

S.P. BUNTING AT THE 6th CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN, 1928

SESSION: 23 JULY 1928

Comrades, I think it would be a good practice if the speaker announced himself, because we cannot hear from the chair who is speaking. Therefore, I begin this practice by announcing my own name which is S.P. Bunting, from South Africa.

I notice that all the speakers have been talking about Com. Bukharin's speech and saying 'we are being neglected', etc. I suppose we are going to say the same thing on behalf of South Africa, for we too think our affairs are important. Africa as a whole is a continent with 120 million inhabitants and I cannot say much about most of it, but I want to speak on the proletarian character of the subject races of South Africa; and here we also say that Comrade Bukharin's speech and in fact the Communist International literature in general, treats these races to a certain extent in somewhat Cinderella-like fashion. We know the theoretical importance given to the colonial movement, and I will not speak of that at the moment; but as regards the proletarian value of the African workers I agree with Comrade Ford that to neglect the value of the Negro proletariat is a very great mistake. The fighting strength after all of the colonial masses, for any objective, consists very largely in their working class, particularly in a country like ours where a native movement, proletarian or nationalist for that matter, has no chance for the present of being an armed movement, it must depend on its industrial weapons, on strikes and on political struggles and little more for the present, It is in the field of industrial strikes that the greatest militancy is shown and the greatest power exercised in South Africa as in India too, I think.

Of course, the bulk of the negro population of Africa, even of South Africa, is not proletarian; [just as the peasants are more numerous than the poroletariat] in most countries, e.g. in the USA. But in Africa, at any rate, far more of them are exploited than just those who could be strictly called working class. In West Africa, peasants nominally independent, are exploited in respect of their rubber. In South Africa again, our large 'peasantry' is continuously drawn upon to supply workers for the mines and other large industries or for the

farms. These workers are peasantry part of the time and workers part of the time so that the working class is really very widespread, and it is also by far the STRONGEST section of the native population when it comes to action.

Now if, as is said, as we have always been told, imperialism batters on colonies, has more power than ever before because it has the colonies as a mainstay to supply the super-profits, as fields of investment, as places of refuge for capital which cannot find sufficient profit in the home country, then it must follow that equally important is the labour which provides this profit. As a matter of fact, of course, both in our colony and others, there are capitalist enterprises of great importance. In our country the gold industry is a very first class capitalist development. It is vitally necessary to capitalism, and not least in times of war. It is not a case of 'backward industry' in any way. It is highly developed. An iron and steel industry is also about to be launched and other big enterprises of all kinds show that ours is not just a medieval, feudal, peasant country. The power of labour therefore, is of very great importance. I do not know if we ought to say that the colonial section of the labour movement in general is the most important, but I think we can say that it is the most important weapon for the overthrow of capitalist rule. Moreover, colonial labour is responsible for a great deal of the unemployment in the 'home' countries of the capitalists. All sorts of causes are assigned, but one cause is that industries have been moved from the home countries to colonial countries, and that is one of the reasons why unemployment increases in the home country. At any rate, this backward labour, or if you like, this 'uncivilized' labour as it is called in our country, may play as important a part in the attack on capitalism as the highly civilized labour, of e.g. the United States.

Of course the native labour movement in South Africa is only an infant movement; but it is a good, healthy, lusty infant, very responsive to our propaganda and is growing fast. Our native workers are true-to-type proletarians, as worthy of being called workers as anybody in the world. In spite of the special disabilities placed upon them as a subject race, nevertheless, I say these are as real proletarians as any in the world, they are as nakedly exploited, down to the bone; the relationship of master and servant, employer and employed, exploiter and exploited, is as clear and classical as it could be. The first native strike in Johannesburg was a strike of 'sanitary bucket boys', i.e. engaged in the most degraded 'kaffirs' work'. In a native school which we are carrying on in Johannesburg, we use the *Communist Manifesto* as a text book, reading it with workers who are actually workers in the factories, mines, workshops, stores, etc. we read the well known characterizations of capitalism and the proletariat in the

Communist Manifesto, and the pupils always agree, after arguing and stu[d]ying about what they have read, how completely and correctly every single characterization applies to themselves: 'we recognize', they say, 'how we have become workers, how we have been driven off the land, onto the industrial markets, how we are deprived of family life, of property, of culture, etc.' exactly as in the history of the European countries. And they have the advantage over the European workers, that they are not sophisticated with petty bourgeois or imperialist ideas (except religion, and even that is not native to them); which all helps greatly in the work of making them revolutionary. And in fact the trade unions which we have formed are applying to the Red International of Labour Unions to be admitted to that organization. It is true that the ICU which hitherto has been a strong union of natives in South Africa, is affiliated to Amsterdam; but the Communist Party, finding this body of no use owing to its reformist leadership, has found it necessary to form fresh trade unions which have already been baptized in the fire of strikes, and which are ready to apply to the Red International for affiliation.

I should like in all modesty to point out that the Communist International gives insufficient attention to this aspect of the colonial masses. I was reading the draft programme of the Communist International, where it says that there are two main revolutionary forces: the 'proletariat' in the countries at home, and the 'masses' in the colonies. I beg to protest against this bald distinction. Our workers are not ONLY mere 'masses', they are as truly proletarians as any in the world. The draft programme assigns to the colonies the one task of revolting against imperialism. All good and well. I may say that such nationalist revolt as we have had so far in South Africa has not been on the part of the black workers, but on the part of the Dutch Nationalists. The Dutch Nationalists have had their fling, and have made peace with Britain, and have agreed with a formula which gives them nominal independence; there is not much more to be expected from them. By all means let a nationalist movement carry on. But we can do more as a working class movement in South Africa. It is not good medical science to have one particular pill which you apply for all illnesses. Is it good politics to say that the function of every colony, irrespective of circumstances, is the same everywhere, and that its ONE AND ONLY TASK is to revolt against imperialism? What of the colonial proletariat, why is it that they are thus discussed? There is no reference in the draft programme, or in Comrade Bukharin's speech to the colonial proletariat, as such, to the class power of these colonial workers: as a class they are relegated to inactivity.

I was speaking to a comrade of the English Party, and advancing the view I am now advancing, and he said 'How can you talk like that?'

Look at the number of years of experience of capitalism and organization behind the British working class, which you have not got.' Agreed. But we are exploited down to the bone under the capitalist system and we have got to fight and [have the] determination to resist: what more do you want? We did not have to wait for capitalism to develop: it has been thrust upon us 'fully armed', fully developed.

Is not the distinction between European 'proletariat' and colonial 'masses' exactly the way our 'aristocracy of labour' treats the black workers? The 'prejudice' of the white worker is not that he wants to kill the black worker, but that he looks upon him not as a fellow-worker but as native 'masses'. The Communist Party has declared and proved that he is a working man as well like anyone else, and I want to bring that experience to the notice of the Communist International. If you will regard them also as workers, as proletarians, you will take a different view of the situation. We must abolish this public form of colour prejudice, or 'colour bar'. Uncouth, backward, illiterate, degraded, even barbaric you may call them if you like; they cannot read or write, most of them; but they work, they produce profit, and they organize and will fight. They are the great majority, they have the future in their hands, and they are going to rule, not only in the colonial countries, but in the world. We are going to see not 2 or 3% of non-European representatives in this Congress, but 80 or 90% representing the real strength of the entire colonial working class.

I might say that the Red International of Labour Unions seems to adopt a more matter of fact view of the colonial working class masses than the Communist International. It takes account of the facts and it invites the workers to join its ranks, as workers, in trade unions.

The Communist International is a chain, and the strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link. Little parties like ours are links in the chain. We are not strengthened, but belittled in the way I have just mentioned. If our parties are weak, then they should be strengthened. Better communication is required. It will perhaps surprise you to know that until six months ago we have not had a letter (except for circulars) from the Communist International for five or six years. That is a thing which has to be attended to immediately. At any rate, we ask to be considered a little more as representing equally masses of workers, and not treated with, shall I say, a sort of step-motherly or scholastic contempt as representing mere shapeless 'masses'. When I came here an official of the Communist International said 'we are going to attack you.' That is rather a poor sort of reception to give to representatives elected by the vote of the party, in which there is a huge preponderance of natives. It is rather a poor reception to give to their representatives before anything has been

discussed to say, 'we are going to attack you.' We came here to take counsel together as to how we could strengthen each other. Certainly in our own party, whatever the differences between us, we do not treat each other like that.

We also want better communications, between the different sections of the CI. I could illustrate this in the case of several strikes. We had a shipping strike three or four years ago in South Africa, which affected also Australia, and to a certain extent Britain, and in which our party took the leading part. We had precisely no communication not only with the Communist International on the subject, but even with the British Party. The communication which requires to be perfected is quite as essential between party and party as it is between one party and the ECCI. I entirely endorse Comrade Murphy's remarks that the business of the CI Congress is not just for each Party to come here, as to a sort of father confessor, without reference to other parties; we are here above all to try and link up parties to each other. We parties *are* the Communist International, and as Comrade Murphy said, it is we parties between us who have to build up the leading forces in the world revolution. But there has been very little facility for that so far. A great deal more has got to be done.

Another thing with regard to Africa is that a very thorough study of African conditions is required. Out of that huge continent, the South African party is the only one represented here. At the last Congress I was at, there were representatives from Egypt and I believe there have been in the meantime representatives from West Africa. There is an enormous field of study in Africa. Conditions in South Africa are quite different from any other part of that continent. South Africa is owing to its climate, what is called a 'white man's country' where whites can and do live not merely as planters and officials, but as a whole nation of all classes, established there for centuries, of Dutch and English composition. There are also differences elsewhere, e.g. differences between two capitalist methods of administration — the English aloofness of the official who comes and goes for his term of office and has nothing in common with the people of the country; and the French method, which is rather to fraternize and assimilate. Also the differences between the 'eastern' and the 'western' methods of administration: the one driving the natives off the land, the other maintaining them on it. Such differences want a great deal more study than has so far been placed before the CI. I hope, when the next Congress is called, there will be representatives from every part of Africa, from North and South, East and West, who — far better than we — can put the needs of the whole of the population of Africa. The other day I was asked here of our natives: 'are they Dutch?' There was recently in the *Inprecorr*, one of the more as-

tounding articles on South Africa which could only be called a fairy tale. It was full of the most crass misstatements about conditions there. Such things tend to discredit our official organ, if it can be called such. The answer might be 'Why don't you send correct articles instead?' We have done so in the past, but we have too few people for much of this work, we are very busy, our proletariat, even possessing all the qualities I have given to it, is mostly not literate; and we must be forgiven. Nevertheless study and knowledge is required.

Again, in the attention which is given to the colonial masses we should not forget the achievements of the white working class in South Africa, for they have conducted big strikes of a quite revolutionary nature and I think are capable of carrying these out again. Both sides can contribute very powerfully to the weakening of British imperialism.

We in South Africa are at present a vulnerable link in the Communist chain. If we are properly strengthened and developed, and if we are treated as we think we deserve to be, we hope to become a strong link in the chain and thus be able to take advantage of the fact that countries like ours are also vulnerable spots in the imperialist chain. We could do a great deal in the weakening and breaking of one of those links of capitalism just as the Russian link is shown broken on the globe in the famous cover of the old *Communist International*.

DECLARATION BY SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATE

(Comrade S.P. Bunting) 7.8.1928

Comrades, during the debate on the ECCI Report a couple of weeks ago Comrade Dunne of the American Party attacked a speech I had made on South Africa as a 'social-democratic' speech which should be sternly repudiated by the Comintern. He was followed in similar strain by Comrade Bennett [Petrovsky], of the English Party, who is secretary of the Anglo-American section of the ECCI in Moscow. I was puzzled at the time to know what I had said which could be called social-democratic but I let it pass, presuming that that term, grave and sinister as is its political import today, had nevertheless in this instance been used as we have no doubt all know it to be used occa-

sionally among polemicising comrades, as a mere term of abuse of one's opponents — there being a particular matter now awaiting debate between the South African Party and the Anglo-American Committee for the ECCI.

It is only a day or two ago that I happened to notice in the *Inprecorr* a report of Comrade Dunne's speech from which I discovered for the first time that his attack had been due to a complete misunderstanding of my speech and one which I think would have been impossible if he had given the speech a fair hearing throughout, although I may be myself to blame in that, for I am not a very clear speaker.

I was remarking on the absence of delegates from West Africa or any other part of Africa except South Africa, and was regretting this because, to quote my stenogram,

Conditions in South Africa are quite different from any other part of the continent. South Africa is, owing to its climate, what is called a 'white man's country' where whites can and do live, not merely as planters and officials but as a whole nation of all classes, established there for centuries, of Dutch and English composition.

This statement of fact — for it is a fact that the climate of South Africa, unlike that of most other parts of the African continent, is one admirably suited to Europeans — let Comrades Dunne and Bennett come out and test it for themselves — was distorted by these comrades into an advocacy of 'White South Africa' in the chauvinist sense of a claim that the whites have a right to possess the country as against the Negroes, and to dominate over and oppress them. It is inconceivable that a South African Communist could express such a view, the very view we have combated for the last thirteen years; and it is only due to our Party, to the masses black and white of South Africa, to the CI and its sections, to all who may read the report of this Congress, and to me personally, that the attack by these two comrades should in turn be sternly repudiated and disavowed.

Our Party has had the further misfortune to be referred to by Comrade Bukharin in a somewhat similar way. In his concluding speech in the same debate, he referred to signs of anti-Negro chauvinism in the American Party, and he seemed to imply that at a meeting of some commission, he had heard a similar charge brought against the South African Party. If such a charge was made it must have been many years ago, while the question was still a matter of debate with us; for if any Party in the world has as the very centre of its activities fairly and squarely fought, conquered and killed the dragon of chauvinism, until today nine-tenths of its membership are Negroes, its message of emancipation is the message most eagerly heard of by all

Negroes, it has formed numerous Negro trade unions and further has just lately succeeded in amalgamating white and black unions in one industry into one union—‘for the first time in history’ as was cabled to the *London Times*—then that party is the South African Party. Can any other Party show a record like that? Once more I think it is due to all concerned that the wrong impression given by Comrade Bukharin’s speech [should also be corrected].

SPEECH, 20.8.28

ON THE KUSSINEN THESIS

Comrades, I should like to have spoken on colonial or at least on South African matters in general but in the limited time must confine myself to a controversial matter seriously affecting our South African Party.

There is a proposal in the Negro Sub-Commission, presided over by Comrade Bennett, that the Party should put forward as its immediate political slogan ‘an independent native South African Republic, based on the workers’ and peasants’ organization, with full safeguards and equal rights for all national minorities’; also that the country and land be returned to the black population; a native national revolutionary movement to be developed by the Party in support. This formulation is opposed by the majority of our Party, mainly for practical reasons, which are very strong. But we may first consider the more theoretical basis of the formula. This is stated in a draft resolution submitted to the Sub-Commission as follows: ‘The national question in South Africa, which is based upon the agrarian question, lies at the foundation of the revolution in South Africa.’

Unfortunately we Party members in South Africa are so much occupied with practical work, which we have to do in our spare time only, that we have no time for study, so that we are only amateurs when it comes to theorizing. But according to our experience, it seems possible to harp too exclusively on the national chord in colonial matters. In an earlier debate on the ECCI resolution, I ventured the opinion, in effect, that it might not be universally true that the chief function of a colonial people was to engage in a national

struggle (predominantly agrarian in character) against foreign imperialism and for independence; and that in South Africa, at any rate, the class struggle of the proletariat (chiefly native) appeared more capable of achieving the task – in effect, that the class struggle there is more revolutionary and effective than the national or racial struggle for the same ends.

It is often said that the colonial thesis of the II Congress is authority to the contrary, but I do not find anything to that effect in the thesis. It says of course, that we should 'support the revolutionary movement among the subject nations and in the colonies...THE FORM OF SUPPORT TO BE DETERMINED BY A STUDY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS.' And it does also say:

There are to be found in the dependent countries two distinct movements, one is the bourgeois democratic nationalist movement, with a programme of political independence under the bourgeois order, and the other is the mass action of the poor and ignorant peasants and workers for their liberation from all forms of exploitation. The former endeavours to control the latter...but the CI and the Parties affected must struggle against such control and help to develop CLASS consciousness in the working masses of the colonies. For the overthrow of foreign capitalism, which is the first step towards revolution in the colonies, the co-operation of the bourgeois revolutionary elements is useful. But the first and foremost task is the formation of Communist Parties which will organize the peasants and workers and lead them to the revolution and to the establishment of Soviet Republics...

This is so even where there is a bourgeois democratic nationalist movement in existence, and bourgeois nationalist revolutionary elements to co-operate with. Until recently, nearly all subsequent Communist theory on colonial revolution that I have seen has been based on the assumption that such a movement and such elements are in existence in every colony; the present draft colonial thesis is one of the first to deal on a separate basis with colonies, like most African colonies, where they are not.

In general, in the case of all national and colonial governments, the II Congress thesis says:

The CI must establish relations with those revolutionary forces that are working for the overthrow of imperialism in the countries subjected politically and economically. THESE TWO FORCES MUST BE CO-ORDINATED if the final success of the world revolution is to be guaranteed...[And again] The policy of the CI on National and colonial questions must be chiefly to bring about a UNION OF THE PROLETARIAN AND WORKING MASSES of all nations and countries for a JOINT REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE leading to the overthrow of capitalism, without which national inequality and oppression cannot be abolished...Real national

freedom and unity can be achieved by the proletariat only...by the overthrow of the bourgeoisie...The real essence of the demand for equality is based on the demand for the abolition of classes...The colonial and subject countries have been taught by bitter experience that there can be no salvation for them outside of a union with the revolutionary proletariat

(which includes presumably the revolutionary proletariat of the imperialist race in the colony itself).

And in African colonies (including South Africa) there is as a rule no native bourgeoisie, and consequently no question of the 'two distinct movements' referred to in the II Congress Thesis; there is only the question of 'organizing the peasants and workers and leading them to the revolution and to the establishment of Soviets.' Put in another way, the class struggle is practically coincident and simultaneous with the national struggle. The object is the same in each case—the removal of all oppression (including all special oppression applying to members of the subject race as such) and the gaining of liberation and power for workers and peasants; the parties are substantially the same, and the weapons and methods of the struggle also. Hence there is no very great point of virtue, even where there is no exploited European class present (as there is in South Africa) in emphasizing the national aspect of the struggle as MORE FUNDAMENTAL than the class aspect; rather the reverse is the case. The two struggles would be the same even if the oppressing class were of the same nationality except that there is an additional element of revolt when the oppressor is a 'foreign devil'. As the draft colonial thesis of this Congress says of such colonies: 'The task of the class struggle of the workers and other toiling masses COINCIDE in the main with the tasks of the national anti-imperialist liberation struggle.'

Now a further complication arises in South Africa from the presence of a WHITE exploited working and peasant class as well as a black one—a minority of one in six perhaps, but still one that cannot be ignored and in which (as in the trade unions) the CP has a good deal of foothold. This minority too rises against the bourgeoisie and imperialists, sometimes in a very spirited and revolutionary way, more so indeed than any modern native national movement hitherto, although it has no RACIAL oppression to fight against. As in the case of the natives, its militant character appears chiefly on its proletarian rather than its agrarian side.

The South African native masses, in their turn, are being rapidly proletarianized and organized as a working class. The native agrarian masses as such have not yet shown serious signs of revolt: indeed, as the Draft Colonial Thesis of the Congress says: 'In those

countries the question of the agrarian revolution does not by far constitute the axis of the colonial revolution.' At any rate a live agrarian movement has still to be organized in South Africa.

What is the result of these peculiar factors? It is that both black and white exploited are fighting against the same masters. They both fight chiefly (at present) as proletarians, and the natives have the extra stimulus of fighting against masters who to them are a foreign oppressor race, whereas the whites have this to a lesser degree only (i.e. as 'South Africans' or 'Dutch' against 'British', overseas or 'cosmopolitan' financiers). The white workers, enjoying privileges and higher wages, are, however, disinclined at present to regard the black workers as comrades in the fight,

What is the duty of the CP in these circumstances? Must it not be the same as ever, or more than ever, according to the II Congress thesis? 'These two forces',—the workers of imperialist race and those of the subject race, or the 'home movement and the colonial movement—must be co-ordinated' for a 'joint revolutionary struggle': 'uniting the various units of the future proletarian parties', and also overcoming the distrust of the subject races for the workers of the imperialist races.

The draft colonial thesis of this Congress in reference to South Africa and other colonies puts it thus (paragraph 12)

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The most important task here consists in the joining of the forces of the revolutionary movement of the white workers with the class movement of the colonial workers, and the creation of a revolutionary united front with that part of the native national movement which really conducts a revolutionary liberation struggle against imperialism.

But this task is no longer so easy. It is no longer a mere case of the national and the class movements coinciding as it were automatically. Here the white exploited are of the very race which the native exploited are, as nationalists, fighting against. It is almost inevitable therefore that the nationalist movement of the natives will clash with their class movement.. Similarly the white exploited, finding their race being attacked AS SUCH by a native nationalist movement, are predisposed by their superior economic and political position to side with the masters nationally and forget their class struggle. Special tactics and manoeuvres have to be adopted to prevent this and to harmonize the national and class movements in this special case, devoted principally to neutralizing and correcting white labour chauvinism (or, occasionally, native 'chauvinism'). And if there is danger of a clash, the question how far it is advisable to play on the national chord, whether the advantages exceed the disadvantages, whether

the same result or better can be obtained with less risk, becomes important.

Not only have we no native bourgeoisie or bourgeois national movement, but we have in South Africa no really nationalist movement at all of the kind contemplated in the draft resolution of the Negro Sub-Commission; certainly no movement for a native republic as such has been observable. The African National Congress, which the resolution wants us to boost up, is a moribund body, it has had its day. In any case its demands were not nationalist demands proper, but such as the following reflecting the poverty stricken conditions of the native masses: removal of all special race oppression and discrimination, land and more land, equality with whites, equal votes, equal education, equal treatment, rights and opportunities everywhere. It is inclined to ignore the weapon of the native proletarian movement as such, and has usually sought redress for grievances by sending deputations to the King of England, which of course have resulted in nothing. Thus, the existing 'nationalist' movement for equality, etc., only demands the same things as the Communist movement (proletarian and agrarian) does, with the extra stimulus supplied by national or race patriotism—but from observation of facts we believe the class stimulus is a greater stimulus even to the native masses, it has actually stimulated greater sacrifices and devotion already, and it has the advantage of gaining, instead of perhaps forfeiting the alliance of the white workers. The CP is itself the actual or potential leader of the native national movement; it makes all the national demands that the national body makes, and of course much more, and it can 'control' nationalism with a view to developing its maximum fighting strength. It can and will respond to the entire struggle of all the oppressed of South Africa, natives in particular.

Some reference to the actual work of our Party seems necessary to explain the foregoing. Incidentally, not much interest seems to be taken in this by the drafters of the resolution, any success seems only grudgingly acknowledged, we had to get an appreciative paragraph specially inserted in the draft; concentration of interest on a nationalist movement seems to involve a lack of interest in the day to day struggle against race oppression itself. (It is the same in the draft CI programme, and we have asked for a clause to be inserted in that, laying down that CPs must struggle in the colonies against race or colour discrimination and for absolute equality).

What have we done so far? Our work among the native masses, our chief activity, conducted so far mainly as a working class movement (although an agrarian movement will be developed as fast as we can get contact especially with the distant and not easily accessible native reserves) is limited only by our ability to cope with it. We have

1,750 members of whom 1,600 are natives, as against 200 a year ago, and we are adding to that and also rapidly organizing militant native trade unions which have learnt to conduct strikes. We are also combatting and slowly overcoming white labour chauvinism, which we find yields when confronted with organized masses of native fellow workers face to face. We have put through joint strikes of white and black which were victorious, also an amalgamation of white and black unions into one, an unprecedented thing in South Africa. As for the native nationalist movement, though it is somewhat dead and alive, we pay it a good deal of attention and whenever we see any life in it we apply United Front tactics as per the draft colonial thesis. Thus, after years of preparatory effort, we have recently begun to reap substantial success which will continue provided we can find the manpower to garner the harvest. Native workers and some peasants are pouring into the Party in preference to joining the purely native bodies, whether national or industrial, which have let them down and fallen into the hands of the bourgeoisie. They fully appreciate the 'vulgar Marxist' slogan of 'Workers of the World Unite', of joint action by black and white labour against the common enemy; and at the same time they see that the CP sincerely and unreservedly espouse their national cause as an oppressed race. (Recently, in the wilds of Basutoland, we found a well thumbed copy of Bukharin's *ABC of Communism*, brought there by an old pupil of ours and now widely read among the members of the 'Plebeian Party' of Basutoland, which seeks affiliation with the CP).

Such are the surrounding circumstances in which a native republic slogan would be launched, and we consider it would, not in theory perhaps, but certainly in practice, arouse white workers' opposition as unfair to the minority, and would thereby not only emphasize the contradiction between national and class movements, but put the whole native movement at a great disadvantage unnecessarily and without compensating advantage. It would not avail, when such suspicions are aroused, to put them off with smooth, 'empty liberal phrases,' to the effect that 'national minorities will be safeguarded,' especially when no definition is given of these safeguards — for that matter no definition is given of the precise meaning of 'native republic' itself. But expressions like 'South Africa is a black country,' the return of the country and land back to the black population, 'South Africa belongs to the native population,' etc., though correct as general statements, do invite criticism by the white working and peasant minority who will have to fight with the black workers and peasants if the bourgeoisie is to be overthrown. They certainly seem to indicate a black race *dictatorship*: they either are an exaggeration or they are calculated to be generally understood as one — and for

the purpose of overcoming white labour misgiving—that comes to the same thing. If the white working class feels, from the apparent exclusiveness of the phrase ‘native republic’, that the intention is to ride roughshod over it, it will not avail to say: ‘it is all right, it does not mean that.’ They will retort rightly or wrongly: ‘Under a native government built on a nationalist or racial foundation and thus biased against whites even though proletarians, any ‘safeguards’ of the white workers and peasants would go to the winds at the first clash. Who will have the power to stop it? The example of the Ukraine etc. is quoted. But the racial gulf between black and white in South Africa has no parallel there, and besides, the influence and power of the Soviet Union to stand by and see fair play makes all the difference; there was a case of a former empire now turned into a proletarian state, voluntarily liberating its subject nations and having the power to see such liberation through on such lines as a proletarian state would naturally approve. And as regards disposal of the land, the draft resolution does not even speak of safeguards. As the slogan will certainly be interpreted by the exploited whites, as it has indeed been interpreted by ourselves (so much so that its defenders have defended just that interpretation of it) it means that the exploited whites are to become in their turn a subject race, that the native republic in spirit if not in letter will exclude all whites, and that the land without exception will belong to the natives—not as a matter of the verbal drafting of a resolution but as a matter of fact. The slogan will have to be redrafted on less nationalist lines if it is to avoid giving that impression.

Of course, no one denies that *the immense majority must and will exercise its power as such*, from which it follows that a minority of the exploited is also entitled to its proportionate voice and share in power and land. The ‘native republic’ is defended, indeed, as a mere expression of *majority rule*, but it obviously goes beyond that, and the little difference makes all the difference when it comes to combating white chauvinism: it handicaps propaganda to that effect. It may be asked, why are we so concerned about the fate of a comparative handful of whites. It is certainly strange that we of the CPSA, who are accustomed at home to work almost exclusively among and for the native masses, and who are always attacking white chauvinism, should find ourselves obliged here in Moscow to take up unwonted cudgels for the white minority. But the reason is not any special love for the aristocrats of labour, or any chauvinist preference for the whites, as is superficially and malignantly suggested in the draft resolution, but first the need for labour solidarity and second a true valuation of the forces at our disposal. Our infant native movement, any revolutionary native movement, lives and moves in a perpetual

state bordering on illegality; on the slightest pretext it can be suppressed either by prosecution or legislation or by massacre or pogrom. We are therefore always looking for allies, or rather for shields and protections behind which to carry on; and even the *bare neutrality*, much more the occasional support of the white trade unions, etc. is of incalculable value to us. It undoubtedly helps us to avoid being driven underground, which in a country like South Africa, where we are well known, where there are no crowded masses to hide behind or among, would make our work almost impossible, and besides, in a political agitation for liberation of the mass of the people, publicity is a very valuable weapon.

We have always instinctively felt this need of white labour support, but it is only when threatened by this slogan with the loss of it, that we realize how very useful it is to us, and how impossible it is to agree with the defenders of the slogan who say 'To hell with white labour support, damn the white workers.' It is easy to sit here and, on limited experience of our local atmosphere, to lay down a policy and say 'It will be all right, you don't understand, this slogan will not alienate, it will attract the white workers.' We who would have to go back and preach it, we who have had all these years to drive a composite team, to work in both camps, black and white, who have learnt the art of doing it on uncompromising Marxian lines by long and hard experience of the enormous difficulties arising out of this very race question, the crucial question of South African labour — on a matter like this we must be heard with respect. We say that the white workers are unquestionably going to be alienated by the present slogan and that instead of support from white labour we are thus quite likely going to get its hostility and Fascist alliance with the bourgeoisie. This in turn will also encourage the government to persecute and the courts to convict everyone who preaches the slogan — we have had many successful legal contests on native propaganda, but the law has now been so tightened that we probably cannot get away with this slogan as a slogan, and thus our movement may not be just 'driven underground' but closed down. Indeed a further sequel may be violent race hostilities, a bloody struggle for mutual extermination or subjection between whites and blacks as races, and what is worse, between the white exploited and the black exploited, a struggle in which the class struggle is completely obscured and forgotten, and in which the unarmed side courts defeat — and all for the sake of a formula which will, as far as we can judge, not increase our work or our success in the present weak stage of our Party — it may be different when we are much stronger.

Our present policy is endorsed by good authority. The amendment of the CPSU to the ECCI thesis of Comrade Bukharin for instance says:

53. The Congress observes a growth of Communist influence in South Africa. The Congress imposes the obligation upon all Communists to take up as their central tasks the organization of the toiling Negro masses, the strengthening of Negro trade unions and the fight against white chauvinism. The fight against foreign imperialism in all forms, the advocacy of complete and absolute equality, strenuous struggle against all exceptional laws against Negroes, determined support for the fight against driving the peasants from the land, to organize them for the struggle for the agrarian revolution, while at the same time strengthening the Communist groups and parties — such must be the fundamental task of the Communists in these countries.

There is nothing here about a 'Native Republic.'

The draft of programme, English edition p.563 (1) *ad fin* lays down that

in colonies and semi-colonies where the working class plays a more or less important part and where the bourgeoisie has already crossed over to the camp of the avowed counter-revolution, or is crossing over because of the development of the mass proletarian and peasant movements (and as we propose to add, in colonies, e.g. in Africa, where no native bourgeoisie exists, but where the main mass of natives is being proletarianized the CP must steer a course for the hegemony of the proletariat and for the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry which will ultimately grow into the dictatorship of the working class. In such countries, the CP must concentrate its efforts mainly upon creating broad mass proletarian organizations (trade unions) and revolutionary peasant unions, and upon drawing up demands and slogans directly affecting the working class. It must propagate the idea of the independence of the proletariat as a class which on principle is hostile to the bourgeoisie, a hostility which is not removed by the possibility of temporary agreements with it. It must imbue the masses with and develop among them the idea of the hegemony of the working class; advance and at the proper moment apply the slogan of Soviets of Workers and Peasants' Deputies.

Here, too, there is nothing about a native republic.

It is worth while also to quote the views of Comrade Lozovsky in the Negro Worker of 15th July, page 5, which recall the language of the 2nd Congress:

The Negro worker must understand that the racial question will be solved together with the social question. Real equality and fraternity of

workers of all colonies will be forged in the joint struggle against capitalism.

The Negro workers of the USA, Africa, etc., will achieve equality with the white workers only through the organized struggle against the whole system of capitalist oppression.

After long consideration and having heard all that is said for the draft resolution, and in view of the special complications conditioning Communist progress in South Africa, we are at present, while standing for proletarian equality and majority rights and all that that implies, against the CREATION of any special special nationalistic slogan at all for South Africa, except of course the liberation of the native people from all race oppression and discrimination, and separation from the British Empire.

[These documents are taken from the original stenographic transcription at the conference in 1928, with corrections in Bunting's handwriting. Two sentences in our copy are missing and we have reluctantly used the Inprecorr report to fill the gap. These are printed in square brackets. The editors have substituted the letter 'z' for 's' in words like 'organization' to conform with contemporary practice. No other changes have been made. Extracts were printed in Edward Roux's *S.P. Bunting: A Political Biography*, published by the author, Cape Town, 1944. Only 500 copies were printed. Roux also reprinted the tribute from Spark.]