irma Diamond  
A. Kagan

The following signs with reservations on the interpretation of the Independent Native Republic slogan:

Issy Diamond<sup>3</sup>

This statement has the unanimous support of the Cape Town aggregate meeting and District Party Committee.

RGASPI, 495/64/140/131, 137-9.

Original in English.

Typed. Copy.

Stamped: 17.NOV.1935 - 6469

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**Telegram from E. Mofutsanyana to ECCI,  
22 September 1935<sup>1</sup>**

DOCUMENTS ABOUT THE FACTIONAL STRUGGLE IN THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Strictly confidential

Johannesburg,  
September 1935

to Zusmanovich  
(Private address)  
(MOSCOW COMINTERN)

TELEGRAM RECEIVED STOP FIVE UNDESIREED ELEMENTS EXPELLED  
BEFORE TELEGRAM STOP AMONGST THEM ARE NO LEADING COMRADES  
STOP PROFESSOR<sup>2</sup> REMOVED ONLY FROM POST FURTHER STEPS  
STOPPED REACCEPTANCE OF EXPELLED WILL BRING PARTY GREAT  
HARM STOP MOSES (KATANE) WENT AWAY FOR A REST<sup>3</sup> MONTH STOP

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**Doc. 49**

3. Despite the word 'signed' there are no original signatures in the text.

**Doc. 50**

1. The date is mentioned in the Russian translation of this document: RGASPI, 495/18/1032/218.  
2. E. Roux.  
3. 'for a rest' - to Moscow.