

Letter from W.H. Andrews to S. Barlin,  
27 April 1921<sup>1</sup>

Johannesburg,  
April 27th 1921

Mr. Sam Barlin,  
Hotel de Luxe<sup>2</sup>  
Moscow.

Dear Sam,

Your letter of March 2nd has just arrived by the mail and also one from Comrade D. Ivon Jones and other Comrades in England. I am trying to answer them all therefore I shall have to be very short in order to get them away by the mail to-day.

I am glad to hear you are well and that you are in the centre of things in Russia. Regarding credentials they have been already sent also to Den Bakker and Comrade Jones, whichever two of the three who have the credentials can attend the Conference with full power from the I.S.L. as Delegates from S. Africa. Probably before you get this the I.S.L. will have ceased to exist and will have merged itself into the United Communist Party of S.A. Section of the Third International with the 'International' as the official organ and headquarters in Johannesburg. Harrison is the Secretary of the United Party in Capetown and H.W. Haynes will probably function as Secretary of the United Party in Durban.<sup>3</sup> We have had a meeting with Dunbar and five other delegates of his Party to discuss the question of joining up, I think the major part of his Party are anxious to fall into line on the twenty-one Points,<sup>4</sup> but Dunbar is as

1. This letter was sent during preparations for the founding conference of the CPSA which was to unite different organisations in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. A Communist Party of South Africa had already been created in September–October 1920 by a group of communists led by A. Dunbar who opposed any participation in elections. To avoid confusion it was proposed that the adjective 'United' be added to the name of the Party. However, during the founding conference in Cape Town on 31 July and 1 August 1921 it was decided to call the new party Communist Party of South Africa, omitting the word, 'United'.
2. Hotel Lux where many foreign Comintern officials and visitors stayed.
3. 'United Party' in both cases here refers to Communist Party of South Africa.
4. Twenty-one conditions of admission to the Comintern were stipulated at its 2nd Congress. The main thrust of these regulations was full compliance of member parties with any decisions, policy or otherwise, passed at Congresses or taken by the ECCI. Only one national communist organisation could be recognised by the Comintern; no splits were allowed; no dissent from an adopted policy was tolerated. Some conditions outlined tactics that could be used by member parties (e.g., participation in parliamentary elections which was often unacceptable for ultra-left organisations). For the full list of points see: "The Twenty-one Points-Conditions of Admission to the Communist International" as adopted at the 2nd Comintern congress in 1920 and appended to the constitution of the Communist Party of

impossible as ever and it is doubtful whether if he is willing to join ~~whether~~ we would have him in the Party as he is a pure and simple anarchist saboteur. Norrie I do not think will accept the twenty-one Points although probably his Party will cease to exist and the more genuine members attach themselves to the new organisation.

Things are looking better now generally so far as the communist movement is concerned in S.A., the Natives have formed what they call a 'Little Group' at Natal Spruit and wish to become a Branch of the new Communist Party, Thibidi<sup>5</sup> is at the head of it.<sup>x</sup> The International circulation is beginning to rise again after having a slump for the last<sup>6</sup> twelve months. We are busy with May-Day arrangements, no trams will run on May-Day but the demonstration and procession will be on Monday, the Federation has taken no lead in the matter, but the Miners took the bull by the horns and decided to demonstrate on the Union ground after a procession round the town on Monday morning. Our Social will be held on Saturday evening, the reason for this being that we could not get the Town Hall on Sunday. You will see the programme in this weeks paper, and generally you will get more information in the paper than I can give in a letter.

We shall not be able to send a Native Worker to Russia, there are great difficulties in the way of this, it might be possible next year; one difficulty is this that there is no Native Worker we know in S. Africa in whom we have absolute confidence, the educated ones are as you know under the influence of the Missionaries or the Church or the Native Affairs Department and one is just as likely to send out a spy as a genuine comrade.

Max<sup>7</sup> is well and in business for himself and anxious to hear from you personally, he is in Johannesburg. The papers from the Free State arrive regularly also those from Benoni, they are eagerly sought for. We received No.15 (French and German) of the 'Communist International' I must now conclude in order to get letters written to the other comrades.

With kind regards to yourself, Jack<sup>8</sup> and the Russian Comrades. Particularly

<sup>x</sup> I have just received a note from him to the effect that he is threatened with the sack if he does not leave the I.S.L. He is a govt. school teacher as you know.

South Africa by its founding conference in 1921' in: *South African Communists Speak. Documents from the History of the South African Communist Party, 1915–1980*. London: Inkululeko Publications, 1981, pp. 58–62.

5. T.W. Thibedi.

6. There are typed over words after 'last'.

7. The identity of Max could not be established. Perhaps the author meant Max Joffe.

8. Jack – probably, J. Den Bakker.

if you have the chance convey my regards to Comrades Litvinoff and Fineberg whose acquaintance I made in England.

Yours for Revolution.

W.H. Andrews.  
Secretary. I.S.L.

RGASPI, 495/64/5/38-41.

Original in English

Typed on the letterhead of the International Socialist League. Copy.

Stamped: 1) General office, No. 4.

2) Literature Department, No. 6.

Inscription: 26.

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**Report of S. Barlin to Comintern  
[April-June 1921]<sup>1</sup>**

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST LEAGUE AT WORK FOR UNITY

At its annual conference held on the 2nd of January last, the League invited all socialist parties and groups to send delegates for the purpose of discussing the question of uniting all communist elements into one South African Communist Party. A hundred delegates attended the conference, representing the International Socialist League, Poali-Zion, Communist Party (anti-political),<sup>2</sup> various Indian industrial unions (Natal), and individual members of the South African Labour Party, Federation of Trades, native workers unions, and unattached socialists.

On the question of communist unity the delegates agreed to the following as a bases for unity.

a. No desire for unity should be allowed to have any influence in the direction of admitting any elements which do not accept the principle of and agree to affiliation with the Third International.

b. A decentralised system of feebly connected revolutionary groups is no improvement of the present position of affairs. A strongly disciplined and centralised party and with no whining for local autonomy of branches, is the only change worth aiming at.

1. Neither the date nor the addressee are indicated in the original. Judging by the contents of the document, it is S. Barlin's report to the Comintern submitted between April and June 1921.

2. The Cape Communist Party created in Cape Town in 1920. It did not accept Comintern's conditions for membership (see footnote 4 to document 5, vol. I).

c. Whatever declarations, program and constitution can be agreed upon should be submitted for approval to the Third Communist International and the party shall be bound by its decisions.

A sub-committee was appointed to draw up a report of the proceedings to be submitted to all bodies represented, with an invitation to unite into one organisation on the lines outlined.

The second unity conference was held in March. The delegates present agreed upon to form a united Communist Party of South Africa (section III Communist International) based upon the 21 points laid down at the second congress of the III International.

The newly formed Communist Party will include the International Socialist League of South Africa, Poali-Zion, the Social-democratic Federation (Cape), The Communist Party (Cape), The Jewish Socialist Party (Cape), the Marxian Club (Durban), the Socialist-Democratic Party (Durban), and individual members of the South African Labour Party. Another split was intended in the Labour Party but it appears that the time is not quite ripe yet. The newly formed United Communist Party<sup>3</sup> will command a membership of about two thousand.

There is a broad field for propaganda to be done in South Africa in the direction of establishing a joint machine in the British colonies for united action in its struggle against British imperialism, and with the recent affiliation of the Cape Federation of Trade Unions to the Red Trade Union International the U.C.P. of South Africa<sup>4</sup> is going to be a strong force in the South African Labour movement.

This congress should consider the question of two mentioned organisations and should at once proceed to establish such a machine and lay down a definite line of action for such a body which will be the driving force for a speedy British revolution.

SAM BARLIN.

RGASPI, 495/64/5/28.

Original in English.

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Stamped: Archives of the Comintern

(in Russian)

No. 3896

Moscow

Inscription: 10.

3. Communist Party of South Africa (see footnote 1 to document 5, vol. I).

4. Communist Party of South Africa.