

**Report of Discussion, Meeting of Anglo-American Secretariat, ECCI,
1 December 1927 (Extract)**

MEETING OF ANGLO-AMERICAN SECRETARIAT. 1.12.27

[...]

DISCUSSION ON SOUTH AFRICA

Com. LAGUMA stated that the Communist Party of South Africa had not yet considered the Resolution of the Comintern on South Africa,¹ but would do so at its Congress on January 1st. He had, however, received a letter from the Secretary of the Party which indicated that the resolution did not meet with the approval of the Central Committee of the Party. The Central Committee seemed to be afraid that the slogan of an independent native republic as a step towards a peasants and workers republic with full safeguards and rights of all minorities, would antagonise the European section of the working class. They maintain that the European section has the most say in affairs, and that those who drew up the resolution have an insufficient knowledge of the situation in S. Africa, especially 'the widespread apathy of the native masses'.

Com. Laguma declared that this was contrary to the facts, that there had been many strikes and revolts by the natives against their intolerable conditions, unjust taxation, etc. Further there was proof that the natives were beginning to understand that the I.C.U. was following a reactionary policy. For example, two or three months ago the workers at a large railway depot in Johannesburg came out on strike, and when the officials of the I.C.U., at the request of the management, asked the workers to return to work, they were told to go to a 'warm place', and the strikers carried on without their assistance. There had been many other similar instances. He thought that the Central Committee were not in as close touch with the masses as they should be. The Committee, with one exception, consisted of Europeans, and judging from the letter he had received, he did not think they were gauging the situation correctly.

Com. DEMAR urged that a special decision should be taken to fight against the Kadalie leadership of the I.C.U.; that our comrades should organise an opposition inside that union with a view to capturing the leadership, and to rescue it from the clutches of the League of Nations and the Amsterdam International.

1. Resolution of the Politsecretariat of the ECCI of 22 July 1927. See document 45.

Com. PETROVSKY expressed the opinion that Com. Laguma had acted wrongly in not having met the Central Committee on his return to South Africa, and defended the resolution and tried to carry it through. As Com. Laguma was in favour of the resolution, he must get into contact with the Party comrades and do everything possible to get the resolution accepted.

Com. Petrovsky continued that we were witnessing a great change in the policy of the Amsterdam and Second International. In the old days they were satisfied to cover up the action of the imperialists; now they were performing the work of the imperialists, and were turning to the colonies and the oppressed nationalities with object of helping the capitalists to conduct their peaceful work, and the militarists to do their military work. The question of the I.C.U. and Amsterdam was not a small question – it was a question on an international scale, and a big campaign was required to combat it. In view of this, the special attention of the Party should be called to the fight against Amsterdam, which meant also doing everything possible to help our small group inside the I.C.U. to fight against the Kadalie leadership.

Com. Petrovsky stated that it appeared from what Com. Laguma had said that the relation of forces of the white and coloured members inside the Party had remained the same. Something had to be done to change this proportion. On Com. Laguma's return to S. Africa, he must take up the fight for a stronger campaign among the coloured people, so that the Communist Party should become a real party of the natives.

Com. RATHBONE stated that in addition to the proposals made by Com. Petrovsky, he would like to add that we should fight the Amsterdam influence in the I.C.U. not only from within but from without. In the first place we must organise our group inside the I.C.U., and although this might be difficult in view of the fact that the party members were expelled from the Union, he agreed with Com. Petrovsky that this decision should be disregarded because it was not a formal decision. This could form the basis of a challenge to the Kadalie group. But in addition to this, we should organise the workers in those areas which were not touched by the Kadalie Union. For example, the I.C.U. had not organised the coal mining and gold mining areas, and if we organise the workers in those areas, we could force the Kadalie group to negotiate with us. Even if we failed to keep in the end the actual branch which we had organised, the very fact that we were endeavouring to organise native workers would mean a great extension of our influence.

Com. FINEBERG declared that the Communist Party of S. Africa would never be capable of carrying out the C.I. resolution as it is at present organised. The resolution instructs a white group in a colonial country which is the dominant power to hand over that power to the native population. Our instruction should therefore be to the communists in S. Africa to throw their whole weight on the native side, as only a native party could logically carry out a slogan of an independent native republic. The whole policy of the S. African

Party² at the present time was directed towards the white workers, and it was not possible to expect them to carry out such a task.

Com. REESEMA stated that it was not accidental that Amsterdam had interested itself in S. Africa. The natives felt that the British imperialists were protecting them against the Dutch Boers, and Kadalie was working as an agent of British imperialism.

Com. YOUNG opposed the suggestion made by Com. Rathbone that we should organise those workers not touched by the I.C.U. This meant, he declared, to organise a new native union in opposition to the I.C.U. This was contrary to the policy of the resolution of the C.I. which stated that we must work inside the I.C.U.

Com. LAGUMA, in reply to the discussion, stated that with regard to the activities of the party members within the I.C.U., it was very difficult to do what was expected of them in view of the fact that they had been expelled from the union, could not take part in any of its meetings, etc. The I.C.U. had recently printed a new constitution in which no reference was made to the expulsion of the communists. The Central Committee of the Party had taken advantage of this and instructed the members to apply for membership. Com. Laguma stated that he had applied, but was refused, other applications having met with similar results. But he was not in a position to say as to what had happened to less prominent comrades in the party.

With regard to the resolution of the C.I., Com. Laguma explained that he was in Cape Town and he had sent the resolution to the C.C., defending it at the same time. On receipt of the letter from the C.C., he had made it the subject of debate in the party in Cape Town, and at a meeting of the National Congress, and it was enthusiastically received and agreed that it was the correct line. Even the Europeans, with one exception, approved of the resolution in Cape Town, while the non-Europeans were unanimous.

With regard to Kadalie and Amsterdam, it appeared that Kadalie was already disillusioned about Amsterdam. In an article in the 'Labour Monthly', Kadalie stated that he applied to the Amsterdam International for affiliation with the object of bringing the South African Labour question into the international arena, but that he was aware that the R.I.L.U. had always been in favour of organising the colonial workers. Laguma thought there was a possibility of getting Laguma³ to change his policy.

In conclusion, Com. Laguma stated that they all agreed that the Party in S. Africa should be predominantly non-European. He pointed out, with regard to the question of organising the native workers in those areas where the I.C.U. had not yet spread, that the African National Congress had just recently at their

2. Here: Communist Party of South Africa.

3. Undoubtedly Kadalie.

convention decided to form an African Labour Congress, and it would be possible to do this work through them.

RGASPI, 495/72/27/198-202.

Original in English.

Typed.

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**Draft telegram from ECCI to Sixth Congress, CPSA,
22 December 1927¹**

Confidential²

**DRAFT TELEGRAM TO BE SENT TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN
COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS TO BE HELD ON JAN. 1ST, 1928.**

The C.I. sends fraternal greetings to the 6th Congress of the South African Communist Party with best wishes for its successful work. The South African Party has big tasks before it. It is the only force able to organise the native workers, to overcome the prejudices of the white workers cultivated by imperialism against their native brothers and to create a united front of the white and native workers against imperialism.

To accomplish these tasks three conditions are absolutely necessary. First: that the Party shall concentrate its work among the native masses whilst continuing its work among the white workers. Only in this direction can the party create a sure foundation for its fight. Secondly: the Party must mobilise all its forces to detach the ICU from the Amsterdam International. The Amsterdam International is the tool of imperialism and it is necessary to prevent the native trade union from being used as a part of this instrument. Thirdly: the Party must work inside the ICU and mobilise the native masses against the dangerous policy of Kadalie as the only way to bring this native union onto the path of class struggle. The Party must explain to the masses the nature of the Amsterdam International which is using its connection in South Africa on behalf of world imperialism.

All these points are included in the CI resolution already submitted to the South African Party.³ We urge the Party Congress to have very serious

1. This telegram was written and sent as a result of the discussion of La Guma's report in the Anglo-American Secretariat.

2. 'Confidential' in Russian in the original.

3. The CPSA.