

Our mass organisations are going ahead. The Peace movement is organising a mass meeting for next months and also a Peace Penny week and Com. Tho.¹⁹ is working to make it a success. The FSU is now functioning in the three large centres and has started its own organ, which is selling 1000 per month. It is making a drive for mass membership. The Friends of the Spanish Republic is starting a mass campaign to show 'Defence of Madrid'²⁰ and is also collecting money for a S.A. Ambulance Unit. An All In Conference is to be held in Johannesburg for Spain during the next month. The Youth Movement is also making progress and they have a club house near the Trades Hall. They are organising on parallel lines Coloured, and Native sections.

Well Comrade, I must say au revoir till I write again. Have not heard for a long time from you.

Revolutionary greetings,
Yours comradely.

I.W.
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RGASPI, 495/14/350/22-4.

Original in English.

Typed.

Stamped: 2658 – 17.JUN.1937

## 78

### Letter from I. Wolfson to the Comintern, 23 April 1937<sup>1</sup>

23rd April 1937.

Dear Comrade,

We are grateful for your letter and also for Harry's<sup>2</sup> both of which will be very valuable to us in our work and will help to put things much better here. Moreover getting letters from our brothers in Britain also has a good effect and

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#### Doc. 77

19. Possibly, M. Thomas.

20. The reference is to a popular pro-republican film about the Spanish civil war of 1936-9. The 'South African Ambulance Unit' was to be sent to assist the republican forces defending Madrid.

#### Doc. 78

1. This is one of three letters sent from South Africa to the Comintern in April 1937. The previous letter (see document 77, Vol. II) is signed 'I.W.'. Most probably, the letters were sent to G. Hardy.
2. Harry Pollitt.

shows that they are interested in helping us to overcome our problems and help our movement on its difficult path. It was also good for Harry to write to Gibson Chairman of the Spanish Committee<sup>3</sup> and tell him what is being done. This creates confidence and a good impression. We are calling a special pb meeting to deal with the letters and to correct mistakes and improve our work.

After a meeting last week and not having heard from you several months we decided to write direct to Harry to help if they can as we are being held up, we could do a hell of a lot more if we had the means.

Well Comrade, I am pleased to report that we had a fine aggregate meeting on Sat. night from 6.30 to 11 p.m. About 80 members present mostly Natives and what a fine political level there was in the discussion. Marks the DPO delivered the main report on Party activity in Johannesburg district which was very good. We are sending over a copy of the report as soon as it is ready. He dealt with the progress and the many weaknesses in a most objective way and the discussion was on a good political level. Ed.<sup>4</sup> supplemented on the Election and I on the Trade Unions. A controversy arose on the question of May Day and Kalk<sup>5</sup> said that the Labour Party and the Building Union were withdrawing from the Committee (United May Day) because we insisted on Native speakers from both platforms whereas they wanted one platform to have only European speakers. He said that we would have to compromise and not smash up the committee, but in doing so he antagonised Comrade Josie<sup>6</sup> by his manner and this led to a bit of a row. I then spoke and formulated the question on trying as far as possible to preserve the unity of the committee and pointed out that if the Lab. and the Builders withdrew we would be left with only a few small unions and ourselves. What we ought to do was to get a European Communist speaker from their platform to point out the necessity of complete unity of the workers.<sup>7</sup> I pointed out that we must utilise every possible occasion to put our line, for example if we get an opportunity to speak in the City Hall on Spain must we refuse to speak because we cannot get a Native speaker there today? I also said that fascism the main enemy was doing its utmost to win the poor whites and we must not leave them to the mercy of the fascists we must make the thin thread of the united front into a powerful thick rope. Edwin<sup>8</sup> then supported me and we decided to put forward two platforms one European speakers and one Native and European speakers, and the next day at the United May Day Committee the organisations which were going to withdraw remained and are now participating in the demonstration. The meeting went

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3. References to Spain in this document are connected with CPUSA's support for the movement of solidarity with the republican forces in the Spanish civil war of 1936-9.
  4. Mofutsanyana.
  5. Kalk's name is encircled in the original.
  6. Mpama.
  7. There is a double line in pen in the left margin opposite the next sentence in the original.
  8. Mofutsanyana.



off very well until as I say some comrades differed with Kalk's<sup>9</sup> view including a few European Comrades and instead of replying in a comradely manner he shouted down their<sup>10</sup> throats and you know that, that is just what does the opposite to winning comrades over. After the comrades had heard our explanations they agreed with us and as I say we managed to preserve the unity of the committee. The President of the S.A. Trades & Labour Council will preside at the demo. and we are having cp speakers including Ed.<sup>11</sup> and Marks.

I am enclosing a cutting showing Dr. Malans speech and I would like you to comment as he is taking a fascist course and influencing the poor white supporters of the Nat. Party towards reactionary politics. We are going for the leaders of the Nat. Party on the platform and in our paper and telling the rank and file that they are being deceived and misled by their so-called leaders.

Ed.<sup>12</sup> received a letter from the ycl about the youth movement which is a real treat to read and we are getting into touch with our people in the youth movement. Dr. Jof...<sup>13</sup> is devoting his whole time to this movement and I must say that in spite of the many sectarian mistakes they have made good progress. Last night they called a conference to form a Youth Peace Council and 12 Youth organisations were represented. First they put a short play 'Stop those war drums' which had a wonderful effect and when they had their conference which was a huge success. The youth movement is building up youth sections amongst the native coloured and european and are doing good work. They have a series of club rooms and a number of enthusiastic workers. They put on anti war plays, participate in all working class activities and are becoming well known. The doctor<sup>14</sup> is footing most of the financial bill and it has cost him a few hundreds since he started but I told this was not the proper way to build up and he must get help from members and raise money by functions etc. anyhow the movement will develop as a result of the letter received which will do a great deal to put things on a better basis.<sup>15</sup> They are devoting great attention to winning the Afrikaans speaking youth, which as you know is steeped in race prejudice and hatred of everything with any tinge of colour etc. They have succeeded last week in drawing into the movement 40 new Afrikaans speaking members mostly workers and they are setting up a cultural committee to produce Afrikaan plays etc. They are also running a monthly bulletin.

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9. Kalk's name is encircled in the original.

10. There is a single line in red pencil in the left margin opposite the text starting 'as I say' to 'down their' in the original.

11. Mofutsanyana.

12. Mofutsanyana.

13. 'Dr. Jof...' - Max Joffe.

14. Obviously, Dr. Joffe.

15. There is a single line in red pencil in the left margin opposite this paragraph, from the beginning to the word 'basis'. There is a triple line from 'conference which was a huge success' to 'put on anti war plays...'

The Bookshop is well established and did a turnover of £100 last month and this money<sup>16</sup> expects to top £120. It has a committee of t.u. people and university people and will progress with good management. A number of t.u. are now buying books for small libraries and the place is getting well known. SATLC decided to start Library. We are bucking up with the Spanish Committee which has been a bit slack. The BWIU (Builders) passed £100 to the fund of the Trades Council after a stiff fight on their E.C. We are now planning to show Defence of Madrid<sup>17</sup> wherever we can. This will spread the truth about Spain. How glad we all are that Spain is showing up so wonderfully. Andrews is not so pessimistic as he was when I saw him in C.T. He is now convinced that our line about Spain is right. We are not getting much support for our campaign from Cape Town and Durban.<sup>18</sup>

I have left the election campaign till the last because it is the most important. Basner left today for the Zoutpansburg, Pietersburg, etc. in the Northern Transvaal where Rheinalt Jones is trying to upset our support as this area is where we got the most support. Edwin<sup>19</sup> cannot go out as we are stuck for means. I am sure that if our people could get about we could rally thousands of people to our side. That is why we hope that our friends will be able to do something for us. There is two months left for the actual election Day which is on June 21st. Ballinger is a bastard of the worst type and has withdrawn from the campaign. He poses as a friend of the natives but is a wolf in sheeps clothing. He has been using the election campaign to attack the party and to create anti-semitism telling the people not to vote for Basner because he is a jew. In a paper published under his aegis he attacks the communists and says 'do you know what they have done. They have sent an African Albert Nzula to Moscow and they have killed him there.'<sup>20</sup> Real provocation and it makes my blood boil when I think of the way he carries on. However he has withdrawn from the campaign as he did not stand any chance at all. The farmers have complained to the authorities that they are having trouble from their labourers who have been infiltrated with communist propaganda and as a result of this no longer want to work. I agree with you that they are preparing to go for us as we get more active. I am enclosing a few cuttings for your notice. I will conclude with thanking you for remembering us as we like to hear from you. My health is o.k. but no time to study as you advise us to do. Meetings take up too much time and I really would like to have spare time to read and inwardly digest. We

16. The word should read 'month'.

17. See footnote 20 to document 77, vol. II.

18. There is a single line in red pencil in the left margin opposite the end of the paragraph (from 'We are now planning...').

19. Mofutsanyana.

20. See documents 27 and 32, Vol. II. There is a double line in red pencil in the left margin opposite the sentence about A. Nzula.



will try to make time however. Best wishes from all comrades and to all over the sea.

Yours fraternally.

RGASPI, 495/14/351/7-8.

Original in English.

Typed.

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(in Russian)

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**Letter from A. Marty to G. Dimitrov,  
May 1937**

Strictly confidential

To COMRADE DIMITROFF:

Re: C.P. of South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

It is certain that a new revival of the factional struggle has begun in the C.P. of South Africa. The last number of 'The African Defender', which we have just received and which is appearing after an interruption of 8 months, is an indication of this revival.

- (1) The magazine was, from the very beginning, the organ of the Roux faction. The advice was not to revive this magazine, but now it is again appearing despite the instructions given by Comrade H.<sup>2</sup>
- (2) The magazine is being edited and printed not in Johannesburg, where this was done before, but in Capetown where Roux is living.
- (3) The editor of the magazine is Kotane, who was in the same faction with Roux. It is very suspicious that he is now in Capetown because, according to the last information we have, he was secretary of the Native 'African Mine Workers' Union' at the Rand.
- (4) The contents of the magazine are not in agreement with its name since there is nothing there on the tasks of the African Defense organisation.<sup>3</sup> Also, there is nothing in the magazine to popularise the line of the Party

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1. The words 'South Africa' are underlined in pencil in a very thick line in the original.

2. George Hardy.

3. It is not clear what African Defence Organisation is meant here. Marty may refer to Ikaka la Basebenzi.