

Comrade BUNTING (South Africa):

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

There is a proposal in the Negro Sub-Commission that the Party should put forward as its immediate political slogan "an independent native **South African Republic**, as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic with full safeguards and equal rights for all minorities"; that the country and land be returned to the black population; and that a native revolutionary movement be developed by the Party.

This formulation is opposed by the majority of our Party, mainly for practical reasons. 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."

According to our experience, it seems possible to harp too exclusively on the national chord in colonial matters. In an earlier debate, I ventured the opinion, that it might not be so **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 accomplishing the same task.

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 also says

"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 Congress 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 C. I. and the Parties affected must 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 nationalist revolutionary elements is useful. But the first and most necessary task is the formation of Communist Parties which will organise the peasants and workers and lead them to the revolution and to the establishment of Soviet Republics . . ."

That is so even when 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 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 different basis with colonies, like most African colonies, where such elements do not exist.

In African colonies there is as a rule no native bourgeoisie, and consequently no question of the "two distinct movements": there is only the question of "organising the peasants and workers and leading them to the revolution and to the establishment of Soviets".

Put in another way, the class struggle is here practically coincident and simultaneous with the national struggle. The object is the same in each case — the removal of all oppression 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 or virtue, even where there is no exploited European class present (as there is in South Africa) in emphasising the national aspect of the struggle as more fundamental than the class aspect; rather the reverse is the case.

Now a further complication arises in South Africa from the presence of a white exploited working and peasants class as well as a black one — a small minority, but one which also 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.

The South African native masses, in their turn, are being rapidly proletarianised and organised as a working class. The native agrarian masses as such have not yet shown serious signs of revolt: indeed, as the theses say:

"In these 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 organised in South Africa.

The draft colonial theses in reference to South Africa and other colonies says: (paragraph 12)

"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 against which the native exploited as nationalists, are fighting. 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 have to be adopted to prevent this and to harmonise the national and the class movements in this special case, devoted principally to neutralising and correcting white labour chauvinism.

Not only have we no native bourgeoisie or bourgeois nationalist 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: removal of all special race oppression and discrimination, land and more land, equality with whites, equal votes, equal education, equal justice, equal treatment, rights and opportunities everywhere. It has usually sought redress for grievances by sending deputations to the King of England, which of course have resulted in nothing. 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 C. P. 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.

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 far as we can get contact especially with the distant and not easily accessible native reserves) is limited only by 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 organising militant native trade unions which have learnt to conduct strikes. We are also combating and slowly overcoming white labour chauvinism, which we find yields when confronted face to face with organised masses of native fellow workers. We have carried through joint strikes of white and black workers 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, we pay it a good deal of attention and whenever we see any life in it we apply United Front tactics. Thus, after years of preparatory effort, we have recently begun to reap substantial success which will continue provided we can find the man power to garner the harvest. Native workers and some peasants are pouring into the Party in preference to joining the purely native bodies, which have let them down and fallen into the hands of the bourgeoisie. They see that the C. P. sincerely and unreservedly espouses their national cause as an oppressed race.

Such are the 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 being unfair to the minority, and this would not only intensify the contradiction between national and class movement, but put the whole native movement unnecessarily at a great disadvantage. 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. 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 side by side 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. 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 say, rightly or wrongly: "Under a native government built on a nationalist or racial foundation and thus biased against whites, any "safeguards of the white workers and peasants would go to the winds at the first clash." 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, 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. 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, it handicaps propaganda, when it comes to combating white chauvinism.

It is certainly strange that we of the C. P. S. A., 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 to take up unwonted cudgels for the white minority. But the reason is, first the need for labour solidarity, and secondly, a true valuation of the forces at our disposal. Our infant 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 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 realise 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". We who have had all these years to work in both camps, black and white, who have learned the art of going 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. 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 prosecute and the courts to convict everyone who preaches the slogan. 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.

Our present policy is endorsed by good authority. The amendment of the C. P. S. U. to the E. C. C. I. theses 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 organisation 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 organise them for the struggle for the agrarian revolution, while at the same time strengthening the Communist groups and Parties — such must be the fundamental tasks of the Communists in these countries."

There is nothing here about a "native Republic".

In the draft C. I. Programme there is also nothing about a native republic. But a direction to imbue the colonial masses with the idea of the independence and hegemony of the working class and to advance and at the proper moment apply the slogans of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Republics.

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 for the fullest majority rights, against the creation of any special nationalistic slogan for South Africa, except of course the liberation of the native people from all race oppression and discrimination, and separation from the British Empire.

different thing for the Communist International, for tactical reasons, to utilise those antagonisms for revolutionary purposes. But even this is problematic, owing to the fact that the capitalists are more cunning and politically conscious than we are.

Economic antagonism exists between a section of the native bourgeoisie and the foreign bourgeoisie; the former stands for an exclusive right of exploitation, but this is not the driving force of the revolution. The driving forces of the revolutionary movement are, as in every other capitalist country, the millions of homeless industrial proletariat, and also the pauperised peasantry, created by the capitalist exploitation in different colonies; and it is these rising forces that badly need the attention of the Communist International. Needless to say, we cannot depend, or rather, we must not attach any considerable importance to the so-called nationalist movements in the colonies, as the history of this movement is the history of servile capitulation before the imperialist forces on the one hand, and on the other, the treacherous betrayal of the masses by the so-called nationalist leaders just at the moment when an honest sincere lead was needed.

With reference to paragraph 8, in which the theses mention the decolonisation theory, Comrade Kuusinen is quite right in his condemnation of this false theory. No imperialist power whatsoever will ever agree to decolonise until and unless its very existence is threatened. Especially in India it is a life and death problem for British imperialism.

A few remarks about the industrialisation of India. The creation of the native bourgeoisie is a historical necessity for the British bourgeoisie, but at the same time, by such an action, the British bourgeoisie willfully creates a competitor and a rival. And it is here that the imperialist colonial policy asserts itself. India must be industrialised, but: 1. under the chief control of British capital; 2. Indian capital has to assume a junior partnership; and 3. the Indian industries have to play a secondary role so as never to be independent of the home industries, but, besides this, to be permanent consumers of the home manufacturers; 4. to help in the competition against Japan and the U. S. A., etc. and 5. to help in the production of war material.

This is, in short, the gist of the real imperialist policy of the British bourgeoisie with regard to the industrialisation of India. There is a group of comrades who really think that the industrialisation of India is developing quite independently, and that that is the real policy of the British bourgeoisie. Such an idea is absolutely erroneous and misleading. As long as the British rule in India, there can be no free development of the natural resources of India, much less of industry. Then again, a section of the theoreticians think that there has been no industrialisation whatsoever in India. Such an idea is just as wrong as the first one. If there has been no industrialisation, how will you account for the huge army of the industrial proletariat and the strikes in practically all the industrial centres of India. Whatever motive may be attributed to industrialisation, it has been developing; though it is quite correct to say that it has been retarded, and that it will never receive any independent headlong stimulus at the hands of the imperialists. Comrade Page Arnot should not have been so optimistic and enthusiastic about the industrialisation of India. Speaking the other day on the colonial theses, he went so far as to defend British imperialism in India, instead of ruthlessly condemning it.

Well, now, the so-called industrialisation of India has brought forth an army of factory proletariat — the vanguard of the Indian revolution. But it is obviously relatively weak to be capable of fulfilling its historic mission quite independently. The peasantry, comprising the greater part of the Indian population, the most down trodden, the landless and the homeless whose blood is sucked by the government, the landlord and the usurer jointly, is adopting a revolutionary movement.

The present economic analysis of the situation brings forth to the light that the vanguard and the rearguard — the factory proletariat and the peasantry — must co-operate to fulfil the tremendous task of the liberation of India from imperialist domination. It is quite clear and certain that in the struggle the factory proletariat, being better organised in the urban centres, will take the lead. The situation today, therefore, demands the organisation and centralisation of a strong class-conscious political party with a Marxist-Leninist programme and slogans; in other words, the Communist Party of India, to lead the revolutionary masses to its final and successful goal.

Some comrades may suggest that the Workers and Peasants Parties existing in the various provinces of the country are nothing less than a proletarian party, as suggested by me. Permit me to clear the situation. In the first place, these workers and Peasant Parties are not Communist groups. Secondly, their programme is an elastic one so as to include all those who are interested in the welfare of labour. And thirdly, they have no peasantry affiliated to them. They are, so to speak, mere union of workers.

At the same time we must criticise the policy of the Comintern in conducting the organisation of the Workers and Peasant Parties while altogether ignoring the organisation of the Communist Party of India. This is just as absurd as to put the cart before the horse. This policy must be revised.

In conclusion I request that all these points should be clearly dealt with in the theses and a definite line of action should be drafted for the future work in India.

Comrade SCHUBIN (Soviet Union):

Comrades, I would like to pick out two questions: the question of grouping colonies and semi-colonies and the question of the characteristic of the class forces in the national revolution. First of all I will say a few words concerning the standpoint represented here by Comrades Bennett and Rothstein. But is it necessary after Comrade Bennett's yesterday's explanation to speak about this question? I think that it is. For if one sees through what stages comrades have gone who — I do not want to say represented formerly the decolonisation theory — but have nevertheless used the same arguments in defence of this theory, if one examines the whole path which the comrades have traversed, one must say that it is a path of retreat in connection with which the fundamental errors of this theory have been retained. To what length have these comrades already gone? They have gone the length of Comrade Bennet — to emphasise his standpoint — quoting, under the unanimous applause of the whole audience, Comrade Bukharin's speech in which the latter declares that the process of the industrial development of India, the process of its industrialisation, has been interrupted by British imperialism, that what is going on there at present is not the industrialisation but the pauperisation of the country.

If this is how matters stand, i. e., if Comrade Bennett means by "control of British imperialism" opposition to the industrial development of the colonies or impeding this development, and if he means by "industrialisation" not the course of the production of means of production, but merely transference of capitalist production to the colonies, — is it then worth while to argue against this whole theory? But I reiterate, in the arguments of the comrades who have defended this theory, the fundamental mistakes of the decolonisation theory, i. e., of the obliteration of the difference between the colonies and the imperialist countries, have remained intact. Let us consider the path traversed by the overt and covert adherents of "decolonisation". The first stage: decolonisation without inverted commas. It was already formulated in Roy's book "The Future of the British Policy" a book which was written, as everyone knows in 1926. Roy said then:

"What are the main demands of the nationalist bourgeoisie? They consist of three fundamental demands: industrialisation of the country, fiscal autonomy, and protective tariffs. All these demands were satisfied because British imperialism endeavoured to overcome the post-war crisis through the reorganisation of the foundation of the Empire.... Experience has shown that the economic programme of the nationalists can be carried out even if the imperialists do not introduce the drastic political reforms demanded by the petty bourgeoisie. In other words the big bourgeoisie has come to the conclusion that its economic development is possible within the framework of the imperialist policy", (retranslated from the German).

This is fundamentally all that is wanted for a decolonisation theory! Certainly, someone in the commission designated Comrade Luhani quite wrongly as the father of this theory. Perhaps Comrade Luhani was the first to coin the name for this theory, but in that case he is only the "sponsor" of the theory whereas its father is Comrade Roy.

Let us take the second stage of the development of this theory. The slogan "Industrialisation of India under British