

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.

Typed. Copy.

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.

And the chief reason for all the weaknesses, lack of coordination etc. is the weakness of the Communist Party. It has been said that this weakness is based on the fact that there are differences of opinion on questions of policy within the Party – that the leadership is divided. The resolution of the Party last December on this point declares: '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' [...]

The fact that this resolution, adopted by the Communist Party of Great Britain last year has never come to the knowledge of the Party alone clearly shows that it is not a question of political differences, but simply lack of contact and lack of organisation within the Party). In practice, the Party Centre has not been functioning for the past year. In Cape Town we have had no contact whatever with the Centre, and during the whole course of the year have only received 4 letters from them. Yet we have regularly written to them, sent minutes of our meetings, etc. The Party organisation is simply chaotic; the press has failed to issue a paper for more than 6 months; only one issue of Umsebenzi has come out and that a duplicated copy. Finances are in terrible disorder.

One of the main contradictory factors to the weakness of the Party is in connection with its Trade Union work. [...]

Following all this, the Cape Town District Committee asked for a full meeting of the C.C.³ at which a pro-tem committee was elected for the purpose of preparing a National Conference. In the meantime the Party Centre has been shifted to Cape Town, a decision which has the approval of the whole membership of the Party.

Cape Town. Here the Party organisation is on a much healthier basis. The membership is built up chiefly on the Trade Unions, that is, the members are ~~all~~ mostly trade unionists. There are 3 Trade Union groups distributive, transport and secondary industries. We also have Party members working in other organisations – African groups in the locations, Guardian group, National Liberation League, F.S.U., and a group of Afrikaner members and sympathisers.

The Party worked well during the elections supporting the progressive candidates, we issued election literature, handbills and leaflets. Also issued leaflets in connection with the recent crisis. Under Party influence we succeeded in establishing a Joint May Day Committee for the first time since 1923. We also have a Committee for the Relief of Starvation in Namaqualand, which has done some very good work. There are also 2 Committee for the Relief of Spain and a Joint Relief Committee based on the Trade Unions who would not participate in the Relief Committee. ^{About} £250 has been sent to the British T.U.C. by this Committee, and over £1,000 forwarded to London by the other Committee.

3. 'CC' is written in by hand replacing crossed out 'PB'.

All the time the Cape Town Committee has been pressing the centre to organise and lead the Party throughout the country. The general lines laid down in the resolution adopted at the special C.C. meeting are:

Reorganisation of all districts and strengthening of D.P.C.'s.

Organisation of Party in a flexible manner.

Establishing of training schools in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town.

Special Fund for Party organ – in the meantime each of the 3 Districts to issue Bulletins.

Finances of the Party to be reorganised in a proper manner.

Recruiting campaign in all areas.

Campaign and careful watch against Trotskyist and bourgeois influences. (case of Basner). [...]

There are about 200 Party members in Africa

Johannesburg	100–120
Cape Town	42
Durban	30
Individual members	
in other parts.	

The Party is growing in Cape Town, but the growth is slow, and there are still traces of sectarianism in the Party.

Only one recruiting meeting ever organised in Capetown – 150 people present and 3 joined the Party. Other people gave in their names and were not accepted but steps were to be taken to follow them up.

The last meeting of the District Committee pledged itself to increase the membership from 42 to 100.

In Cape Town the membership is as follows:

Africans	11.
Afrikanders	4.
Jewish	7.
S. Africans ⁴	2.
Coloured	18.

There has been no organiser for the Party who has constantly visited the districts, but Comrade ^{Koutane⁵} has been instructed to do this since the last C.C. meeting. He is paid £8 a month plus expenses.

A party member Kotane⁶ is Chairman of the African National Congress in Cape Town.

4. Obviously, South African born whites.

5. Kotane.

6. Kotane is written in by hand replacing crossed out 'Mofutsanyana'.

There is still a large amount of prejudice between Native and coloured workers, and the difficulty of getting these two sections together is almost as great as getting coloured and white workers. A great deal more work has to be done inside the Labour Party to get it active of all the questions affecting workers in S. Africa.

[...]

RGASPI, 495/14/360-a/2, 4-7. For the full text of the document see: RGASPI, 495/14/360-a/2-9.

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