

We have had no answer to these arguments. They been insolently ignored in the Negro Sub-Commission.² 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 Party³ 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 paragraphs⁴ 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.¹ 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.

It seems that we can expect many more of these 'amalgamation' stunts as soon as the white workers realise that they have another means of exploiting the blacks – as a catspaw.

The remarks of the person Mrs. Rebecca Bunting in opposition to the slogan of a Black Soviet Republic was reported in the capitalist press here who were somewhat jubilant and gave great publicity to it.² The other result is that we have already received a letter and comments from non-Europeans outside the Party, that it seems the Communist Party South Africa is 'running with the hares and hunting with the hounds'. It is in my opinion a disgrace the way the Social Democrats are trying to sabotage the freedom of the blacks of this country.

La Guma
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RGASPI, 495/64/77/24.

Handwritten.

Stamped: 1) 002341 – 1.OCT.1928

2) 2211 – 3.OCT.1928

(in German)

Inscriptions: 1) Native Laundry Workers Union  
(on reverse side, in La Guma's handwriting)

2) received 29.9.28.

(in German)

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### Minutes of Meeting, Central Executive Committee, CPSA, 20 September 1928 (Extracts)

MINUTES OF MEETING OF CENTRAL EXECUTIVE  
HELD ON THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 20TH 1928 AT 8 P.M.  
AT ASHERS BUILDINGS

Present. M. Wolton (Chair), La Guma, Sachs, Weinbren, Molobi, Thibedi,  
D. Wolton, Danchin, Kalk, Diamond, Phooko.

[...]

Thibedi's Allegation Com. Thibedi reported that in looking through the drawers in the desk used by Comrade D. Wolton he had found a typewritten document which he thought had subsequently been despatched to the E.C.C.I. He had copied extracts from the document as follows.

2. The reference is to articles in the mainstream South African press that claimed that Rebecca Bunting had warned of dangers of 'a black South African republic'. See, for example, the *Cape Times*, 25 August 1928. In fact, she made no such statement on the floor of the Sixth Congress. See: *The International Press Correspondence*, VIII, 48 (11 August 1928), p. 839.

'Financially the Party depends on donations from S.P. Bunting or some of those who aim to visit Russia eventually and claim allegiance to the movement. A definite non-European section of the Party is persistently clamouring for recognition and accordingly the white members of the Party see their privileged monopoly being threatened.

Definitely hostile acts are being resorted to in order to stem the development of non-Europeans within the Party.

In Johannesburg the majority who function (about 10) are ably represented by S.P. Bunting and the majority of blacks who function (about 10) are inarticulate or have through a course of selection of years, merely support because they have no reason to suppose any other policy is available.'

Com. Thibedi further stated that after the receipt of the newspaper report of the speech of Rebecca Bunting Com. Wolton had said to him in conversation 'For the last 10 years some members had been trying to get Buntings out of the Party – this is now their chance.'

Com. Thibedi alleged that Coms. Wolton and La Guma were carrying on intrigue within the Party and that Com. La Guma had in his possession a document that was being circulated amongst members of the Party.

Com. Weinbren read Comrade Bennett's speech from Inprecorr in which was stated that the recent successes of C.P.S.A. were due to the resolution submitted by the E.C.C.I. Com. Weinbren thought that misleading communications were being sent to E.C.C.I. by individuals in the Party and he strongly protested against such communications being sent.

Com. Wolton stated that he was preparing a report on the Party organisation in South Africa and he had made considerable notes. The report had not been submitted to E.C.C.I. He described as a lie the statement of Com. Thibedi that he had used the implication that 'now is the time to get the Buntings out of the Party'. In reply to Com. Weinbren he said that statements were submitted in the Minority report on the Resolution. Com. La Guma stated that he had prepared a document for submission to members of the Party, such document was in support of the E.C.C.I. resolution on South African and that the document was held in readiness. He further stated that frequent communications were passing between he and members of the E.C.C.I.

Motion. Weinbren moved seconded Diamond 'That the C.E. hereby warns all those concerned that this squabbling and antagonism be stopped otherwise the suspension of such members will be enforced'.

Sachs moved an amendment seconded Kalk 'That the C.E. appeals to all comrades to cease personal squabbles which are destroying Party work, and to carry on political discussion in a disciplined and comradely fashion.

Amendment – 2 votes

Motion – 4 votes Motion declared carried.

It was agreed that Com. Wolton's statement that the document had not been submitted to the E.C.C.I. without reference to the Party.