

4.) The plenum of CC is called for the end of November. W. will be present. I had a ^{long} talk with W. in presence of B. before leaving. He stayed in very good mood.

Peter

RGASPI, 495/14/355/119.

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(in Russian)

31.V.1938

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**Resolution of Central Committee, CPSA,
29 December 1938–2 January 1939**

RESOLUTION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

The Central Committee of the CPSA met at Johannesburg on Thursday, December 29th, 1938, and continued in session until the 2nd January 1939. It considered and discussed reports on the following:

1. Political situation in S.A. (W. Kalk)
2. The Struggle of the Africans (E. Mofutsanyane).
3. The Struggle for peace and against Fascism (R. Alexander)
4. The Trade Unions (I. Wolfson).
5. The Non-Europeans in Industry. (M. Kotane)
6. The Indian people in S.A. (H.A. Naidoo).
7. The Coloured people in S.A. (S. Nikin).
8. Party Organisation (M. Kotane)
9. Youth Movement. (M. Joffe).

After having heard the reports and the discussion thereon, the Central Committee decided on the following resolution for the CPSA:

The Munich Four Power Pact,¹ which sealed the fate of Czechoslovakia, was a blow not only against the people of Czechoslovakia, but an attack on the

1. The Munich Pact of 1938 which was signed by Britain, France, Germany and Italy permitted an immediate occupation of the Sudetenland, an area in Czechoslovakia with a large German population, by the Germans. It became a symbol of the appeasement of the aggression of Nazi Germany on the part of Western powers.

democratic rights and liberties of the peoples of the world. Everywhere the reactionary and Fascist forces hailed the Munich pact as a 'victory for peace', but in reality Munich marks the opening of a new chapter in history – the intensification of the fascist forces making for world war, for the destruction of the Spanish Republic, for the complete violation of China, for the return of colonies to Nazi Germany, for an attack on the Soviet Union, for the destruction of the democratic forces in every country.

In our country, S.A., the Hertzog Government pursues its pro-fascist course. Cabling its support of the Munich betrayal, the United Party Government sends Pirow, as Minister of Defence, to visit the Fascist leaders in Portugal, Italy, Germany and Great Britain, his visit coinciding with the intensification of the campaign for the return of Nazi Germany's colonies in Africa. The banning of radical and working class literature, the banning of workers' meetings, the threat to ban the Communist Party, the stifling of parliamentary procedure, are sign-posts on the road to Fascism that has been taken by the United Party Government.

The Nationalist Party, a Republican Party, despite its phrases against British Imperialism, warmly approves Chamberlain's betrayal² of the Czechoslovakian Republic, and it is being taken along the road to Fascism by its reactionary leaders, who advocate further oppression of the non-European peoples, antisemitism and support the bond movement³ that aims to smash the trade unions in S.A. by creating racial trade unions. The Voortrekker celebrations⁴ were used by the Nationalist Party to turn the genuine National and anti-imperialist feelings of the Afrikaans speaking peoples into anti-democratic channels of narrow chauvinism against other sections of⁵ the S.A. people.

The Labour Party greatly weakened by the results of the last general election,⁶ due to its weak policy, does not come out clearly against British Imperialism and Fascism and supports the segregation policy of the United Party and Nationalist Party. The Labour Party must take up the daily demands of the people, change their native policy and help to build a broad united front in S.A.

2. N. Chamberlain, British Prime Minister (1937–40) led the British delegation to Munich.

3. 'Bond movement' – Afrikaner Broederbond (Brotherhood), a secret Afrikaner organisation, originally created in 1918 as a cultural body. In the 1930s became increasingly political, emerging as a driving force of Afrikaner nationalism and the vanguard of the Purified National Party.

4. A stage-managed commemoration of the 'Voortrekker' movement – migration of several thousand Afrikaner families from the Cape to the interior in an attempt to escape from the British control and to create new states. The migration began in the late 1830s and became known as the Great Trek.

5. 'sections of' is written together in the original.

6. General election of 1938 that brought the first sizeable victory to the hard line Afrikaner nationalists. While still in the minority, the Purified National Party won 27 seats in the National Assembly, leaving the Labour Party with three seats only.

The world crisis has also hit S.A., notwithstanding the fact that the gold mining industry is drawing huge profits from the increased price of gold and ignoring the demands of the workers for a share of the extra profits. Unemployment is once again on the increase in many industries, whilst the low prices of agrarian products have led to increased impoverishment in the agricultural population of S.A. The Government forces up prices to the consumer by the control boards, which restrict production under the Marketing Act. That helps the rich farmers at the expense of the consumers and the poor farmers. The policy of subsidies of exports of raw products also hits the S.A. consumer by forcing up prices here.

The United Party Government, which gained a victory at the general elections, has by legislation tightened its anti-democratic measures on the people of S.A., despite its cry that it stood for democracy against Fascism.

The S.A. people due to the successive policies of past governments and the present policy of the United Party Government, which represents the Chamber of Mines and the wealthy financial and agrarian interests in S.A., has been reduced to a state of mass-poverty. Millions of Africans, eking out a miserable existence under the most oppressive laws; coloured and Indian discriminated against with almost no democratic rights; 400.000 poor whites, landless and below the bread line, show that the policy of the government is directed against every section of our people.

The composition⁷ of the African people is particularly bad. Segregation, pick-ups,⁸ pass-laws, beer-raids,⁹ census under the Native Laws Amendment Act¹⁰ harasses every native in urban areas, no matter what his position may be. On the mines and in other industries, wages are kept at a bare minimum, which is responsible for malnutrition, disease and starvation. Wages are further depressed by importation of thousands of natives from territories outside the Union of S.A. The position of the natives on the reserves is bad, due to the poverty, overcrowding and taxation – all means to force them into seeking work on the mines. The land hunger of the Natives is not satisfied, the sum allocated under the native laws being wasted in paying excessive and inflated prices for the settlement of Natives on the Land, but no land has been given to the natives as yet.

In this situation the great weakness of the Native people is the lack of organisation. The All African Convention has failed to become the rallying point of the national aspirations of a united African people. The African National Congress has, however, made headway by taking up mass-work in a

7. 'Position'?

8. 'Pick-up' – see footnote 3 to document 34, vol. II.

9. 'Beer-raids' – police raids to African locations with the purpose of uprooting beer brewing by African women. See also footnote 1 to document 80, vol. I.

10. Native Laws Amendment Act of 1937 introduced influx control in the urban areas in order to curb the urban inflow blacks and to keep black labour on farms.

number of areas, thus proving that the African people are anxious to organise politically and to fight for their rights. The strong militant stand against the Native Law Amendment Act census by a number of urban locations shows that the native people are prepared to struggle if given a correct lead. Trade Union organisation amongst the natives is still very weak, but progress is being made, hence the fear of the Government and their proposals to bring the native trade unions under control of the Native Affairs Department, proposals which must be strongly resisted.

Fascism, the enemy of all S.A. people is making attempts to win support amongst the Natives. Due to the national oppression of the African people, and our neglect to expose the dangers of Fascism to the African people, there is a strong tendency to support the return of colonies to Hitler Germany, which would only succeed in making the position of the native people still more intolerable.

The main task of the African people is unity, unity of all African organisations to strengthen the national movement for freedom and democratic rights, which can best be done by improving work in existing native mass organisations, strengthening native trade unions and all affiliating in a national movement around the All-African Convention in a movement that is out to fight for a better life for the African people.

Similarly the struggle for unity must be strengthened amongst the coloured peoples, whose conditions are also intolerable. Thousands of coloured peoples live in slum conditions, subject to almost the same subjection¹¹ in many areas as the native peoples. In industry the coloured skilled workers are being ousted and replaced by white labour, hence closing skilled occupations to all sections of the non-European peoples, African Coloured and Indians. Against this discrimination, the progressive movements in S.A. must struggle and fight for the right of skilled occupations being thrown open to all, irrespective of race, without a reduction in the present standard of the skilled workers. The National Liberation League¹² has done good work amongst coloured people and must continue to take up their demands.

The Indian people must also strive for unity, striving to unite the S.A. Indian Congress and the Indian Colonial Born Association,¹³ on the basis of the common struggle for democratic rights for all Indians who also suffer oppression and discrimination. We must combat sectarian notions amongst

11. 'Subjugation'?

12. A Cape organisation created in 1935 linking supporters of the All-African Convention, the CPSA and the New Era Fellowship, a Trotskyist discussion group, in an effort to form a united cross-colour front against fascism. Zainunissa Gool was the leader of the new organisation.

13. The Colonial Born Indian Association was founded in 1911. The authors may have also meant the Colonial Born and Settler Indian Association that was founded in 1933 or 1936.

the Indian petty-bourgeoisie, that the communists are out to confiscate their property, and win them to the national struggle of the Indian people.

We must strive to unite all non-European organisations, the All-African Convention uniting the African people, the coloured organisations, the Indian organisation, in abroad non-European united front which will fight against the oppression of the non-European people, and for the democratic rights of these people. Care must be taken to win support amongst the European people and to explain that the non-European united front is not against the European people, but¹⁴ against the reactionary and oppressive legislation, which also detrimentally affects the European people in S.A.

The Trade Union Movement must strive to bring about national trade union unity, unity based on a common policy and action for the betterment of the conditions of the workers of S.A. Therefore the present unity agreement between the Cape Federation of Labour Unions and the S.A. Trades & Labour Council, which has not achieved anything of value must be made the instrument which will bring the rank and file of both organisations together in a common struggle. Simultaneously, we must go forward in the fight for trade union unity in each industry, not in a mechanical manner but bearing in mind the decision of the last party conference. By the trade union resolution at that conference it was clearly indicated that wherever possible one trade union must be built up in each industry, but where, due to race prejudice, this is impossible, side by side unions must be built for non-European workers, taking the line of gradually bringing them together, eventually uniting them in one organisation.

The weakness of the trade union movement is due to the large number of unorganised workers, both European and non-European. Thus we must continue the fight for 100% trade unionism, around a programme of daily demands, including increased wages, 40 hour week, annual paid holidays, adequate unemployment insurance, freedom of organisation, right to strike and against the anti-strike clauses of the Industrial Conciliation Act¹⁵ and anti-working class legislation. Especially must be built up the native trade unions, and the whole of the trade union movement must be mobilised against the attempts of the Government to control native trade unions, under the native affairs department, a danger to every section of the trade union movement. In building native co-ordinating committee, care must to taken to avoid the danger of entirely separating native trade unions from the S.A. Trades and Labour Council, which would widen the breach in the working class of S.A.

An organising campaign must be carried out amongst the Afrikaans workers in rural areas to win them into trade unions. This will help to draw the poor

14. There is a typed-over word after 'but' in the original.

15. Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 restricted collective bargaining to unionised whites and coloureds, at the same time limiting their rights to strike.

whites into the trade union movement and away from the pro-fascist movements that are trying to win the Afrikaans people.

The Trade Union Movement must become the core of a national movement against Fascism and war and for the formation of a democratic bloc against the United Party Government. Thus a fight must be waged against the non-political outlook of the trade unions and against those elements in the trade unions that wish to link the trade unions to the United Party Government.

The increase of delinquency amongst the youth, especially the non-European youth, and bleak outlook that faces the youth of S.A., make it imperative for the youth to be organised, also taking in consideration the prejudiced feelings of the peoples. Non-European youth can be interested in the struggle for work, for democratic rights and so draw them into the national political movement; similarly amongst the Indian and coloured youth. The European youth, too, are being paid special attention by the Fascists, and a campaign must be conducted for the demands of the European youth and to expose the dangers of Fascism to youth of S.A.

Women must work in their organisations to fight against the disabilities of women and for equal democratic rights and improved working conditions.

Mass Organisations to organise support for Spain and China must be organised to win the people of S.A. in the fight that these gallant peoples are waging. The peace movement must be built up to mobilise the wide feeling for peace that exists in S.A. into a strong movement against all acts of aggression b¹⁶ the war-mongers.

In all our work the party must have before it the perspective of the tasks that face it in S.A. today, the task of uniting the S.A. people in a broad anti-imperialist movement against Fascism and War, and for Freedom and democracy. To make this perspective a real and living force in our country requires patient and consistent work amongst every strata of the S.A. people, both European and Non-European, taking up the demands of the different sections and uniting them on all issues wherever possible, eventually uniting them in a big democratic movement that will bring a happier life to all sections of the S.A. people.

THE PARTY.

In the present situation in S.A, faced with the danger of Fascism and War, and a sharp attack on the democratic rights of the S.A. people, we find the Party in a very bad position. The decisions of the Party Conference held in 1936¹⁷ have not been applied and carried out and the Party has stagnated and in fact retrogressed.

16. by.

17. See document 69, vol. II.

Discussions and reports and the meeting of the C.C. do not reveal sharp differences of opinion on the general line of the Party as adopted at our last conference, as has been maintained by some comrades. What is wanting is a long standing absence of ordinary elementary organisation and efficiency which are sadly lacking in our Party. A feeling of suspicion between leading comrades, lack of co-operation and no collective work has also led to the chaotic state in which the Party finds itself. No directives have been issued, work has not been co-ordinated, no control has been kept whether Party comrades carried out decisions, all of which has led to the party leadership in the centre no longer enjoying the confidence of the rank and file, and not exercising any leadership worth mentioning. Strong criticism must be made against the members, who after the Trades and Labour Conference refused to carry out the ordinary work of the party, thus further adding¹⁸ confusion to the already bad position. Failure to give¹⁹ a lead to mass organisations has resulted in the Party's influence in those organisations being greatly weakened. No planning of work, spasmodic efforts on a few questions is the sum total of most of the work of the Party. In the Trade Unions, lack of collective leadership and understanding led to differences of opinion on the work of Party members in the trade unions, which could have been avoided had a healthy discussion taken place at all times.

The lack of training of Party cadres has kept the Party membership on a low political level. Hence, when Basner introduced his trotskyist views on the Czechoslovakian crisis, in which he slandered the C.I. and some of its leading parties, members in Johannesburg were thrown into confusion. This is also due to the bad composition of the Party, which is not in accordance with the resolution of the last C.C., and of our conference, viz, to recruit to our Party the best elements of the European and Non-European people and trade unionists born in S.A.

This weakness in the Party resulted in lack of confidence and hiding the face of the Party, believing that this was helping to bring about a united front. A real united front in S.A. can only be brought about by a virile, active Communist Party, leading all sections of the S.A. people.

The C.C. after a thorough discussion feels that a radical change for the better can be made if the following plan of work is carried into effect:

1. Party headquarters to be in Capetown until next conference of the Party six months hence, with the following comrades in charge of national work,²⁰ as a Political Bureau: Kotane, Andrews, Alexander, Morkel, Gool, Kahn, Wolfson, Kalk, the Secretariat of three consisting of Kotane, Andrews and Morkel.

18. There is a typed-over word after 'adding' in the original.

19. There is a typed-over word after 'give' in the original.

20. There is a typed-over word after 'work' in the original.

2. Re-organisation of all districts to strengthen District Party Committees.
3. The Party must take up all important questions and directives must be given to all centres.
4. Control of all work of Party members, including leading Party members.
5. Organisation of the Party in a flexible manner, organising people in their²¹ residential areas, as well as in trade union groups, and, if it warrants, in factory groups. This means that to gain the confidence of the people, party members must work largely amongst their own people and take up the demands of their particular district.
6. Establishment of training schools in Capetown, Johannesburg and Durban, training all Party members, and new²² recruits to the Party.
7. Starting a special fund to which all branches must help for a Party organ. In the meantime Johannesburg, Capetown and Durban to issue Party bulletins until such time that a Party organ can be established.
8. Finances of the Party must be re-organised in a proper manner, that is in a planned way. Party expenditure to be in accordance with the income. Members of the Party must pay their Party dues. Finances to be allocated as follows:
 - Payment of office and organisation expenses.
 - payment of functionaries,
 - publication of bulletin.
 - payment of debts.
 - quota for pamphlets and leaflets.
 - payment to headquarters of proportion of party dues, viz. 50%.
 - districts unable to pay to be given special allowance.
9. Recruiting campaign in all areas to draw the best S.A. elements into the Party.
10. A campaign and careful watch against trotskyist and petty bourgeois influences, which are a grave danger to the Party and to the progressive movement of S.A.

RESOLUTION ON COMRADE BASNER.

Comrade Basner, by his statement at a Party aggregate meeting in Johannesburg, expressed views contrary to the programme and policy of the C.I. and detrimental to the interests of the Party in S.A., views which can only lead the Party along the same path as that proposed by the trotskyites.

Comrade Basner failed to carry out the task of preparing a report for the C.C. allocated to him. Comrade Basner made a written statement that he does not agree with the line of the C.I. in relation to colonial peoples in relation to S.A.

21. There is a typed-over word after 'their' in the original.

22. There is a typed-over word after 'new' in the original.

Comrade Basner's whole attitude &/ actions clearly show that he has done the Party irreparable harm and it is agreed that the following disciplinary action be taken against him:

1. Removal from the C.C.
2. Not permitted to hold any leading positions on any party organ or committee.
3. campaign to expose his line and role in all branches.

RGASPI, 495/14/358/2-6.

Original in English.

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Inscription: 1) 'H.P. G.B. 23.2.39'²³

2) SA

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Minutes of Colonial Committee, CPGB, 21 February 1939 (Extracts)¹

Confidential

COLONIAL COMMITTEE – 21ST FEBRUARY, 1939

9 comrades present, including Cde. Weinberg, from the Communist Party of South Africa.

[...]

E. Weinberg:² [...] In the country as a whole there is growing a strong anti-Fascist feeling which so far we have failed to coordinate and lead [...]

Doc. 92

23. 'H.P.G.B.' may refer to 'Harry Pollitt, Great Britain'.

Doc. 93

1. The Colonial Committee of the CPGB discussed matters concerning British colonies and dominions. Apparently in keeping with the decision of the South African Commission that the CPSA work closely with the CPGB, E. Weinberg travelled to London for consultations, as had I. Wolfson and H. Basner in 1937.
2. E. Weinberg was at that time acting secretary of the CPSA.