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LFP/021/0121/3
In South Africa, where the Africans, Coloured and Indians/^{who} constitute 80% of the population* enjoy almost no political rights and are held in a state of subjection and poverty by the ruling white minority, one of the key questions faced by the Communist Party since its formation has been the formulation of a correct policy on the national question - that is, a policy which would most effectively rally the African rural masses and the oppressed Indian and Coloured minorities into alliance with the proletariat and under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Party in the struggle to end national oppression, as an essential part of the ^{fight} ~~struggle~~ to end capitalist exploitation.

The hammering out ^{has been} of a correct policy ~~was~~ made more difficult by the fact that, unlike the struggle characteristic of the rest of Africa, in South Africa it was not simply a question of fighting for independence from foreign white rule. The substantial white minority is far from being merely the direct agent of an overseas imperialist government. The whites as a whole, and in particular the Afrikaners who constitute the majority of them, have their roots deep in South Africa and know no other home. They are white Africans.

And the situation is all the more complex in that the oppressed people, far from being a homogeneous community, are themselves divided up into a large number of different national entities, the African 'pre-nations', the Coloureds and the Indians. ~~and~~ The oppressing whites are themselves divided into Afrikaner and English nation^{al} entities with very severe economic conflicts straining their unity both internally and in relation to one another. And the Coloureds

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~~South Africa is a country rich with the diversity of its peoples.~~ ^{*The} population of 14½ million is made up of Basotho (23%), AmaXosa (22%), AmaZulu (17%), Afrikaners ~~17%~~ (11%), Coloureds (9%), ^{and others} English (9%), ~~Indians~~ 3%, ~~and others~~ (6%).

All figures are ~~estimated~~ approximate, and are based on the Dominion Ref. (U.G. 61 of 1955) together with the 1958 official population estimates. The Basotho figure includes ~~the total for~~ includes, the Southern, Northern Sotho of ^{and} Botswana. ~~The Coloureds are not a separate national group~~

and the 'Coloureds' are really a political and not a national community. They form part of the Afrikaner & English national groups, mainly the former - although, of course, this statement would make steam come out of the ears of the present spokesmen of the Afrikaner volk. (One of the ~~facts~~ facts hidden by the "race" smokescreen, which a more detailed study of the national question will reveal, is that the 'Coloureds' are probably Afrikanerdom's richest national asset. It ~~may well be that~~ ^{Taking} the addition of a Coloured Afrikanerdom will have the effect ~~is taken~~ into account, the view I have expressed that the Afrikaners (meaning only the white Afrikaners) do not constitute a nation ^{Union of Nations in S.A., Harare today, April 1959} may ~~not~~ have to be revised.)

At the same time it must be noted that the position is by no means static. The political discrimination against the Coloureds is in fact creating something akin to a Coloured 'national consciousness', and the South African Coloured People's Organisation ~~is~~ ^{is thought of itself} as a national organisation like those of its African & Indian allies in the Congress alliances. ~~It, however, one takes any optimistic view of the time required for the union and any reasonably optimistic estimate of the time required for the winning of freedom however, precludes the development of a Coloured nation - but, of course, socialism has been "around the corner" for quite a long time.~~

Looking back at the long and difficult road covered by the pioneers of South African communism it is not surprising ^(in the search for a correct policy on the national question) to find that they stumbled often, did not always point out the best route, and sometimes even had to retrace their footsteps down alleys which they had not perceived to be dead-ends.

Because in a small movement like ours, such a description of our past history might be thought to weaken the confidence of those who look to us for a lead it is worth repeating the words of D.N. Aidit, Secretary of the Indonesian Communist Party, in a recent review* of the history of that great party, now the biggest in the capitalist world: "If we, today, recall the entire period of the 1920's and even * if we recall the entire period up to 1951, we will realise just how shallow the Communists' knowledge of Marxism-Leninism was at that time. This is why we should not be surprised if, during the period prior to 1951, the welding of Marxism-Leninism with the practice of the Indonesian Revolution did not proceed well and rapidly, and some serious mistakes were committed in leading the Indonesian Revolution. ^(Footnote) (Speech delivered in January 1959 to the Indonesian Peoples University, Marxism Today, April 1959, p. 109).

"But it was due to the fact that Marxism-Leninism had entered into the Indonesian Independence Movement that these serious mistakes and failures did not weaken and certainly did not destroy the revolutionary movement of the Indonesian people. Marxism-Leninism helps the working class to analyse and draw conclusions from mistakes and failures, and in this way to raise the struggle of the Indonesian people to a higher level. "

These words are fully applicable to the history of the South African Communist Party and in particular to its striving for a correct policy with regard to the national liberation movement.

The South African Communist Party is by far the oldest in Africa. Established as the CPSA in 1921, it was the direct successor of the International Socialist League ^(I.S.L.) which was ^(made immediate contact with the Zimmerwald International) formed in 1915, and which applied for affiliation to the Third Communist International shortly after ~~the holding of~~ the first Congress of the ~~Comintern in~~ 1919.

These pioneers of Marxism-Leninism in South Africa were all white men, predominantly British immigrant workers on the ^{big} ~~large~~ industrial complex that had developed around the mines in Johannesburg and its vicinity. They were men whose political experience was ^{mainly} confined to that of the British trade union and Labour movement, and the organisations they formed, ~~including the South African Labour Party,~~ were modelled on those in Britain.

Although their military and working class consciousness made them seize eagerly on Marxist-Leninist ideas when the Russian revolution brought these within their ken the founders of the I.S.L. were, at the time of its formation by no means Marxists. ^{Most} ~~They~~ were militant socialist internationalists who perceived that the first world war was ~~simply~~ a struggle between rival capitalist power blocs and ~~they~~ refused to support it, but ~~among~~ ^{they} ~~them~~ were socialists of all hues, ^{including} ~~fabians,~~

(A) Migrant labourers, ^{backward} ~~they~~ were men from the reserves, rural areas, where the farms were too small & impoverished & overcrowded to support them without the supplement of mine wages. Forming the majority of the labour force they were the unskilled labourers paid at starvation wages who were the main source of profits.

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were in constant danger that as the African acquired industrial skills, whites would be replaced by blacks, or would have to accept the far lower African wage rates.

The white trade union movement, therefore was dominated by fear of the competition of the African workers and determination to keep the Africans out of ^{the skilled jobs.} ~~industry~~. Many argued that they should be kept out of industry altogether, and that the unskilled work should also be reserved for whites.

The men who formed the ISL were an integral part of the Transvaal white labour movement. The task which now faced them was to break from the hostility of the Labour Party to the Africans, and to discover the first principle of South African communism, that the African worker and the white worker must be brothers.

In the period between 1916 and 1919, the years of international revolutionary upsurge highlighted by the great October revolution, the ISL believed that the revolution was imminent in South Africa too. It believed that the white proletariat would seize power, but that it could only succeed with the backing of the Africans, and it must guarantee to them the "fullest rights they are capable of exercising."

These years saw considerable close cooperation between

(insert (A))

(A)
* § which had been established in 1912 with the primary aim ~~of~~ ^{of} bringing together into common action as one political people all the African tribes, in order, ~~so that~~ by combined effort & united political organisation, ~~they~~ to defend their "freedom, rights & privileges." * ^{Footnote} See L. Roman: Chapter in the History of South Africa p. 14 ff.]

In this regard the Communist Party at that time were far ahead of any other political organisation in realising the might of the awakening African peoples.

"The influence of the Russian Revolution is felt far beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Republic and has an even more immediate appeal to the enslaved ~~and~~ coloured races of the earth than to Europeans," wrote W.H. Andrews on the 1921 Pan-African Conference convened by the great W.E.B. du Bois and attended by three A.N.C. delegates.

Nevertheless there was still a belief in the leading role of the white proletariat and this was reinforced by the militancy of the white mineworkers in of the Transvaal in the 1922 strike. This strike of white miners was detrimental to the interests of the African miners as it fought against the breaking down of the industrial colour bar in the mines. But the issues at that time were not so easily perceived and there was much confusion as to the policy to be followed by those whose ideas of freedom encompassed the whole population and not only the whites, ~~mine workers.~~ ~~Even if they were mine workers.~~

But even though the "Red Revolt" as the White Miners Strike had been dubbed, did not bring a conscious advance in the theoretical approach of those concerned with the emancipation of labour, events made practice oustrip theory.

There were those people like S.P. Bunting and ~~Ivor~~ Ivon Jones who urged that the main task was the "awakening of the African proletariat" and they now came into their own. They found strong allies in the Western Cape, where unlike the Transvaal the main labour force was Coloured.

The Cape Coloured workers were permanent city residents, not migrant labourers. They had a long artisan tradition, and were organised into trade unions and political organisation. And unlike their Transvaal brethren they had the vote and were wooed by the political parties. In these circumstances socialists at the Cape, some of the most outstanding of whom were Coloured, had a better consciousness of class solidarity than did those of the Transvaal and were far less prone to the racial prejudices of the North. Nevertheless it is the politics of the Transvaal, as the industrial never-centre, that dominate the working-class movement, as they do everything else. Although on some theoretical issues the small Cape ~~and~~ ~~socialist groups were in advance of the bigger and more important Transvaal bodies.~~ (and even Natal) socialist groups were in advance of the bigger and more important Transvaal bodies.

~~Africans~~ For the first time Africans were recruited in numbers into the Communist Party, and African Communists established the first I.C.U. branches in the Transvaal and were elected on to the Executive of "Ndiyakubona Mlungu" ("I see you, white man") as it was popularly known.

As a result of the new policy this party made very important advances and opportunities were created for the emergence of ~~new leaders~~ African Communist leaders, among them Moses Kotane, Albert Nzula, J.B. Marks, Edwin Mofutsunyana and Johannes Nkosi, who was shot ~~at the great pass burning~~ by police at the great pass burning attempt in 1930 at Cartwright's Flats in Durban.

The I.S.L. and A.N.C. cooperation reached its peak when in 1918 three I.S.L. and five A.N.C. leaders were charged jointly with incitement to public violence as a result of their part in an African mine strike.

With its affiliation to the Third International, and with the formation ^{in 1919} at Cape Town of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (the I.C.U.), a mass organisation of African workers which swiftly drew tens of thousands of militant workers into its ranks, the situation was ripe for a great advance by the ISL and its transformation from a body with roots in the white aristocracy of labour into one drawing the main body of its members from the masses of unskilled workers, the Africans.

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1918-1919

1. FORMATION
2. AFRICAN
3. I.C.U.
4. I.S.L.



But although the "Red Revolt" does not indicate that the strike ~~led to~~ ^{created} the ~~necessity~~ ^{conspicuous} brought an advance in ~~the~~ theoretical approach, ~~events~~ ^{the} events ~~have~~ made practice outstrip theory.

The Communists, although they gave qualified electoral support to the Labour-Nationalist coalition now found that they could no longer obtain a hearing among the white workers, demoralised by the crushing of their strike, and ^{more} hostile than ever to the Africans; ^{while on the other hand important sections of the African workers had been alienated by the Communist participation in the strike which had been approved of by the white workers.}

The wing of the Party which had continually urged that the main task was the ^{awakening of} ~~work be done among~~ the Africans, now came into its own.

^{migrant} It found strong allies in the Communists of the Western Cape, ^{unlike the} Transvaal, the main labour force was coloured. ^{The Cape Coloured workers were permanent} city residents, not migrant labourers. ^{Unlike the Transvaal, they were had} a long artisan tradition, and were ~~not~~ ^{well} organised into trade unions & political organisations. ^{And unlike the Transvaal workers, they} had the vote & were wooed by the political parties. ^{in some of the most outlying of whom were coloured.} In these circumstances socialists at the Cape had a far better consciousness of class solidarity than did those of the Transvaal. ^{Because of the} ~~Transvaal~~ ^{Transvaal}, as the industrial nerve-centre and was far less prone to the racial prejudices of the north.

~~have dominated~~ dominate the socialist scene, as I dominate the working-class movement, as they do everything else, and for the purpose of this study we follow the convention of focusing all attention on Transvaal developments as the most important ones, although on some small theoretical issues the ^{small} Cape, and even the ~~Transvaal~~ Natal, socialists ^{groups} were in advance of ~~those~~ ^{the} ~~Transvaal~~ ^{Transvaal} bodies.

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single, common language. The blossoming of cultures national in form and socialist in content with the object of their fusion into a single, common, culture - this is the dialectical nature of the presentation of the question of national culture.

It may be said that, presented in this way, the question is self-contradictory. Yes it is self-contradictory. But this contradiction is a living thing, and it is a complete reflection of dialectics.

Take, for example, the way ^a ~~one~~ great writer presents the question of the right of nations to self-determination, including secession. He expressed the thesis of national self-determination in the form of a simple formula: "disunion for the purpose of union." Just think - disunion for the purpose of union! It even smacks of the paradoxical. And yet this "self-contradictory" formula reflects that living truth of dialectics which enables dialectical materialists to capture the most impregnable fortresses in the sphere of the national question, as in all other spheres.

The same must be said of the formula of national culture: the blossoming of national cultures (and languages) in the period of people's democracy with the object of preparing the way for their dying away and fusion into a single, common, culture (and a single, common language) in the period of the victory of the people all over the world.

Whoever has failed to understand this dialectical character of historical processes, is lost.

It is the misfortune of our deviators that they do not understand and do not want to understand dialectics.

LB

⑧ ⑥ ⑤

At the ~~1924~~ conference of the party in 1924, the ~~transvaal~~ Cape delegates, ~~who~~ who had withdrawn, & were participating in, the rise of the ICU, united with the most advanced ^{section} of the Transvaal delegation, and, by narrowly defeating the proposal by Andrews that the CP should ally for affiliation to the thoroughly reactionary white labour ^{Party}, ~~placed~~ set the party's on the ~~course of placing its~~ main emphasis on the work among the Africans. It should be mentioned that the ~~majority was strengthened by the~~ arrival at this ~~and~~ decision was aided by a ~~direct~~ letter from the Young Communist International to the YCL called in the year, supporting such a new orientation. ^[SPB p 63]

Africans were recruited in numbers into the Party for the first time; and African communists established the first ICU branches in the Transvaal and ^{through mainly from Cape Town} Communists were elected on to the executive of that body.

keep going. We have to depend more and more on donations from our supporters to increase. The big advertisers boycott us, either because they are opposed to our policy, or possibly (it costs us £400 A WEEK to print out the 25,000 copies of the paper), but we must keep going.

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Yours sincerely,

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I. O. HORVITCH
Directors

P.S. Should you wish to help us more directly by serving on one of our campaign committees, please contact us. There is plenty to do.

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As a result of the new policy,
~~the party entered into one of~~
During this period ^{which followed} the party made very important advances.
and ~~such outstanding figures as Moses Kibane~~ for the first time
the opportunities were created for the emergence of ^{young men} African communist leaders. ^{including Moses Kibane, Albert Wanda, J. B. Hako}
Although the party ^{grew}
its path was by no means simple. But as communism grew,
so also grew the ^{bourgeois} reaction. At the end of 1926 the
ICU leadership, corrupt, . . .

At the end of 1926, however, the ICU leadership, corrupt
and opportunist, and fearful of the Communist call to
militant action, turned against the party ^{on the rallying-call} claiming that they
^{was} were white-dominated and expelled all Communists from the
I.C.U. Because of its late entry into the ICU ^(+ the party's unpopularity + incorrect role in the 1922 events) the Communists
did not have sufficient support among the ICU rank and file
to challenge the anti-communist leadership and resist the
expulsions. ^(As a result) the ICU went on its way to inevitable
disaster, losing its militancy, its leaders in violent personal
conflict, and its fund squandered and embezzled. By 1932
the great ICU was little more than a memory).

During the stocktaking following the communist failure
in the ICU and the resultant discussion on the policy of
the party with regard to the African struggle for national
liberation, the party ^{on South Africa which brought the}
~~such a resolution~~ the party was assisted by a draft resolution
from the Communist International ^{on South Africa which brought the}

--- national

But while the party suffered this defeat in the ICU it succeeded in making progress in the ANC, which agreed to to attend send its president, J.T. Gumede to the anti-Imperialist Conference in Brussels in 1927, from which he proceeded to tour the Soviet Union, returning a vigorous ally of cooperation with the communists.

~~The Congress~~ Although the party had made ~~these~~ great advances, and had contributed very greatly indeed to the ~~general~~ raising of the general level of the political consciousness of the South African people it had not yet developed a correct policy with regard to the national question. It ^{tended to see} ~~saw~~ the struggle in terms only of

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the mobilisation and organisation of the proletariat, and the organisation of trade unions, and not to pay proper attention to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the South African ~~non-white~~ people were not proletarians and could not be reached by the slogans of the class struggle.

~~In their appeal to the workers, ^{so} of all races to stand together as one, they ~~had~~ called upon the whites to fight against racial discrimination and the withholding of democratic rights from the Africans, but this had been seen as something incidental to the class struggle.~~

~~(Cape Town Communists expelled from the ICU executive)~~
 During 1927 one of the ~~party~~ ^{party} leaders, James LaGuma,

who had accompanied Gumedé to Leningrad & then Moscow ~~with the~~ discussed the situation with Bukharin and obtained a new perspective; — that the purely national struggle, uniting the oppressed people of all ^(against white domination) classes, was itself of great revolutionary importance in the struggle against ~~white domination~~ imperialism, and that ~~freedom from national oppression~~ was the wresting of national ~~lib~~ freedom was an essential stage to the winning of socialism.*

[See Poir. SPB, 88-9]

The party had hitherto seen the International therefore put forward to the South African party for discussion the adoption of the slogan "an independent Native Republic as a stage

towards a workers' & peasants' government."

Today, when the vital importance of the national struggle is seen by Marxists as axiomatic, the correctness of the analysis ^{brought back} ~~accepted~~ by La Guma is easy to see.

But at the time it seemed to the party leadership (which was still ideologically extremely weak and paid little attention to the study of Marxist works) to be a complete reversal of their policy. They had urged proletarian unity as the only way to socialism as the only way, in turn, to achieve the equality of nations. Now they were called upon to support the African national ^{movement} ~~struggle~~, which they had previously condemned as diverting the attention of the African mass workers away from their fundamental unity with the white workers class struggle was to be the path to socialism.

The party leadership of the time was still ideologically extremely weak & paid little attention to the study of

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Marxist theory, and, if Roux's ^{*}is description is correct
they failed completely to understand the ^{proposed} ~~new~~ resolution.

"Was it - ...

* ~~While Roux's statements were active in the party at this time, and later editions~~
~~the party's attitude was expelled~~ and ~~now extremely hostile to the party~~
* Roux: S.P. Sunday p 89: In ^(otherwise) evaluating all Dr Roux's statements, his
hostility to the party must be borne in mind. In the period which
he here describes he was an active party member

of those concerned, E.R. Roux wrote: "Was it not similar,
we said, to Marcus Garvey's slogan 'Africa for the Africans'
which the C.P. had always opposed as the exact opposite of
internationalism? How could we reconcile such a cry with our
steadfast aim and slogan: 'Workers of the world, unite!'"?
We, as South African communists, had claimed to represent the
aspirations of all workers, black and white; and now we were
being asked to go before the masses as a purely black, even,
as we saw it, as an anti-white Party. Almost all the white
communists were indignant, and black communists like Thibedi,
who had been trained in the old tradition, equally so." [Roux 11/1/29]

today
Although the demand for African rule is commonplace, it
must be remembered that at this time even the leaders of the
African national movement were still ^{talking} merely of African
advancement "under the leadership of the Europeans."

... The party

~~As it was, it is hardly the cause for
the International agreed, that the correct policy was
for South Africa was to make the party's main plank.~~

2. 16

~~Yes in independent nature republic with~~

"A South Africa Native Republic, as a stage towards a Workers & Peasants government, with full protection and equal rights for all national minorities."

Thus it was that the basic party formula, which almost all socialists would today readily acknowledge to be substantially applicable to this day, was introduced against the opposition of the party leadership at the end of 1928. Although

~~Connect as the policy was
the new policy~~

Some of the white communist members could not stomach the

With its attention fixed now firmly on the
most Africans, the party membership & military
grew in the years ahead, but although ~~even~~

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The way was now prepared
Most of the leading opponents of the resolution, including the three delegates to the International, ^{under the pressure of} ~~loyally~~ accepted the new policy, and the way was opened to further big advances.

Entering now into the national struggle the Party introduced a new spirit of courage and militancy at a time when oppression was reaching new heights, for in June 1929 the Nationalist Party, after discarding ~~its~~ ^{the} Labour Party couch, won power for the first time on its own, following an election in which the promise to crush the "Black Peril" was its main slogan. and the ~~farist~~ ^{RAZI} Rind became Minister of Justice. & the Rind ~~Dischler~~ ~~Dischler~~ was amended ^{to give} him the power of ~~deputation~~ ^{deportation} of to banish ~~militant~~ ^{propagandists} ~~fighters~~ without trial.

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The Communists broke through their isolation for the leadership of the ANC & ICU & joined with them in a mass campaign against ~~the~~ ^{Prow's} new Act amended & Dragan's day 1929 was the occasion of ~~big united~~ for the first time of big united front demonstrations of ~~between~~ the Communist & national movements.

In 1930 the party resolved
The new approach was bringing the party even greater support. Branches were ~~now~~ ^{flourishing} in the main towns, including Bloemfontein, and the party, ~~overestimating~~ ^{overestimating} its strength now decided to call for a national fast-day on Dragan's Day 1930. The support it won in the ~~preparatory~~ ^{preparatory} stage from the widest section of the national movement, showed what strides were being taken. ~~Even~~ ^{Not} only did Congress & ICU

(to the reporter in October 1950)

leaders refused to be called but even the two
Zabantsundu wished the campaign success. As it

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Needless to say, ~~the~~ Reaction ~~was~~ did not sit idle. In the Cape
the governor Pirow's police launched a terror campaign
against the militant ANC of the Cape and the
right wing Thakle challenged rallied support for an
anti-communist crusade, again relying, as Kadalie had done
in 1926, on the charge that the communists were
dominated by the whites. At the same time Kadalie
was brought into battle to address meetings in the
free state against the anti-pass campaign

which had all but adopted the party
newspaper Umselenzi, then being
published in Cape Town, as its organ

The anti-pass campaign proved to have been

too anti-

or
happened, the task set proved too ambitious; a successful national
pass-burning would shake the very foundations of the oppressor state
and this could not be achieved in one campaign a campaign of a
few months. In Durban, where the Communist Johannes Nkosi led the
most successful burning, Pirow's retaliation was immediate, the
martyr Nkosi was brutally done to death by on the spot by the police.
Thousands of new recruits, won by Nkosi in a few months
before the campaign & now turned his police base on them, lost no
time in using terror within in Natal since the time of Dandabha to smash
the movement there. Mass arrests & deportations succeeded in crushing the
party in Natal.

During 1932 the party intensified its propaganda aimed at arousing action on national liberatory demands and the Executive Committee of the Communist International recorded ^(at rec'd of that year) that the national-revolutionary movement in South Africa has moved considerably forward during the recent period. The framework of the slave regime is beginning to burst and the pressure of the masses who are seeking in the Communist Party their guide and leader. [Unsekeri 25-12-31]

It is now proposed ~~that~~ a further elaboration of the party programme on the

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national question, "~~The fundamental task and the revolutionary programme around which the struggle must~~ declaring that one of the fundamental tasks of the party to be against the furtherance of the slogan: "Down with the British & Afrikaner imperialists. Drive out the imperialists. Complete & immediate national independence for the people of South Africa. For the right of the Zulus, Basutos, etc., nations to form their own Independent Republics. For the voluntary uniting of the African nations in a

Federation of Independent Native Republics.
The establishment of a workers and
peasants government. Full guarantees of
the rights of all national minorities, for
the coloured, Indian and white toiling
masses. " * [~~Dr~~ Umsebenzi 8th Jan 1932]

~~But there were years of in~~
~~But the party was this~~ was a programme
for a ^(national movement) ~~party~~ on the upsurge. But, ~~in fact~~, the
~~on the other hand the~~

parties of the Afrikaners & the English, or of agriculture
and mining, previously at loggerheads, ^{had} ~~now~~ united
precisely in order to prevent the ~~hand~~ of the
slave regime from bursting, and ~~with~~ ~~the state~~ under
a new coalition ~~regime~~ government, the state was
~~as strong and firm.~~

~~South African state framework:~~ ²⁴ On the other hand
the national movement was in a state of quiescence.
~~It had not been able to withstand the~~
the leadership had not been able to withstand the
assault launched by Pirow from 1929, and the
organisations themselves were too amorphous and
inchoate to ~~withstand~~ exist in semi-illegality.

"The Congress of 1917 to 1920 that organised
strikes on the mines, that led the pass-burning
campaign, is no more," - Umsebenzi noted at
the begin of 1934. "Its leaders are
corrupt, its fighting strength is gone."

* It has lost practically all its membership, ^{unofficially} ~~unofficially~~ and Moses Kotane declared flatly: "The once formidable ANC ^{the} have disappeared." ^{**} [Umsebenzi 27-1-34]

Not that the party mourned what appeared to be the passing of the ANC & ICU.

In addition the party Communists, while ^{ready to unite} ~~ready to unite~~ with the national ^{ANC} ~~national~~ movement on specific campaigns, still saw Congress as a basically reactionary body, serving the interests of an African bourgeoisie and also was no question of ^{Communist} ~~Communist~~ working to build & strengthen the ANC. The party ^{believed in} ~~believed in~~ rather the masses on national slogans but under its own banner. Experience had still to teach the important lesson that it was not in spite of Congress, but in alliance with Congress that the party would lead the struggle for socialism.

The party itself was ^{also} going through a difficult period. Since ~~1931~~ Before 1931 it too had been very loosely organised, a member being anyone who had taken out a membership card, irrespective of whether or not he attended meetings. From 1931 the party had ~~tightened up~~ reorganised to meet the new conditions, but had gone to the other extreme purging itself not only of ~~waverers~~ the undisciplined

& the waverers, but also, in an exaggerated fear of a ^{unbridled} ~~unbridled~~ right wing campaign against the ~~right wing~~ ^{right wing} danger right wing deviation, especially some of its most loyal members, among them S. P. Bunting. ^{here it is necessary to note that the influence of} ~~here it is necessary to note that the influence of~~ The International was a contributory factor to the party's error, which had its parallels in other countries too in this period.

21 and the waverers, but also of some of its ~~best~~ ^{most loyal} members, most notably S.R. Bunting.

In this situation the ~~new~~ national programme did not make any impact upon the situation. The call

With the party weakened and the national organisations virtually non-existent the call for the ^{right to self-determination} establishment of the "Zulu", Basuto, "etc.", ^{nations} died still-born. There is no record of its having been discussed in the party, not any sign of its ~~that it~~ having made any impact on the national organisations.

In 1934

* Anybody who has set himself the task of listing the South African nations will know how valuable the ^{little} ~~word~~ "etc" is after the Zulu & Basuto!

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~~It must be noted that~~

In 1934 a new factor began to loom large on the South African scene - the fight against fascism. ^{Nazism} ~~Hitler~~ had triumphed in Germany, and everywhere democrats rallied to form popular fronts to prevent the same thing ~~not~~ from happening to them.

but after only two or three such references in the party newspaper *Unschelji*, it was heard no more was heard of it.

In 1934, this ~~fruitful period of activity~~ with the rise of Nazism the need for a popular front became urgent and there was an increase in the activity of the white trade union movement in response to the fascist threat. The Africans to build a strong anti fascist front the party found itself confronted with the old dilemma in a new form. As it saw the situation, the world was divided into fascist countries & countries under danger for fascism. But crucial point then

fell under both categories. The Africans lived under fascism. But the ~~European~~ ^{white} engaged democracy which was threatened by fascism. The white fascists drew their strength from the whites only, & it was essential to mobilize the ~~white~~ ^{largest} ~~largest~~ possible force against them. Large sections of the white trade union movement population were willing to resist the fascism, while not being willing to form a united front with the Africans. And at the same time the Africans could not be called upon to fight ~~for~~ against something that didn't affect him directly. [Article by S.B. (Hazel Bark), S.A. Worker 23/4 May 1936]

In fact there did begin to develop a parallel struggle. On the one hand the Africans

were uniting against the Hottel Bills to deprive the ~~late~~ Africans of the vote (the only province where they were enfranchised), in a campaign which led to the creation of a great united all-African Convention in 1936, in which ^{African} communists played an important role.

But on the other hand there ~~was~~ was the predominantly white Anti-Soviet League, in which the party was the driving force, & in which some of the ^{white} party members who had been expelled as right-deviators, now returned to activity. [Although in the League the party consistently urged that the Europeans must be drawn into the anti-Soviet struggle the party now found itself fighting on two fronts, the officers in the AR, the Europeans in the Anti-Soviet League.

When the Netjas Bill went through with little real
popular opposition. This, combined with a party campaign
to get the ANC to dissolve itself into a new party
established as a permanent body, with the ANC dissolved &
disbanded, failed (the ANC indignantly claiming that it had
been in existence since 1912 & could intend staying in
existence), & there was a general recession in
African political activities. The defeat of Ethiopia
by Italy all combined to bring about a
falling-off of African political activity in 1936. The
emphasis of party work swung dramatically
once more towards the Europeans. The party
newspaper had been called *Umschekenzi*, with
the translation "S.A. Worker" as a sub-title. Now the paper was
called *The South African Worker*, & *Umschekenzi* became the sub-title.

~~Musechigi type of party to the SA who, material~~
 was produced in Africans & directed at the
 Africans who ~~and there was~~ ^{an} inevitable tendency to
~~underestimate~~ ^{play down} the question of equality for the African -
 and the directing of activity towards the
 African diminished. ~~the result was~~

~~once more a sharp~~

This switch of policy, like the previous one, was
 accompanied by intense internal struggle ~~and~~ new round
~~burst of~~ expulsions, but unlike the previous occasion, the
 struggle had features were not compensated for by the
 fact that they merely marked a basically correct
 time. ~~when the party of 1924 had swung from its attention~~

from the white workers to ³⁴ the Africans, the new
 support it won more than compensated for the loss of
 white support. But the shift back brought only
 disaster. The ~~party~~ ^{party} newspaper closed down in 1937
 for lack of support - its continued existence had for some time
 been artificial. So low did morale sink that
 party secretary Mafutsanyana ^{was} actually ^{able to find a second for his} ~~proposed~~ to a
 depleted party conference that the party should ^{in 1938,}
 divide into two - a white party & a black one. ~~The~~
 with the Johannesburg party members ~~democratic~~ & divided,
 headquarters moved to the cabinet ~~at~~ ^{at} Johannesburg.

At this time of the shift in headquarters, public
In the years immediately before the war, public
attention ^{was} became increasingly ^{becoming} focused on international
affairs. ^(At last there was a realisation of) the threat of nazi domination was,
^(seen by Communists the world over as) the predominant main question facing them.
In its clear analysis - unplagued by ^{the national question} -
of the international alignment of forces, its forthright
condemnation of Munich, its call ^(military defensive) for an alliance
with the Soviet Union ^{the new Central Committee} began to win, once
again, the confidence of the most politically conscious
sections of the population, and ^(the party showed) it took on a
new lease of life. The fact that the
Non-European masses, ^{many} already burdened with a
(fascist-like oppression) were not as alarmed by the
rise of Germany as were large sections of the whites,

~~When~~ With the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the character of the war changed & ~~the party made~~ the struggle for the rallying of the maximum possible support for the war to smash nazism, became the main task of the party. It called for the ^{pre-}arming of African troops (who throughout the war were never permitted to carry anything more lethal than assegais) & for the

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accordance to them of some instalments of the democracy for which they were alleged to be fighting, & ~~for the maximum~~

~~was effected~~ This policy won the party great support. From 1942 it switched over its organisational basis from that of a tightly-knit body of cadres to one of a mass party and by 1944, when the Red Army as South Africa cheered the ~~unfathomable~~ ^{pre-}army, on its ~~terrible~~ ^{breath-taking} achievements of the Red Army, the party was probably stronger than it had ever been before.

1. FORMAN, Editor
2. CARPSON, Assistant Editor
3. J. J. THORNTON, Assistant Editor
4. J. J. THORNTON, Assistant Editor

The ANC, which, like the party, had fallen on bad days after the failure of the 1935-6 campaign against the Hertzog Bills, pulled itself together, again like the party, in the early war years. In 1940 a more vigorous leadership, under Dr Alfred Xuma, replaced that of the moribund Mahabane. [The ANC. Edwin Mphahlele. Freedom Oct-Nov 1945]

During the war years close cooperation was once again established between the party and the ANC, the two organisations which, with all their ups & downs and differences, ^(since 1917) have been brothers in the South African freedom struggle.

~~The war had Congress resurgence, like that of the party, dated from the war years, when the election of Dr Xuma Alfred Xuma to the presidency signified in 1940 the a more vigorous leadership, under Dr Alfred Xuma replaced that of the moribund Mahabane~~

With war's end new theoretical assessments became necessary. Once more the national question & the relations with the national organisations came to the fore. And here one is struck by the lack of continuity between the ~~the~~ decisions in this period and those of the ^{previous} years. While in its work in the trade union field there is a continuous thread, ~~even~~ ^{even} like Bill Andrews ~~understand~~ ^{and} ~~has~~ ^{is} basing their approach on all the years that had gone before, there is no continuity with regard to the national question. It is as if a veil had been drawn over the period before the war. The "native republic" slogan is not referred to, its convertness or otherwise not discussed.

This ~~was~~ ^{is} unfortunate, for the old decisions were in many respects relevant to the new situation. Where ~~the~~ ^{lay} the main office of party activity, among whites or among blacks? And to offer, as was sometimes done, the facile answer that it was wrong to pose the question at all - that the party must work everywhere where it could gain support - did not ~~also~~ ^{provide} sufficient guidance. The party was getting a hearing among a section of the ^{middle class} ~~white~~ ^{urban} ~~bourgeoisie~~ - in particular and specially from the Jews who had seen with joy the overthrow ~~of the Nazis~~ ^{by the Red Army} of the Nazi murderers of so many of their brethren. A Communist candidate ~~was~~ ^{was} returned in the Johannesburg Town Council & an exuberant party official declared that this was the first of many. But a writer in Freedom noted: "A Johannesburg municipal election arouses the District Committee to a height of activity which it never achieves at any other time of the year. On the other hand, elections for Advisory Boards in the locations pass almost unnoticed by the bulk of the members. This is

Something which has been commented on bitterly by African party members... * [Article by "B. O'Brien", Freedom, Feb 1946]. And in the same issue of Freedom, a member of the Central Committee drew attention to the fact that the British District had issued a leaflet to the Africans which, while obviously well-intentioned, pandered in certain respects to their race prejudices.

There was an echo of the 'Native republic' controversy when a minority in the party criticised the slogan "Votes for All" adopted in 1948. One ~~of this minority~~ ^{one member of this minority} declared: "While the slogans of the party must be in advance of the general consciousness of the working class this slogan is so far in advance that it does not bring the party into the position of leading the working class but leaves us out on a limb far ahead of the working class. To the average worker, even to the average Non-European worker the slogan represents a dream, an ideal which does not appear possible." * [Article by L. Bernstein, Freedom, Dec 6, 1948] In a reply the party secretary Moses Kotane made clear the incorrectness of this view and its danger. He pointed out that for the Africans the idea winning of the vote was not an unattainable dream & that to drop the slogan would mean the abandonment of the whole struggle base of the struggle against the colour bar. ** [Ibid]

In the following year the party issued its first detailed post-war analysis of the national question, an analysis in which one is particularly struck by the absence of any references to the decisions of the past.

"South Afr. (paragraph 91) 4

* [Report of the CC to National Conference, Jan 6-8, 1950; Freedom, 15th Dec 1949, para 91] Africa #; J. Kagan... [Freedom, 15th Dec, 1949]

Then, just as long back the party in 1937 had noted the ~~anomaly~~ fact that South Africa seen South Africa as two countries in one - a South Africa which was both ~~to~~ fell into both of the two world categories: fascist & menaced by fascism - it now saw South Africa as a country ~~in~~ which ~~was~~ combined "the characteristic of both an imperialist state & a colony within a single, indivisible, geographical, political & economic entity."

The Non-European population, while reduced to the status of a colonial people, has no territory of its own, no independent existence, but is almost wholly integrated in the political & economic institutions of the ruling class.

Although in Communist literature national movements had been identified with an actual & rising bourgeois class, this description could not be applied to the Non-European bourgeoisie. "It is small, fragmented, pinned down in the poorest areas, forced to use subterfuge & illegalities to evade discriminatory laws, starved of capital, & exposed to constant insecurity. It is not a class that could provide effective, militant leadership." In fact the leadership was petty bourgeois in character & in keeping with its character the aims of the national organisations were usually vague, often contradictory, & at times conciliatory. "Whenever an attempt is made to formulate specific aims, other than immediate demands, the leaders show a tremendous capacity for evasiveness & ambiguity."

There could be detected "the beginnings of a Non-European

! pigments that cut across the racial divisions."

The conclusion drawn was these:

(Type 120 - 122) * * * ^{Third} Report: Para 120-122.

The party's analysis reveals very clearly how far ahead of any other body in South Africa ~~was~~ the Communists in their understanding of their country and its needs. Nevertheless, from

(~~From~~ ^{gained by} the vantage-point of our subsequent knowledge of subsequent events it is possible to see that in this analysis, though at a ~~very~~ far more advanced level, there ~~were~~ ^{are} defects ~~comparable with~~ of a similar type to those of the period before the 'Native Republic' slogan - that is, an over-emphasis of the class aspect of the struggle at the present-time, and an under-emphasis of the revolutionary character of the national struggle.

While it is ~~obvious~~ absolutely correct that the ~~basic~~ ~~line~~ in South Africa is ~~the~~ to everything in South Africa is the class struggle, and that it is because of ~~imperialist~~ imperialist exploitation that there is national oppression in South Africa, the analysis of the international fact that the overwhelming

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majority of the people see their ~~struggle~~ immediate enemy as the national oppressor, ~~rather~~, of all classes, rather than the class oppressor of all nationalities, is not because of lack of political consciousness, but because their experience shows them, just as their Marxist-Leninist understanding showed the delegates at the Sixth 1924 Congress of the International, that the first ~~thing to do is to win national freedom~~ task is the winning of national freedom. Before we can have a socialist South Africa we must have an independent African republic, with ~~full protection~~ ^{full protection} + equal rights for all minorities.

At the ~~very moment when~~ the 1949 analysis tended somewhat to underrate the ~~progressive character~~ revolutionary nature of the national movement. In the ~~very~~ ^{same} week as the 1949 ~~conference~~ publication of the party's analysis ^{was} ~~with its~~ the declaration that it could avoid racialism only if it recognised the class alignment that cut across racial divisions; ~~and the description of the leadership as "irresolute & timid"~~ by the belief that the petit-bourgeois leadership was by its nature "irresolute & timid" & best described as "an intellectual revolt." In fact in the very week that the analysis was published in Freedom, the militants of Congress, rallied by the Youth League were deposing Xuma for precisely because of his irresolution & timidity, and were setting Congress firmly on its militant course with their famous Programme of Action, committing Congress to a new path of

~~How was it possible that a petit-bourgeois leadership~~

These Youth Leaguers were students & teachers & professional men, ~~as~~ as petit-bourgeois as their predecessors. But they were men thrown up by the national struggle, & not the class struggle. And more significant ^{remarkable} still, although they were not Communists when they initiated & carried through their militant policies, many of them ~~in later years~~ were afterwards drawn towards Marxism and the Communist Party.

The probable explanation for this is that the party's analysis erred when it said the ~~main~~ purpose of South African national oppression to be, like that of the national oppression in ^(pre-war) Eastern Europe, the attempt to ~~prevent~~ ^{prevent} the development of a rival bourgeoisie. In fact our oppression laws have the purpose first & foremost of driving the African workers to the factories & farms. Whereas in Eastern Europe the worker national oppression suffered by the worker

flowed from the laws designed to shackles the bourgeoisie, in South Africa the restrictions on the bourgeoisie, which as they are, are secondary to the enslavement of the African worker.

Yet this reason, the African worker, when he fights the pass laws and all the other offensive chains is fighting directly in his own class interest as a worker against the ^{capitalist} ~~employing~~ ^(can be) class; for this reason the national movement ~~is not~~ ^{is not} the movement of the ~~rising~~ ^{a rising} bourgeois class, but also ~~attempts~~ ^(putting forward with class demands) to arise, but ~~primarily~~ ^{the} movement of the African proletariat.

One further point about the 1949 analysis: Although in previous periods one of the cardinal questions had been the thorny issue of ~~the right to~~ self-determination, this statement said nothing ~~at all positive~~ at all about it except ~~in one questionable passing reference~~ critical reference to the Programme of Action. To criticise the Youth League Programme of Action for claiming the right to self-determination. Here the analysis made the ~~unbelievable~~ ^{astounding} comment: "Here is the familiar objective of nationalist movements. But what meaning must be ascribed to it in South Africa? The 'right of self-determination' can only mean the 'right of political secession' i.e. to set up a separate state. To be politically 'independent', to 'secede', would mean the dividing of South Africa into a 'black' & a 'white' state - would mean apartheid. Is that to be the aim, or must one understand the programme to mean that the whites / should

should he^{to} be expelled from South Africa?"

The programme of 1949 brings us to the end of the survey of Communist discussion of the national question. In 1950, shortly before the promulgation of a law ~~banning the~~ making membership of the party illegal, the ~~leadership~~ Central Committee, faced with an extremely difficult decision situation, took what was, in the view of the present writer, an incorrect ~~decided~~ course, and decided on the ~~deco~~ liquidation of the party. As a result there has not, since that time, been a journal for the discussion of and development of Marxist-Leninist theory in this country.

At the present time, when the national liberation movement is more militant, & more politically-conscious, than ever before, with the working class ^{acknowledged} ~~recognized~~

by all to be the ⁴⁹ leading force in it, the need is growing for a further advance theoretical advances to ^{show} ~~face~~ the way ~~for~~ to swift victory. While the proletariat & urban petit-bourgeoisie are already in the arena of combat, their great & indispensable allies, the agrarian masses on the farms and in the reserves, are not.

In the sense that it is not a class slogan, but a national slogan which will ~~start~~ bring these masses into alliance with the proletariat it may be said that the national question in South Africa is now primarily an agrarian question. ~~Ad Not~~ only is ~~it necessary to~~ this ~~reach~~ the care with regard to the content of the slogan, it is true also of the form in which the ~~the~~ our

call is delivered. The rural people do not understand our newspapers & pamphlets, which, in the main, are produced in English. Most are illiterate or only slightly literate, & ~~can~~ ^{must} be approached not only not only in their own language, but also through their own national idiom & culture. This is mainly a practical problem, but it also has a political undertone, for in the very necessary struggle to overcome tribal national antagonisms and build a united African political organisation, there has in the past been a hesitancy to on the part of political leaders to do anything which might foster separate nationalisms. The time has come to consider whether, under the leadership of the working class a healthy, people's nationalism, within the framework of ~~the firm political unity~~ ^{and} multi-national ~~unity~~ political unity, ~~of might not be the swiftest~~ need any longer be feared; or if indeed this might be the ~~best~~ ^{best} way to raise the political consciousness of the rural people.

Linked with this problem too is the question which is going to be raised more & more frequently as the realisation grows that the Freedom Charter is rather treason not a dream, ~~but already~~ ^{Already a body of} ~~people are beginning to say~~ ^{white} it is well-known that ~~even~~ ^{white} people believe that votes for all would simply mean the replacement of white tyranny by black tyranny. (see for example the ^{betrayal of} ~~History of~~ 'Values Representation', by OS Rolles, etc. p.16). It will

become desirable to be able to convince explain to people what the
mean that means when I say "All national groups shall have
equal rights", and that is meant by by "they shall be
equal status in the bodies of state for all national groups &
races."

Does this for example contemplate a bi-cameral
legislature, ^{like that of the USSR or China} in which there is one house where all
national ~~groups~~ ^{groups}, irrespective of size, have an equal vote; or does
it simply mean one man, one vote? And what do we
mean by the term 'national group'?

~~It is perfectly true that in the long run the~~
One answer we may give is that there are things
which must be thrashed out at a national convention
to plan the new state form, & ^{that} if people want to know
the answers they must urge the holding of such a convention.

But such a reply is not one that can be given by the
vanguard party. The new state may not come about as the
result of a round-table conference! We must have our
answers ready now - not fixed & inflexible answers, for
conditions change, but reversible answers to such questions as:

~~When the class has disappeared~~

#