

**Statement of A. Marty to South African Commission,
19 March 1936 (Extracts)**

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON SOUTH AFRICAN QUESTION
MARCH 19, 1936

Strictly confidential.

CONCLUDING SPEECH OF COMRADE MARTY

I think we can and must finish now. We have discussed a very long time, and I think also that Comrade Stepanov has given the general line. I intend to add only a few words. [...]

So, the Sixth World Congress put forward the daily demands. This is quite clear, and only in the end, they put the slogan of an Independent Native Republic. Our Party forgot the daily demands and put forward a scholastic discussion on the Independent Native Republic. [...]

Our Party, by its long discussion and hard factional struggle, has given to the British imperialism the most important service which it could hope to get, because, by discussing for a long period of years, our Party did not give leadership to all the mass movement in South Africa [...]

What has the Party done to interpret the speech of Comrade Dimitrov – not apply it, but to discuss it. [...] You come here having 150 members, and even then, I do not know if there are 150. Comrade Kotane said a few months ago that the comrades who came here arrived in South Africa and were immediately put into the leadership; gave some directives, etc. We know: formerly there were several collaborators here who did not apply the line of the C.I. and of the 6th Congress, of the Political Secretariat, etc. For that, and other questions, they were all immediately removed from the C.I. [...]

I think that the responsibility of the leadership of our Party in South Africa is still very great. They discussed and discussed. All the comrades of the Commission have heard you. We have seen that all the South African comrades here have made the first step forward, an effort, but even in their declarations, all of them, always the old factional struggle could be seen. You are now in another atmosphere than in South Africa; you have been here a long time, in the atmosphere of the C.I.; you are in the country of Socialism, where only the workers rule the country, and even in such a situation, you remain factionalists.

I asked you in the first sitting of the Commission to be quiet, you have not done that; you have written to South Africa since you have been here. I ask that the comrades of the Cadre Department, Brigadier and Loba and others, to investigate this question. You have written to South Africa since your arrival

here; you continued the factional struggle while being here in Moscow; it is impossible to deny this.

I propose to finish by asking that the CPSA accept the main line of the Party as explained by Comrade Stepanov, and naturally, their proposals are not the proposals of Comrade Stepanov or Marty, but the proposals of all the comrades of the Secretariat of the ECCI. This means to develop the whole fight of our Party on the basis of a programme of action to beat British imperialism. It is not necessary to repeat everywhere, all the time, 'against British imperialism'; it is better not to repeat, but to beat, and when the workers fight in strikes, if we help them to win, we beat imperialism. When I can help to give to the Native people some rights, not all, but some, I am beating imperialism.

The Native people are drawn into the political life of the country; they are rising and going forward and the main way is to really beat imperialism. Speaking is not very important, but organising of the workers, unifying the trade unions, organising the Native people for their rights – these are the best way to go to the movement, broaden it and beat British imperialism.

I propose, in concluding these words to accept the following directives as:

Proposals for acceptance by the Secretariat of the ECCI.

After hearing, during the investigation of the factional struggle in the C.P. of South Africa, Comrade Richter¹ for the leadership of the CPSA; Comrade Kotane, for the opposition; Comrades Eugene, Henderson and Yugov,² for the C.P., and also all the members of the Commission, particularly the representatives of the CPGB, CPUSA and C.P. Canada, the Commission states:

- a.) That for many years a very hard factional struggle has been going in the Party of South Africa, in the form of scholastic discussion about the interpretation of the slogan of an Independent Native Republic, and on the question of the existence or not of a Native bourgeoisie.
- b.) As a result of this factional struggle and of this discussion, the Party quite forgot, in a sectarian and passive manner, the development of the movements of the workers, Native peoples and poor whites.
- c.) In the Party, there is increasing demoralisation, no discipline, principally amongst the cadres.
- d.) Since the 6th Congress of the C.I., the membership has decreased from 2,000 to 150.
- e.) The further continuation of the scholastic discussion and of the factional struggle threatened not only to liquidate the Party, but to compromise the Communist movement in South Africa for a long period of time.

1. Here and elsewhere in the text, Maurice Richter.

2. Obviously, Paul Richter.

I propose the following main directives, as ending all of our work here, to be presented for acceptance to the Secretariat of the ECCI:

1.) That the Communist Party of South Africa must immediately stop this whole discussion and the factional struggle, which are playing into the hands of the enemy, the capitalists and the authorities;

2.) Whoever will try to continue the discussion and the factional struggle must immediately be exposed as an agent of the capitalists and of the authorities, and must immediately be expelled from the ranks of the Party;

3.) On the basis of the activity of the Communists in South Africa must be put the programme of action for the main concrete demands of the Native people, workers of all races, of the toilers;

4.) The Communists must mainly concentrate their work (a) in the trade union movement, endeavouring to realise, in the shortest possible time, trade union unity in the All-South African Union, and incorporate into the trade unions the majority of the workers, white and Native; and (b) to defend rights, interests and demands of all Native peoples.

5.) The leadership of the Party should be constituted only of loyal activists in the trade union movement, connected with masses, and of the activists devoted and faithful to the movement of the Natives.

6.) To mobilise all the best of our 150 comrades around the Programme of Action proposed here by Comrade Stepanov, and for the practical work in the trade unions and amongst the Native peoples.

7.) The Editorial Board of the paper 'Umsebenzi', must be constituted of comrades who can effectively realise this line, with the aim of transforming the paper into a centre of unification and organisation of the workers and trade union movement, and of the Native movements and of the poor whites. It is necessary to have a campaign for the creation of a daily paper of the unified trade union movement.

8.) Only after all of these measures will have been realised, to call a Party conference to consolidate all the results obtained, and to put the question of the creation of a monthly organ of the Party in the form of a pamphlet or booklet. [...]

Several comrades said we have no cadres. You have plenty of cadres; we found them. We do not know Comrade Wolfson, but he was the leader of many strikes; he fought for the white workers, for the Native workers, for the Indian workers, and seems to us to have big authority in trade union movement. He is a labour leader [...]

Comrade Gomas wrote some proposals which are very good. He is still connected with the opposition, but I think it is possibility to speak with him. He is a mass man; he is working in the trade union movement. [...] Gomas is putting forward very good proposals for the trade union movement, and he began to realise them. I do not know him, but I see that he realises things and is a good comrade. We must speak with him and explain to him the questions he does not understand, to help him to understand and not immediately to say,

he is an opposition comrade. No, we must speak with him; he is a good comrade connected with the masses; we must help him; he is a leader. [...]

Lastly, the workers – the British, the Afrikanders and the Natives. They have a very old traditions of a struggle as workers. They have a very old traditions of struggle as workers, and probably as colonial workers, their traditions are the oldest in the world. When we look at the past, we see some big strikes. [...]

I think that our Party does not yet understand the significance of such strikes, Richter told us that this was also a strike against the Natives. How is it possible to speak in such a way? You must read the articles of Andrews, who was secretary of our Party in the International, and you must see it was not a strike against the Natives. [...]

You know, reality and life gives us the solution for the slogan of the Independent Native Republic. These workers of the Rand give the solution to us. Their strike began for daily demands, and it finished with a demand against British imperialism, for freedom, for an independent South Africa. Life will give the solution, but our party does not understand.

Our Party, through Comrade Richter, says it is a strike against the Natives. I do not know what happened to Andrews but I think that it might have been possible, in 1931, not to have put him out of Party. I cannot forget that Andrews is now the general secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, and I do not forget that, during the imperialist war, Andrews and two other comrades in South Africa (Fisher and Spendiff), were fighters against British imperialism, against the war. I think that if it had been possible at that time to speak with Andrews, we would have been able to keep him for our Party, explaining to him what our line is – uniting the white workers with the Native people, and a struggle also for the Natives.

RGASPI, 495/14/20-a/169, 172, 179–83, 184–6, 189–91. For the full text of the document see: RGASPI, 495/14/20-a/169–94.

Original in English.

Typed.

Steno.

Inscription: Read and corrected only on the question of proposals, page 13 till 18, March 23rd 1936. A. Marty.

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Programme of Action Proposed to CPSA, 19 March 1936

1. In South Africa, the danger of fascism has been sharply increasing during the recent period. The Basis for fascism and the ground for the propaganda of the Nazi organisations exist: