

when it is brought back here it will be 'killed by kindness'. I have no confidence in them to sincerely fight for it.

You may depend on  
Yours for the Revolution  
La Guma.

P.S. To busy to write further until next time.

RGASPI, 495/64/77/20-1.

Original in English.

Handwritten.

Stamped: 1) 002279 – 20.SEP.1928,

2) 2166 – 25.SEP.1928.

Inscriptions: 1) 28/IX/28

2) Received on 14/IX

3) 'Conf.'

(in German)

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#### **Amendment to 'Native Republic' Slogan Proposed by CPSA Delegation, Sixth Comintern Congress, 25 August 1928<sup>1</sup>**

##### THE COLONIAL THESIS ON SOUTH AFRICA.

25.8.28

The CP of South Africa proposes an amendment of the 'Native Republic' slogan as at present drafted, for the following reasons.

1. There is a real danger that if a national or racial movement for a native republic were launched in a form liable to conflict with the other tasks of the Party, or other wise inappropriate, as we think the present form is, it might have as its outcome an eventual race war between black and white, irrespective of class divisions among the whites. This is admitted by advocates of the slogan.

2. Such a race war negates and clashes with the class solidarity of black and white workers which it is the Party's task to promote, and on the basis of which the Party has succeeded in winning the confidence of large native masses without in the slightest degree compromising with chauvinism.

1. Judging by the handwriting, this document was edited and corrected by S.P. Bunting.

3. The ruling class, while not at the moment courting such a race war, will welcome it when it comes, they are ready for it – so long as they can count on white and black labour disunity, on which their strength largely depends.

4. Such a race war would probably result in a defeat of the unarmed blacks, followed by their redoubled oppression and also that of the exploited whites, and with no compensatory gain. The CP for its part would succumb under the strain.

5. All this can be avoided by modifying the 'pure and simple' racial or national appeal of the slogan ('racial' is more correct than 'national' as no native nation exists today, there are only various rival tribes) in such a way as to reconcile it with the class appeal of labour solidarity.

6. The amendment proposed by the SA delegation achieves this result. It reads: 'AN INDEPENDENT WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC WITH EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL TOILERS IRRESPECTIVE OF COLOUR, AS A BASIS FOR A NATIVE GOVERNMENT'.

7. This embodies all the substantial content of the slogan as at present drafted, everything that it will work out at in practice, the absolute liberation of the natives and their rule as the race constituting the immense majority; while it avoids a wording admittedly liable to cause racial misunderstanding and excesses, and thereby keeps open the door for labour solidarity.

8. The native revolutionary movement gains decisively by such solidarity. In particular, the present government, which depends on working class votes and came into power as a protest against the shooting down of white workers in the 1922 strike, dare not directly and violently attack the labour movement. It does indeed attack the native labour movement with a law against 'creating hostility between white and black', whereby a native national or racial movement is attempted to be made illegal; but the labour movement as such is still protected (the reverse of the position in some other countries) and the native movement whether national or class profits by that protection as a most valuable shield.

9. The amendment involves no 'capitulation to white chauvinism', it is rather a means of check-mating and overcoming it among the exploited white workers. After all, the way to combat the chauvinism of white workers and peasants is not just to shake a fist at them, to threaten them with forcible conquest by the blacks, that method may be reserved for the bourgeoisie; rather it is to engage them with black workers and peasants in the common fight against the bourgeoisie, confronting them with the spectacle of black organisation, whether industrial, agrarian or national, on a large scale as an accomplished fact. This we have proved by long experience in this very campaign against chauvinism, as the only alternative to the possibility of a mere barbaric nation-wide pogrom which may, indeed, end in 'capitulation'.

We have had no answer to these arguments. They been insolently ignored in the Negro Sub-Commission.<sup>2</sup> Our reports on the South African conditions of which we have peculiar knowledge have been altered and our statements distorted. We have been charged with hypocrisy. The whole atmosphere created has been one, not of Communists debating, but of a law court, where our opponents 'look for points' and pose as judges of the kind that listen to no arguments saying they have heard them all before – as if the world were full of South Africas, whose peculiar circumstances were known everywhere and to every one!

The slogan apart from the amendment proposed has been expressed in three different forms.

1. 'An independent black South African Republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic with autonomy for minorities.'
2. 'An independent native South African Republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic with full safeguards and equal rights for all minorities.'
3. 'An independent native South African Republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' organisation with full safeguards and equal rights for all national minorities.'

The latter version skips the preliminary stage which the other versions assumed could, and must, precede a worker's and peasant's government. As a matter of fact (there being no native bourgeoisie or bourgeois national movement in South Africa) it will be necessary completely to overthrow the white bourgeoisie and imperialists before either stage could materialise, so that there is no special point in calling for a preliminary stage. (The astounding reason, typical of the way our arguments have been met throughout, which was given for not accepting this latter version as proposed by a Sub-Committee was that to do so might be regarded by the South African Party<sup>3</sup> as a point gained by them!)

However, it is evident that the wording is elastic. All the more reason for accepting the amendment which does no real violence to the meaning.

We are anxious to lose no chance of arriving at a workable understanding in this matter and in the view of the very serious consequences at stake, we ask the Commission to give its most earnest consideration to our amendment, acceptance of which will also involve consequential alterations in the paragraphs<sup>4</sup> about South Africa to figure in the Colonial Thesis.

Failing acceptance of this amendment, we ask that before the slogan comes into force, our Party in South Africa be furnished by the ECCI with a full

2. Negro Commission.

3. Here: Communist Party of South Africa.

4. There is an illegible word before 'paragraphs'.

exposition and criticism on the whole matter (we have never had anything of the kind so far) which our Party will discuss and report back upon. This is very necessary if further misconception is to be avoided.

Alternatively, or in addition, we suggest that a 'real, good English Communist' of the kind Comrade Kuusinen had in mind in his reply to the Colonial debate, proceed to South Africa as investigator and remain there for say a year, perhaps working at his trade there, the application of the slogan to await his report to the ECCI at the end of the year.

In any case, the Party Executive in South Africa should have a certain discretion to express, interpret and apply the slogan in accordance with the need of the actual local situation.

RGASPI, 495/154/351/61-4.

Original in English.

Typed. Copy.

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**Letter from J. La Guma to D. Petrovsky,  
30 August 1928**

Johannesburg, S.A.

P.O.Box 4179

30/8/28.

Comrade Petrovsky

I understand from hearsay that one of the chief arguments used in support of their opposition to the thesis by the South African delegates, is that a step has already been accomplished towards the unity of the white and black workers by the 'amalgamation' of white and black laundry workers Unions.<sup>1</sup> A report to this effect I notice has already appeared in the 'British Worker', the organ of the Minority movement. I beg leave to state that such an amalgamation of the Unions was turned down by the white Union and that an agreement to support each other in the event of a strike was all that was arrived at.

But, I regret to say that at the very first opportunity of proving the sincerity of their aims the white laundry workers left the blacks in the lurch. This also happened in the clothing industry when black clothing workers came out in support of the whites and after the whites were comfortably back working the blacks were left to the mercy of the bosses.

1. La Guma's reference is to the merger of the white Cleaners' and Dyers' Union with the Native Laundry Workers' Union whose membership was exclusively African, a development noted by Roux in his remarks at the meeting of the Negro Commission on 31 July.