

disposal of Comrade Warren. I also enclose a statement<sup>x</sup> of my views on the Party slogan, the Independent Native Republic.

Yours fraternally,  
E.R. Roux  
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<sup>x</sup>I am sending these statements by the following mail.  
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RGASPI, 495/64/145/49.

Original in English.

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(in German)

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**Statement by E. Roux to ECCI,  
November 1935 (Extracts)**

THE SLOGAN: AN INDEPENDENT NATIVE REPUBLIC  
AN EXPLANATION OF WHAT IT MEANS, IN RELATION TO THE  
DISPUTE IN THE PARTY

Johannesburg  
November 1935

It has been stated that the present dispute in the Communist Party is primarily due to a difference of opinion on the interpretation of the slogan, 'An Independent Native Republic'. This is not strictly true, because the dispute has developed mainly out of the persistent left sectarian mistakes of the present leadership. If some of us who find ourselves in opposition to the sectarian leadership have different views about the slogan, this does not account for the mistakes of the present leadership and the fact that our Party, after four years of 'bolshevisation', has less than 20 Native members and less than 50 whites, of whom the majority are not industrial workers.

Nevertheless the question of the slogan is very important and it is necessary that this question should be thoroughly discussed and the points at issue made plain to the members of the Party and to all those workers and other sympathisers, who, though not members of the Party, are interested in the present dispute.

## WHY A DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION IS A NECESSARY FIRST STAGE

At the time when the slogan 'An Independent Native Republic as a stage towards a Workers' and Peasants' Government'<sup>1</sup> was first put forward by the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, there were many comrades who said that they did not see the necessity for such a slogan, because (a) they did not see the necessity for stages and (b) a workers and peasants government would certainly do away with all the slave laws affecting the Native people. These comrades (and the writer was one) thought that the slogan of a Native Republic would unnecessarily antagonise the white workers, on the support of large bodies of whom the revolution would have to rely in part if it were to be successful. These comrades considered that the broad masses of workers and peasants in South Africa could be rallied behind the slogan of a workers and peasants government.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand if the Party put forward the slogan of a Native Republic, the white workers, and the particularly Afrikaner workers (who form the great bulk of the landless poor whites and the poor white workers in the towns, i.e. the sections of the whites whose economic interests suffer most under imperialism) would be antagonised and would fight on the other side. Under these circumstances it would be impossible to forge the united front of the black and white workers and it would be impossible to carry through the revolution.<sup>3</sup>

These arguments, in my opinion, still carry a certain amount of weight and the Party, in its tactics, particularly among the Afrikaner workers and poor farmers, must take account of them.<sup>4</sup> But before coming to the question of tactics let us first make clear what we mean by a Native Republic and what we mean by a Workers and Peasants Government and what these slogans mean politically.

## THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE REVOLUTION

It is impossible<sup>5</sup> to foretell exactly the path to be traced by the revolution in South Africa. This depends on all sorts of factors, both internal and external. If there were a Soviet Britain and a Soviet America and India our revolution would take a different course from that it would take if these countries remained under imperialist control. In spite of this we can still indicate in broad outline the course which our revolution will probably pursue and the alternatives which will face us at different stages.

We can imagine the following stages:

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  2. There is a double line in pencil in the left margin opposite the first two lines.
  3. The words 'On the other hand...' to '...the revolution' are enclosed in square brackets. There is a single line, a figure '12' and an unclear comment in the left margin opposite these words. All marks are in pencil, comments in pen.
  4. There is a double line in pencil in the left margin opposite this sentence.
  5. There are several typed-over words after 'impossible'.



(1) The overthrow of the imperialists and the setting up of an anti-imperialist government. This would mean the independence of South Africa from control by British finance capital. It could be carried through only by a government representing the broad masses of the people both black and white. Owing to the fact that the Natives form the overwhelming majority of the population oppressed by imperialism, such a government would be a Native majority government, in other words a Native Republic, though it would not necessarily be an anti-white government. If the white workers played a prominent part in setting it up then, naturally, they would play an important part in the government itself. But they would do so as a minority: the majority would be black.<sup>6</sup>

The resolution of the Sixth Congress of the CI (1928) definitely laid it down that South Africa is a semi-colonial country dominated by British imperialism. Imperialism maintains the feudal and semi-feudal exploitation of the Native people. The overthrow of imperialism and the liberation of the Native people is the first task of the revolution in South Africa at the present stage. This means primarily an agrarian revolution and the return of the land to the Native people.

The anti-imperialist government (Native Republic) would be a democratic government; it could not be otherwise. The slave laws, pass laws, and above all the land laws would be abolished. Democratic citizen rights would be acquired by the Native, Indian and Coloured people. The workers' organisations (trade unions, co-operatives and also the peasants' organisations) would have greatly augmented rights and powers and possibilities of growth. All sorts of restrictions now hindering the development of the Native people would be abolished. A Native proletariat of skilled workers resident in the towns would grow rapidly. This would be made inevitable by (a) the growth of industry freed from the present restrictions imposed by the domination of British monopoly capital and (b) the abolition of the colour bar in industry thus allowing Non-Europeans to enter industry without restrictions. At the same time the Native petty traders etc. would have greatly increased opportunities for developing. In fact the revolution would lead to increased opportunities for capitalistic development among the Natives. For such an anti-imperialist democratic people's government would not necessarily be a workers and peasants class government.<sup>7</sup>

(2) A Workers and Peasants Government based on soviets. This would be a class government based on the democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. Among its tasks it would include the same democratic reforms as the anti-imperialist government would carry through, but it would carry these much further and it would not limit itself to these. It would be much more strongly biased in favour of the workers and the poor peasantry and would be less willing

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to allow unrestricted opportunities to any section of the exploiting classes. It would accelerate the development of the country along the lines of socialism.<sup>8</sup>

Such a government would make possible (the international situation still proving favourable) as a further stage the evolution towards.

(3) a dictatorship of the proletariat, a form of government (still based on soviets) in which the proletariat has developed to such an extent that it is able not only to lead but to dominate and so to ensure the much more rapid march towards socialism. Such a government would lead the peasantry towards the collectivisation of the land, the setting up of large scale agriculture, etc.<sup>9</sup> It would complete the socialisation of industry and (still with the help of overseas soviet governments) work for the attainment of the classless society and communism.<sup>10</sup>

With regard to the general principles of this development there is very little disagreement among the comrades. All admit that we cannot immediately jump into full-fledged communism or even into a full-fledged proletarian dictatorship. But there is still disagreement on the question of precisely what we may expect and what alternatives we may be faced with at the beginning of the revolution.<sup>11</sup>

In the first place it is necessary to state that the idea of STAGES does not necessarily mean that there must be a whole series of revolutionary uprisings marking the transitions between the stages. We have seen the Russian revolution progress through different stages since October 1917.<sup>12</sup> It is probable that in South Africa the stages may be more complicated in some cases. It is also possible that in other cases development may be simpler and more rapid. A lot depends on what happens overseas.

[...]

Objectively our Party leadership has failed hopelessly to develop the anti-imperialist struggle. There has been utter passivity on the question of the Protectorates, the Native bills, the Jubilee Celebrations, etc. Only at this late stage when the inner Party situation has become the subject of open discussion in the mass organisations, do our leaders, forced by mass pressure bestir themselves and begin to consider the possibilities of the anti-imperialist united front.

By actively taking<sup>13</sup> its stand against old forms of imperialist oppression, whether directed against the workers, the peasants or the petty-bourgeoisie,

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13. There are typed-over words after 'taking'.



the Party will become the acknowledged leader of the oppressed people and in this way the hegemony of the proletariat will be secured.

Lenin has made it perfectly clear that anti-imperialist struggles waged by subject peoples, even with the participation of the national bourgeoisie, must be regarded as part of the world proletarian<sup>14</sup> revolution. In this connection our Party should take to heart the recent lessons of the struggle in Cuba where the Party made mistakes of a left sectarian character, 'mechanically setting off the class interests of the proletariat against the interests of the national-liberation struggle, the aims of the bourgeois-democratic, agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution in Cuba' (Imprecor,<sup>15</sup> vol. 15, p.1302). In this way the Party in Cuba took up a 'neutral' attitude to the national-reformist, petty-bourgeois, anti-imperialist government of Grau. The result was that the Party facilitated the coming to power of a reactionary government which massacred both the national reformists and the Communists.

#### THE DISCUSSION ON THE COLONIAL QUESTION AT THE SEVENTH CONGRESS AND ITS MEANING FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Comrade Wolton once formulated the slogan of the Communist Party of South Africa as follows: For an Independent Native Republic – to make possible a workers and peasants government. I think we can learn a lot from this formulation. In Germany today the CP is prepared to support the struggle for an Anti-Fascist Government. Such government may or may not be a soviet government. To say that we will support an anti-fascist government only on condition that it is a Soviet Government is to betray the struggle against fascism. For us the Anti-Fascist Government which is not yet a Soviet Government is a STAGE TOWARDS A SOVIET GOVERNMENT.

In South Africa we are fighting for an anti-imperialist government (a Native Republic). Such a government may or may not be a workers and peasants government based on soviets. The role of the Communist parties is to ensure that it shall become a workers and peasants government. But if it is not we still support it as a STAGE TOWARDS A WORKERS AND PEASANTS GOVERNMENT.<sup>16</sup>

This conception in connection with a colonial country was very <sup>clearly</sup> formulated at the Seventh Congress by the reporter on the colonial question (Comrade Wan Min) and the Brazilian delegate (Comrade Lacerda). Comrade Lacerda said: 'The next stage in the struggle in Brazil, which is at a turning point in its history, is the establishment of the anti-imperialist People's Front under the banner of the National Freedom Alliance. The People's Front Government, to which the victory of the People's Front will lead, <sup>WILL NOT YET</sup> BE THE DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP OF THE WORKERS AND PEASANTS,

14. There are typed-over words after 'proletarian'.

15. Imprecor.

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but only a stage towards it. The peasants have a key position in the establishment of the People's Front; we must win them in the first place, and we must secure the hegemony of the proletariat through a persistent, genuine, day-to-day struggle for all the demands of the masses'.

It is true that in South Africa conditions may not be exactly the same as in Brazil. Nevertheless, learning from the experience of our comrades in other colonial countries, we must develop the necessary flexibility in our tactics to enable us to win the leadership of the national revolution.

Those comrades who insist upon the ABSOLUTE IDENTITY of the Native Republic and workers and peasants government must seriously study the facts and see whether they are not making a mistake, being too mechanical.

#### WHAT THEN SHALL BE OUR SLOGAN?

In my opinion the Communist party of South Africa has two main slogans at the present time. They are (1) An Independent Native Republic and (2) A Workers and Peasants Government. The Party must learn how to use these slogans dialectically in the complicated political battlefield in South Africa. On the one hand we must win over to our side the vast mass of the Native population, without whom there can be no talk of an anti-imperialist revolution. On the other hand we must win over a large number of the white workers and poor whites, without whom we cannot build the united front of the black and white workers and lay the basis for the proletarian dictatorship at a later stage.<sup>17</sup>

It is not necessary to stick to any particular formula or form of words, particularly if there is misunderstanding. The words 'Native Republic' often conjure up before the white worker the idea that the role of black and white will be reversed in South Africa and that white will suffer racial oppression, be driven into the sea, etc. We must put it to the white worker like this: 'You desire to see the overthrow of capitalist-imperialism. To do this you might unite with your Native fellow-worker. You cannot expect the black worker to fight shoulder to shoulder with you while you enjoy democratic rights which are denied to him. In other words you must be prepared not only to grant him his freedom but to help him to secure his freedom, and on that basis you and he can unite and beat the boss.' This does not imply the complete identity of the Native Republic and the Workers and Peasants Government. But it does imply that if the white workers take up the correct attitude the Native Republic will become automatically a workers and peasants government.

We believe that the overthrow of imperialism is the main task of the revolutionary movement in this country. Its overthrow will make possible all

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subsequent developments towards a proletarian dictatorship and communism.  
E.R. Roux

RGASPI, 495/64/148/15-17, 20-1. For the full text of the document see:  
RGASPI, 495/64/148/15-21.

Original in English.

Typed.

Stamp: illegible.

Inscriptions: several illegible numbers and words both in pen and pencil.

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**Statement of L. Bach to South African Commission,  
23 November 1935 (Extracts)**

FOURTH MEETING OF SOUTH AFRICAN COMMISSION  
NOVEMBER 23, 1935

Confidential

Present: Marty (chairman), Sussmanovitch,<sup>1</sup> Mingulin, Berey,<sup>2</sup> Eugene, Henderson, Kotane, Potechin, Richter,<sup>3</sup> Patterson, Porter, Huiswoud, Grey, Randolph.

Speaker: Eugene (Bach):

[...]

Reviewing the situation as I see it I am of the opinion that during the whole period of existence of the South African Party there was practically no real Bolshevik Communist Party in South Africa. This was at all times, at all periods, during all the leadership which the South African Party has had, during the time of Bunting, during the time of Wolton and myself, during the time of Kotane, and at the time of the present leadership.

This party was established in 1921. It was imported into South Africa by a number of elements who really and truly were not Communists, against whom actually twenty one conditions of the Communist International<sup>4</sup> were directed, and for a period of about ten-twelve years the Party was working along the lines of those who had established the Party in 1921, embedded with the ideology of what is called Buntingism [...]

In his speech Comrade Kotane has accused me personally of number of questions. My time is limited, and I won't be able to deal with these accusations.

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1. Zusmanovich.

2. The identity of Berey could not be established.

3. Maurice Richter.

4. See footnote 4 to document 5, vol. I.