

everything had to be done in a hurry. The E.B. had not even considered our attitude to the Congress, but endorsed my action.

I will send you a further report next week.

A. GREEN.

ENCLOSURES: (1) Mines leaflet.
(2) Open letter of Federation.
(3) Meeting leaflet.

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**Minutes of Ninth Conference, CPSA,
26-8 December 1930 (Extracts)¹**

Strictly Confidential

REPORT ON NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
OF COMMUNIST PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA.
(JOHANNESBURG, DECEMBER 26TH-28TH, 1930)

Presidium: The following comrades were nominated and elected:

Ngedlane, Jose Mpama, Mackay, Sachs, Safarov, J.W. Ford, Roux and Rathbone.

Opening of Conference: The Chairman of the Presidium (Com. Ngedlane), welcomed the delegates. He paid tribute to the late Com. Nkose² and the Conference stood in silence for two minutes in tribute to the memory of the late Com. Nkose.

1. Selected extracts present the first open attack on S.P. Bunting by A. Nzula, E. Roux, and D. Wolton in line with the drive towards the bolshevisation of the Party.

2. Nkosi, a militant propagator of the 'South African native republic' was mortally wounded in Durban during a country-wide campaign to burn pass-books that was launched by the CPSA on 16 December in support of the slogan of independent native republic and in compliance with Comintern's proposed tactics.

Fraternal Delegates: Phofolo of the Independent I.C.U. said: 'My organisation asked me to represent them at this Congress. There is no special message except to say that they wish the Congress every success.'

A letter was read from the General Secretary of the Independent African National Congress, Cape Town, expressing regret at inability to attend Congress owing to the fact that they are having their first Congress on the same dates and also financial difficulties.

General Political Resolution.

Under this item Com. Wolton stated that the Chairman should have reported but owing to short notice asked Com. Wolton to report.

Com. Wolton said:

'We see that the struggle between the various imperialist powers in the world is greatly accentuated. We see that the struggle for markets is becoming a fiercer and wider struggle every day. There are many things which demonstrate these facts. We see an unparalleled wave of depression sweeping all over the world. We have seen a general decline in world prices in agricultural products in every colonial country of the world. We have also witnessed a phenomenal rise in unemployment, which is computed at the present time to have reached two million throughout the capitalist world and we see this figure mounting and rising rapidly. Imperialism today is in a very serious position. In every front we find that WAR DANGER, ATTACK ON SOVIET UNION, etc.

When we come to our conditions, we find there are various deficits: there is a sharp drop in the price of maize; there is increasing difficulty in the gold market.

There is a rise and deepening revolutionary struggle of the masses against the conditions imposed upon them. With the drop in prices and the low standard of life of the working class arising out of the economic crisis, we find an increasing demonstrations on the part of the revolutionary masses throughout the world to fight back against these - to fight against the worsening conditions which are imposed upon them, etc. [...]

Third Session, resumed 2.30 p.m. on 27th December 1930.

RESOLUTION ON SOUTH AFRICA, REPORTER COM. NZULA.

'Comrades, in the report on Party work, I think the first thing we ought to consider is what big undertakings the Party has carried out this year. I would like to draw attention to certain important events that we have taken part in this year and by which we can gauge our success. The first, I think important event this year was the Negro Conference.³ The C.I. in its policy for S.A. has

3. The reference is to the International Negro Workers' Conference (founding conference of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers) in Hamburg (Germany) in July 1930 attended by E. Sachs.

laid down the winning over of the Negro masses to the Party. There are still people who think that is of no importance, but then we remember the events that have taken place throughout the African continent during the past two or three years, we realise the importance of paying attention to the Negroes.

Now, Comrades, I think the Negro Conference was of special importance to us and it created a stir in this country. That was the first important event the Party took part in and that we have to report upon.

What was the faults or what were achievements of the preparation for that Conference. The faults were the common faults running throughout the last two years. I will deal with that in a more detailed fashion later on. But in any case the Negro Conference did achieve a certain amount of success. We managed to make the broad masses of the toiling Negroes in this country aware of the importance of that Conference.

I have passed over the work of the Party in regard to the League of African Rights. I was one of those who was in favour of the formation of this League of African Rights, but that was due to a total misunderstanding of the Party line on this question. We were a CP saying the masses are dependent, the masses are not revolutionary, the masses will not riot in the street, the masses will not shoot the police, the masses are cowed down, therefore, what shall we do with them. Let's tell them to petition Pirow. Let's get them to collect a million signatures and make them revolutionary. I do not think anybody is prepared to argue the falsity of the programme of the League of African Rights. It was wrong.

Comrades, then there is also the question of TU organisation. If there is anywhere where we are guilty of criminal negligence, it is in our TU work. In our trade union work we have a big field in Johannesburg itself, we have the mines, we have the transport workers and we have the farms, and what have we done. We put a comrade to organise the TUs and what did we do the rest of the time, but criticise that comrade and find all the faults we could. This is due to the failure of the Party to understand the importance of TUs. We have not been aware of the importance of TU organisation, we have not been aware of the fact that the CP has to build around itself mass organisation, like TUs, like IRA.

On the question of the united front, the same thing has occurred. Let Gumedi go to Bloemfontein⁴ and make revolutionary speeches and everything is all right, while forgetting that we cannot have a united front from above.

In spite of all these things, the Party has gained tremendous amount of influence especially amongst the black masses of this country. It has gained that influence in spite of the fact that the Party is lagging behind the militant aspirations of the masses themselves. Take Worcester for instance, while we

4. The reference is probably to the second Non-European Conference which was to be held in Bloemfontein in January 1931 and of which the ANC was part.

were still yapping about a petition, the masses of Worcester prepared actually to carry out a militant revolutionary struggle against the Government of this country.⁵ Take for instance, they actually smashed into the sacred precinct of that town, and what was the CP telling them to do: sign a mild petition. What did we do with East London. We started discussing Kadalie, whether he was reliable or whether he was not reliable, whether we should sack Nzula, or not. There were the masses engaged in actual militant struggle and what did the CC of the Party do, discuss the advisability of sending this man or that man, whether he was reliable or not, and the masses came under Kadalie's influence: the Party has no influence in East London. Then there is the Durban riots⁶ last year. What did we do? The masses in Durban were moving forward and we told them to keep cool, the forces against you are so big, you have to keep cool. You are being provoked by the Government to be shot down. Keep cool. We did not understand the role of the Party and that is why the Party lagged behind the masses of Africa. There are still people in the CP itself, who will tell you we do not see any revolutionary spirit amongst the native masses; they are cowed down, they are cowards, they cannot stand up for their rights. A disbelief in the native masses having the spirit to fight for their rights, and what has been the result of that expression, it has resulted in the Party lagging behind the masses. The masses have gone forward and the Party is lagging behind. The masses in Durban showed their willingness to go forward, party or no party, but in places where the Party has not been taught a practical lesson like that, we always say the masses are despondent, they are despairing, they are useless. This has resulted in a policy of passivity. The CC of the Party instead of organising the masses in SA is wasting its time in personal quarrels. The Party is turned into a YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association).

We must not lose sight of the Right wing danger in the Party. There are people who are playing lip service to the CI but all their lives are trying to disprove the policy of the CI. They want to prove the failure of the new policy of the Party. They accept it but at the same time they do not take the least trouble to understand what that connotes.

Now we come to the question of discipline. I know there are many people who think I am guilty of serious breaches of discipline. The present Comintern policy was passed by a Congress in 1927,⁷ but today you still have people who are prepared to jibe and sneer, to ridicule and make absurd that policy. In a

5. Worcester had the strongest and the most active branch of the ANC in the Western Cape. In early 1930 its membership was about 1,000. In March 1930 it was campaigning under the slogan of 'Black Republic' and clashed with the police. An African was killed in the fight. A big demonstration on May Day also ended in bloodshed leaving five people dead. On 22 June, during a huge meeting with 500-800 in attendance, the leadership was arrested.

6. See footnote 1 to document 80, vol. I.

7. The Comintern line for South Africa was indeed approved in 1927 but by Politsecretariat, not by Congress. The 6th Congress confirmed it in mid-1928 and the Political Secretariat of the ECCI finalised it on 19 October 1928.

Party, if the policy of that party itself means anything, then it means that everybody has to agree to it, if everybody does not agree to it then it means there is no discipline. There has been a total disregard to discipline. Here is a policy passed three years ago and there are people prepared to confuse and confound the new members of the Party on the CI policy.

The achievements in Durban today⁸ are due, not to the efforts of the CC, not to the efforts of the leadership of the Party, but to the efforts of single comrades, who have devotion and who are prepared to fight for the Party.

I want you to discuss the question in a more or less dispassionate manner. The CP is entering upon a new stage, when the masses of the proletariat of this country, the black proletariat, are revolting against the forces of oppression. The CP is entering a stage where new tactics are demanded by new conditions. Comrades, the old leadership has proved itself a complete failure. The old leadership did not convey to the new members what has to be done by a Bolshevik party. The old leaders have not taught the new members like myself and the native members. After two years experience I believe that the whole progress of the Party has been vitiated by old traditions, has been vitiated by Right wing and by chauvinist traditions.

I have not covered the whole ground. I want to have as big a discussion on the points raised and not raised as possible. We need a new leadership, without it we are going to commit the same errors, we are going to commit the same mistakes as in the past.

The matter was thrown open for discussion. [...]

[Fourth Session, on 28th December, 1930]

Com. E.R. Roux: If we are to continue along the lines of the discussion of most of the speakers tonight, the Party will go to rack and ruin. We see a complete inability on the part of speakers to get away from their own petty squabbles and that is what is wrong with the Party as a whole. I agree with Com. Wolton that the terrible squabbles are a reflection of something fundamentally wrong with the organisation and policy of the Party of South Africa. As the Party was not functioning properly in the first place, it led to a stagnation in the branch. This resulted in the energies of the comrades, which would normally be turned to creative activity in organisation and propaganda, directed to personal squabbles.

What attitude has the CI taken up with regard to the situation in SA. The CI says here in SA we have from all accounts and from our study of the situation a country where the revolutionary movement should be making rapid strides. The CI drafted a resolution on SA sometime ago. In that resolution they made an analysis of the situation here and put forward guiding slogans and tasks for

8. The reference is to the success of the campaign to burn pass-books. The campaign in Durban was the most militant in the country and ended in bloody armed clashes between the protesters and the police during which Nkosi was wounded and subsequently died.

the work here. They at once met with tremendous opposition from the majority of the Party in SA, who did not agree with the practical slogans and theoretical suggestions, put forward by the resolution.

The Buntings and I went to Moscow to the VI Congress. There we showed quite plainly that we were almost completely ignorant of the fundamental principles of Communist propaganda in countries like SA. I have this much criticism to offer of the CI in general. They did not treat us in the way we should have been treated. Instead of spoon-feeding us, instead of treating us as a Party that contained elements that have assimilated the principles of the CI, they treated us in a very insulting way. I say the CI did not treat us in a comradely and school-masterly way, they should have treated us, they simply threw at us certain resolutions and we were told to swallow them, without detailed explanations and comradely help from the CI.

The last resolution is a decent sort of a resolution, because they lay down the general theory with regard SA and explain it so that any person with intelligence can grasp the contents.

I do not say that the fact that the CI was brusque with us is an excuse for our ignorance and misunderstanding of the theory they put forward.

At the VII Congress of our Party, the slogan was adopted. The CP in SA proceeded to make further mistakes as is now admitted in the League of African Rights. Com. Bunting says that is a thing of the past and why should we bring it up again. When comrades put up that point of view they fail to understand the outlook of the CI. As a result of their world wide experience, the CI is able to formulate instructions to different countries. There is now something definitely known as Leninism. We of the CP must assimilate that philosophy otherwise our place is not in the CP, and if we have assimilated that policy and if we study carefully the lines of the development in the CI we cannot make those mistakes we have made in the past.

He stated that it was proved to the CI that the leadership of the Party could not assimilate Leninism and therefore the CI demanded a new leadership.

He denies that we were instructed to form the League of African Rights. We were told to form auxiliary organisations, but not in the form that the League was formed.

During the past 9 months the Party organ has been carried on by me in Capetown. The executive of the Party was in Johannesburg and I was in Capetown. In the course of editing that paper, I realise that I made a lot of serious mistakes in leading articles and general policy. Many of those mistakes would have been avoided if the paper had been edited by a committee who could thoroughly discuss matters.

Just in the same way as I was isolated from the Executive, so the Party is isolated from the CI and we have made many mistakes. And it is fundamentally not a question of a single mistake but our whole outlook is not that of the line of the CI.

We have not got to try and re-organise the Party.

Com. Bunting is not a Leninist, definitely not. I do not say that I am a Leninist. I would not have made so many mistakes if I had been a Leninist. Com. Bunting's attitude with regard to the present resolution and the question of the slogan and the LAR shows that he has not yet assimilated the outlook of the CI. Com. Bunting refuses to use the phraseology of the CI. Bunting always regarded the question of nuclei and the Bolshevisation of the Party as mere academic words that do not affect us.

My mistakes are due to the fact that I am not a student of Leninism. There is a definite philosophy connected with Party work in the trade union movement. When we have got hold of it we can then discuss basic principles.

In the past we have had a CE which was not departmentalised owing to lack of funds and workers. We must have a Polit-Bureau to discuss nothing else but the political situation, to formulate the Party policy and give definite statements with regard to policy as conditions change.

Let us now discuss politics. There are very serious differences of opinion about important political matters and that is what we should be discussing now. Let us work out a Party programme of action. Let us elect on our Executive comrades who are prepared to work on the lines of the resolution.

I agree with Com. Nzula that the masses of South Africa are rising spontaneously in revolt against the authorities. We must find out how they can place the Party at the head of those movements.

[...]

Com. Wolton: Our task now is to draw together the threads from the discussion that has taken place on this resolution. Delegates have clearly shown that we have in our Party a very strong Right wing danger which expresses itself, as the Resolution states, in white chauvinism and opportunism.

He said that there was a direct line connecting the white chauvinist actions of the Right wing through a period of three years which delegates had illustrated in detail. We must not only fight open white chauvinism but the great danger lay in hidden white chauvinism which was covered up by revolutionary phrases.

He said that in the Party attitude to the Dingaan's Day⁹ preparations there was also revealed a Left wing tendency to make a heroic gesture without any organisational preparation resulting in sectarian demonstrations in some centres. This danger the Party must be aware of.

The non-Leninist accusations of the Right wing revealed a complete confusion and failure to understand the elementary question of a Bolshevik Party. On the other hand the discussion of delegates has shown a considerable advance in political understanding of the new Party line. Our political conclusions on this resolution must now be given organisational

9. See footnote 1 to document 73, vol. I.

form. Out of the new understanding of our policy and tasks, a new leadership, politically clear, and united on the work ahead of us must be elected from this Congress.

RGASPI, 495/64/95/1-2, 16-19, 31-5. For the full text of the document see: RGASPI, 495/64/95/1-44.

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