

**Report of G. Hardy to ECCL,
9 February 1937¹**

Strictly confidential

THE INNER PARTY SITUATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The total isolation of the CPSA from the masses was due to inner Party strife, factionalism and a failure to politically understand SA conditions. This factional struggle began after the Sixth Congress of the CI when many expulsions took place. These were carried out mechanically and characterised the leadership at that time as the worst type of left-sectarianism, for, they not only did not discuss mistakes with some comrades, but expelled some members without even charging them. This, Bill Andrews states, happened to him who only learned of his exclusion in the Party press. However, many excluded were opportunists, who may have been corrected, however, but for the very bad tactics and left-dictatorial methods indicated above.

The years of fractional struggle that followed not only completed the isolation of the Party but it lost the Party as well, being reduced to no more than 100 members, of which 8 or 10 remained functionaries engaged in the fight. The² fraction, among which were ^{some} bad elements, was made up of nationalists (Kotane), Trotskyites (Roux, who remained inside the Party and claimed himself to be fraction leader) and opportunists.

The fraction was more vigorous than the Party leadership, and, as Roux remained editing the paper and on the Political Bureau, it is easily understood how the Party was driven into a political cul-de-sac in attempts to interpret the slogan 'SA Native Republic', and from which it could not emerge. Politically, having no real understanding of SA, the attempts to continue a fight as to whether there is a native bourgeoisie or not, etc., when a weak one obviously exists (Shopkeepers, professors, owners of Native restaurants, clergy, etc.), was really 'peanut³ politics' and proved a failure to see these very people before their eyes.⁴

The fraction used the MOPR as its organisational base, therefore, insofar as this still remains a centre for subversive activity, it should not be revived and allowed to die, and a new and wider body, cleansed of all bad elements, built

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1. The document is a heavily-edited draft, most probably by G. Hardy himself. Judging by the handwriting his name that appears on the first page could have been written by himself.
 2. There is a crossed-out word after 'The'.
 3. Word corrected by hand.
 4. Two paragraphs starting with 'The years...' and 'The fraction...' are crossed out by hand in the original.

up. The bad management of funds, collected by Comrade Joffe⁵ for anti-fascist work, also exposed the Party to attacks by opportunists and Trotskyites. This fight was led by E.S. Sachs,⁶ General Secretary of the Garment Workers Union (TVL⁷) who constantly attempts to isolate the Party, and he succeeded to win a majority against the Party within the League Against Fascism and War. He charged Comrade Joffe, falsely, with misappropriation of funds collected for the League. This was based upon the fact that in cases where funds were donated for anti-fascist work without saying they were for the League; contributors being agreeable that the money be used in any way possible; as long as it was used to fight fascism, the Party took part of it and gave the balance to the League. But, even though Joffe was collecting for the Party as well as the League, this was tactically wrong and enabled enemies to use it against the Party.

They found assistance for their attacks inside the Party, especially the Cape comrades who were supporting the fraction, and demanded Comrade Joffe's removal from all work, etc. This was the voice of Sachs and therefore the Party opened Joffe's accounts for inspection and finally satisfied two inspectors of his honesty although, due to his slackness or inability, these were badly kept and a small amount unaccounted for. However, these inspectors gave a favourable report. Proof that this was not the vital question with Sachs, whose brother is a Trotskyite editor of 'SA Opinion',⁸ and who also may be one himself, is contained in his continued slanderous statements against the new leadership, and this after Joffe is removed from treasurer of the Party, and from the leadership, at the same time Miss Klennerman, a Trotskyite, is accepted in the League without a word of opposition from Sachs. This briefly was the situation within the Party and can be summed up in the fact that no serious attempt was made to discuss the Seventh World Congress decisions or to popularise them.

In this situation great care had to be taken in the approach to make a decisive change within the Party. The procedure adopted at the off-set was (1) to select three comrades, Mafutsanyana, Wolfson and Kalk (the limitation being determined by the fractional situation which was extremely dangerous), as these were the most likely as a nucleus for the new leadership. It was necessary to discuss South African problems until we had agreement and understanding prior to placing any of these before the Party groups. In the process it was clear that efforts had been made to improve the Party position: Comrade Mafutsanyana had been a representative of the Party on the Native deputation that interviewed the Government, protesting against disenfranchisement of the Natives. The Party comrades had been responsible for the

5. Louis Joffe.

6. E.S. Sachs.

7. The Transvaal.

8. George Sachs, the editor of the 'South African Opinion', was not the brother of E.S. Sachs – the trade unionist; nor was he a Trotskyist.

adoption of the resolution of the SA T and LC conference to create a People's Front movement, the endorsement of the anti-fascist League and other measures. But this was more the work of individuals rather than Party policy.

(2) After agreement was reached and to broaden discussion a resolution was drafted along the lines of the CI decisions and the Seventh World Congress, and placed before the Political Bureau. By drawing new comrades into the discussion we were able to find more capable cadres, especially a school teacher, Miss M. Thomas, a comrade transferred from the British Party, who was already holding evening classes among Natives, teaching them elementary education, and who became active in organising the youth and finally became the Secretary of the Peace Council as well as assisting on the paper. She was a great asset in the development which we achieved because of being free from factionalism, especially in transforming the paper. This discussion, led by the three comrades, improved the position at the centre, but factional strife was continued by Comrade Gomas (coloured) who held the two-front theory, being more nationalist than Communist, but an good energetic/ mass worker. After three or four meetings we were able to note the Nationalist, Trotskyist and other tendencies. It also confirmed the three selected as the best to be had in Johannesburg. It also found out their limitation, for none of them raised problems deliberately left out of the resolution which were not yet clear, such as the Labour Party, the role of the African Convention, etc. Only after satisfaction as to progress, along the line of educational work as suggested by Comrade Dimitrov, was the CI resolution handed over. This method prevented any mechanical acceptance and prepared the basis for a better understanding of it.

(3) The next step was to publish ^{the Party resolution} ~~~~~ in the 'SA Worker', August 8th, and to use it for discussion at aggregate meetings in the districts. The method adopted was firstly an inner Party discussion connecting this with the Seventh World Congress decisions, and secondly: to call wider meetings to which sympathisers, important mass workers and TU officials were invited. One of the three comrades, who functioned as the Secretariat, were selected to lead the discussion.⁹

It was in the districts, especially in Johannesburg, factionalism and Trotskyism became clearly revealed. Comrade Roux, in Johannesburg, not only openly admitted himself to be the fraction leader but demanded their return as an organised group to the Party. This followed an attempt to save him by reasoning with him after his attack upon the Party, the CI, etc., in an article in 'Forward' dealing with Bunting's death.¹⁰ This was done by a deputation meeting him. Their efforts proved futile, for he called the leadership 'yes men', etc., which was really a renewed attack on the CI as well as the Party.

9. The words 'were selected to lead the discussion' were transferred from the place after 'comrades'.

10. S.P. Bunting died in 1936.

In the discussion at an aggregate meeting on August 29th, he also made an open Trotskyist statement, but by now the comrades were able to deal with him, as his ^{own} statement proves. In the debate he said:

'I am not a bolshevik in character. On my views on the USSR there has been a certain amount of distortion by Comrade Wolfson... I still say I regard it has very unfortunate that executions should have taken place in the Soviet Union, because we are trying to build a united front and these executions will not help our movement. Comrade Wolfson and Kalk held the floor a few weeks ago about democratic rights in the USSR guaranteeing freedom of the people. There has been a setback in the USSR. Whether it is necessary I do not know. It is unfortunate that such things should be carried out. These are my views, whether you like it or not. It is difficult for us to justify every action of the USSR... They are bringing back red terror.'

'I agree with Comrade Kalk that I am not a bolshevik. A Bolshevik says: 'I am 100% pure'. The Party will not allow any disagreement. It carries on a fight, deepens it, and even drives people to fascism, or allows them to drift away. This is why Zinoviev and Kamenev are dead... Doriot is a fascist, but if the Party would have behaved differently towards him he would have been a good Communist. You started the fight against us, but you are carrying on the old line, loyal to the CI, and you do not see the new line, etc.'¹¹

This was Roux' contribution one week prior to the Conference. However, he did not prevent support being given the resolution, and considering all the circumstances the leading comrades did a good job and succeeded in winning over the Party to a correct line.

Trotskyism did not show itself in Durban or Capetown within the Party. But factionalism was a feature of the discussion in Capetown. However, some of the criticism was correct when directed against the centre for not giving attention to the districts or giving any political directives. There was agreement with the resolution and the spirit of our Party changed very rapidly. Personal discussions with leading comrades were simultaneously held, and in both places great emphasis laid upon the future of the Party in order to smash down old prejudices. Also they were told the leading comrades were sincerely trying to develop a political line adapted to SA conditions and told not to deal with the past, but as to how much work and assistance each could give the Party was vital.

There was also in the Cape a tendency to intrigue on the part of some comrades (Comrades Weinberg and Ray Alexander) who were inclined to struggle for leadership. They were carefully warned against this and told

11. There is a single line in the left margin opposite the last two paragraphs to the words 'deepens it' and a word 'Roux' written in pen and underlined by a double line.

leadership would be determined in a bolshevik manner. Therefore they gave up this. However, although the discussions were not high, the comrades showed sincerity in their efforts to overcome factionalism. A thing to be noted in Capetown was the real good contributions made towards the discussion by sympathisers and TU officials. The discussion in the Party press was very weak also, and response poor.

In Capetown Comrade Emmerich, who is over three years in the Party, was elected to the Secretaryship of the Tramwaymen's Union without revealing he was a Communist. This does not mean he was not active for the Party, but mainly on TU questions and anti-fascist work. However, this was a purely opportunist tactic which he was instructed to carry out by hiding his Communist identity. But now it was done, he was instructed to gradually reveal himself, while, at the same time, consolidating his already very good position in the TU movement. He has led successful strikes and has now presented demands for a new agreement demanding a raise in wages. If this is successful his position is secure and can hardly be challenged. Therefore he may then completely and openly state he is a Communist. As a step towards this end he was placed on the Central Committee of the Party, and is a candidate to the P.B.

The discussion in Durban was considerably lower than Capetown, where they reported only sixteen members, while Capetown reported 28. However, it must be noted, greater difficulties exist in Durban and the authorities deport our Native comrades back to the Reserve as soon as they become active. Therefore, semi-legal forms were agreed upon. They must work in TUs, the All-African Convention, and to form educational organisation to cover them.

In the meantime, at the centre, the PB and many leading comrades had been holding several discussions on the CI resolution. And it was in these a greater appreciation of the political situation and the tasks before the Party showed itself. Although the CI decisions did not include the LP problem, nevertheless, all were now ready to give it serious consideration. They raised two questions on points in the resolution, (1) the question of a raise in the cost of living ^{being} due to SA going off the gold standard, and (2) whether it was expedient to propagate the 'Confiscation of Mission lands' as a way to alleviate the land problem of the Natives and poor farmers.

On the first point it must be noted there was only a very slight increase in the cost of essential commodities, and therefore, little value existed in raising this question in this form. Rather should we stress the demand for increased wages from the angle of rising rents, etc., and to demand a share in the increasing super-profits accruing from devaluation. Secondly, they argued that in SA there are large numbers of Afrikaners who would look upon confiscation of mission lands as an attack upon religion, therefore, while agreeing in principle, we should not raise it sharply.

I must say this criticism, in my opinion, was correct. Especially would it play into the hands of the reactionary nationalists under the influence of the Dutch

Reformed Church as well as the fascists. Therefore, while it was agreed to in principle, and appeared in our resolution, it should not be stressed; and the emphasis on the relation to gold standard should not become an issue. Ordinarily, of course, prices do rise with inflation provided other factors are not operating as is the case during the general agrarian crisis and during a world crisis. There will no doubt be a sharper tendency for prices to rise, especially if subsidised exports continue. This will strengthen our position in relation to our demand for higher wages. Therefore rising prices should be also connected with a demand for the abolition of subsidies, that should/ be transferred ^{from the rich/} ~~~~~ to assist the poor farmers and to provide land for the landless, etc.

Great care during this period was taken in preparing the delegation for the National Party Conference. Personal talks with prospective delegates took place, so as to politically prepare them and have them accept our organisational proposals, so as to end factionalism.

It was in this preparation that great confusion appeared regarding the attitude of the Government to the poor white problem. It took considerable persuasion to convince Comrade Kotane as to the need to adopt a class attitude towards exclusion of Natives from the railways, etc.; and only after figures were produced was he convinced that Natives were not to be 'driven from industry and back to the land'.¹² Finally he accepted the view that our attitude to exclusion must be one of (1) organising Natives to resist what was really victimisation in favour of poor whites, while (2) at the same time persuade the poor whites it was not in their interests to replace them at wages not far removed from the Native level, simultaneously proving to them the role the Government was playing in this method of attacking both the European and Native workers. Finally, he and others abandoned this Nationalist line, which was also the line of Roux, for this class attitude adopted by the Conference.

The preparation of the Political Report and the resolutions were not satisfactory with the exception of Comrade Wolfson's resolution on the trade unions and economic struggle. The political report of Comrade Mafutsanyana was incomplete leaving out such vital questions as Trotskyism and the Labour Party. Otherwise the line was generally correct, and in conformity with the CI resolution which was also discussed at the Conference. But even the CI resolution said little about Trotskyism, merely mentioning it. The weakness in regard to the LP was made up by having a memorandum circulated to the delegates dealing with our attitude towards it. The resolution on the Native question in charge of Comrade Kalk was also too abstract and dealt too much with the political and economic situation instead of concrete Native problems. Therefore an editing Commission was appointed by the Conference to finalise

12. There is a double line in pencil in the left margin opposite the end of this sentence, from 'that Natives...'.
 reports a sum of funds for planning

them, with instructions to publish as a pamphlet. This, perhaps was never carried out. The conference also adopted resolutions on Spain and the USSR and sent a telegram to Caballero¹³ pledging support to the Spanish Republic.

The composition of the Conference was the best SA ever had. It was attended by 41 delegates: Johannesburg 31, Capetown 7, Durban 2, Harrismith 1.

There were 20 Native delegates, 17 Europeans, 3 Coloured and 1 Indian, and only one was unemployed. There were 27 who were members of trade unions, 9 of which were secretaries, and 3 others held official positions. There were two opposition delegates elected, Diamond and Roux, from Johannesburg.

The thing to note about the Conference is the practical character of the discussion and the unexpected harmony, sincerity and unanimity of purpose, as well as the fine spirit that prevailed. Expressions of confidence that the Party was now going towards a Bolshevik Party were made by comrades holding leading TU positions, such as Comrade Emmerich, Secretary of the Cape Tramwaymen's Union. More than 50% of the delegates have never attended a Party Conference before and Native miners from the Rand were present. They were mostly young comrades and drawn from several industries.

However, we could not say in September that factionalism was eliminated. This was pointed out to the comrades. Comrade Kotane, although accepting the line, and did very well by announcing his opposition to factional work, recommending the faction to give up the fight and work with the Party, etc. Nevertheless Comrades ^{Kotane and} ~~~~~~~~~/ Gomas had made contacts with ^{members of the} ~~~~~~~~~ ^{fraction} ~~~~~~~~~/, but when informed ^{they} ~~~~~~~~~/ agreed to give up their contacts except when it was permitted, for good reasons, by the Party. An estimation can be made: that at the Conference the Party proceeded 50% towards a Bolshevik Party from where they stood a year before, and taking the terrible situation that existed this is considerable progress.

There are many good comrades now on the Central Committee of 11 persons and two alternates (Candidates) and only 4 who were formerly connected with the centre. There is a Political Bureau of 5 members, and two candidates, Comrades Emmerich and Mrs. Mafutsanyana. One of the CC members is living on a Native reserve, and secretary to a chief, which is exceptionally important, as he conducts all correspondence, etc., with the authorities.

Regarding the Paper: It was necessary to transform this into a mass paper, to change the contents, and its name from 'Umsebenzi' to 'South African Worker', keeping the former name only for the Natives, and so as to apply our policy and turn the work towards the Afrikaners which was hindered very much by the Native name and contents. There was some doubts raised as to this change

13. Largo Caballero, one the leaders of the second Spanish Republic and then of the republican forces in the Spanish civil war of 1936-9.

and a little resistance by a number of backward Native comrades. The fact that this was not regarded as necessary, considering Native prejudices among Afrikaners and other whites, indicates how the Party had failed so long to understand SA as a whole, carrying on its work mainly among Natives.

The paper ^{had}/ failed almost completely to deal with South African problems,¹⁴ its contents being mostly about international questions or anything but SA.

Here again Trotskyite factionalism was expressed by Roux who called this change in name 'jim-crowism', etc. This was an attempt to demagogically win support from the Native comrades, and Roux, it may be noted, has designs upon becoming a Native politician — with the aim to be elected to parliament from the Native area in the Cape Province, to where he has moved since the Conference. Again he failed for even after careful explanation that our aim was to finally publish two papers — one in English and Afrikaans and the other Native and English — the Natives understood. Finally Roux was forced to admit our change and perspective of two papers was correct.

The transformation had a great effect: T.U. officials, Comrade Bill Andrews, the Editor of 'Forward', Lucas¹⁵ of the Farmers' and Workers' Party, as well as in letters from many centres, congratulated the Party upon the great change in the paper. One worker who had got a copy accidentally¹⁶ wrote from a far-away point on the railway in the Eastern Transvaal congratulating the Party. He ordered a number and a recent letter from Comrade Wolfson, states a Party group has been formed. The Editor of 'Forward' said he usually threw it away, — now because of its contents and political way problems are dealt with he looks forward to it. Lucas said it ^{was}/ the best expression of the conditions in SA ^{than was found in} / any other paper, etc. These very important statements proves the directive given, as the main task, to concentrate upon having ^a / real political paper dealing with South African and working class issues was correct. When we changed the paper one comrade alone got over 150 subscribers in Johannesburg and one report states the party membership has doubled and the subscriptions of the paper have gone up four times since the Conference ^{in Johannesburg} / The circulation, however, was not more than 400 among Europeans ^{prior to the change} / the balance of 5,000 copies being ^{circulated} / among the Natives. ~~prior to the change in name~~ However, technically it is produced under great difficulties, which accounts for a bad make-up, while the contents contain many bad tendencies and formulations although the line is generally correct. Native nationalism sometimes appears in the articles of Comrade Mafutsanyana and sometimes a leftist attitude shows itself, as well as a failure in some cases to deal with important issues of political policy. Insufficient was

14. The word 'problems' is transferred from one position to another within the sentence.

15. The identity of Lucas could not be established.

16. The words 'who had got a copy accidentally' were transferred from the end of the sentence by hand.

done to popularise the Stalinist Constitution and benefits it gives to the people of the USSR, contrasting Soviet advances indicated in it with ^{conditions under} /fascism, and particularly with the reactionary legislation in SA, etc.

Carelessness to some extent and a failure to fully appreciate Trotskyism and the need for taking decisive action against Roux and Diamond caused a great deal of hesitation in this respect at the Party centre. And only after a great deal of pressure was action taken. Now, although Comrade Wolfson writes that Roux has accepted the Party line in ~~a~~ ^{his} / statement to the Secretariat, it is my opinion, in view of the terrible deeds of wrecking, espionage, terrorism and murder, etc., uncovered at the trial of the parallel centre, Roux must now be made to issue a public statement as to his position, forcing him to come out openly against his own Trotskyist statements and proving his unhesitating opposition to Trotsky, denouncing the Trotskyite-fascist bandits and criminals and their fascist relations, etc., or be expelled immediately. It is my opinion he will hesitate, and, although we must be patient and try to save all who are reasonable, his expulsion is almost a fore-gone conclusion. His case must be put before the membership and fully discussed so as to commence a real cleansing of these elements from the Party and the ranks of the labour movement. Regarding Comrade Diamond, he must be expelled at once.

As to Comrade Riamond:¹⁷ careful investigation must be made and I think it a great mistake to have made him D.P.O. in Johannesburg.

The waverings were expressed by both Comrades Mafutsanyana and Kalk who thought we should create more trouble than was necessary for the Party, due to Roux being looked upon as important in the movement. Only Comrade Wolfson was prepared for decisive action. Comrade Basner thinks Roux is not important and would drift away. He regards him, correctly in my opinion, as a Social Democrat, etc.

The approach of the Party to TU work among Natives is shown as follows:

A conference was held in the Trades Hall, Johannesburg, on Sunday, the 5th July 1936, to discuss the necessity of Trade Union organisation amongst Native workers employed in industry.

Comrade I. Wolfson, General Secretary of the Textile Workers' Industrial Union (S.A.) and Secretary of the Tailoring Workers' Industrial Union, (Tvl.) presided. There were 50 delegates present, representing Natives employed in the following industries: – Mining; Iron and Steel; Timber; Clothing; Meat Trade; Stone and Cement; Leather; Baking; Dairy Workers. Several large European trade unions were represented.

The following programme of action was decided, upon:-

'That a permanent Native Trade Union Committee in Johannesburg be established consisting of delegates from Native Trade Unions in the Transvaal, and the Committee be called upon to carry out the following programme' –

17. Raymond.

1. To coordinate all Trade Union activity amongst Native workers.
2. To organise into Trade Unions all the unorganised Native Workers employed in industry in the Transvaal.
3. To fight for increased wages; shorter working hours and better conditions for the Native workers.
4. To fight for the repeal of all Anti-Trade Union legislation and all legislation aimed at preventing workers including Natives, from organising into Trade Unions.
5. To cooperate with European Trade Unions which are prepared to organise the Natives in their Unions or are prepared to assist to organise Natives in independent parallel unions.
6. To appeal to the S.A. Trades and Labour Council for moral and financial assistance in the organisation of the Native workers into Trade Unions.
7. To appeal to Native workers in other large industrial centres in South Africa to carry out our programme and organise the Native workers into Trade Unions.
8. To secure the cooperation of the entire labour movement for a public commission of enquiry into the working and living conditions of the Native Mine workers, which are deplorably bad.

As indicated considerable mass work has been done: the Friends of the Spanish Republic and the Peace Council have branches in Johannesburg, Capetown and Durban, etc. There is an increase of activity in the Anti-Fascist League, and the youth have carried out a great deal of activity during the summer.

Regarding literature, a weak spot in the Party, this is being overcome by the opening of a bookshop, although two pamphlets have been issued, one on the united front and the other dealing with the miners' demands. The name is 'The People's Bookshop.' It is well situated near the Trades Hall, has around it a wide number of people including trade unionists and was officially opened at the New Year. In December a cheque had arrived in London for £150 to buy stock which proves weaknesses in regard to circulation are being overcome. It will not be known as a Party shop if instructions are fully carried out. But our comrades still suffer from a sectarian approach and do not draw in sufficient persons unconnected with the Party. Properly conducted, this shop should assist in penetration far into the ranks of the bourgeois intellectuals which would widen the Party basis and develop our Party among this strata of the population.

RGASPI, 495/4/352/1-16.

Original in English.

Typed. Copy.

Stamped: 9.FEB.1937

'8'

1841/4

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7/II/37

Inscription: 'Hardy'