Sidney Percival Bunting

Edward Roux

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Preface

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One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

from "Asolando" by Robert Browning
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Reversing the Kiplingesque idea that white stands for virtue and black for sin, a South African Native once said of Sidney Bunting "He has a white skin but a black heart." South Africa, land of the colour bar and racial oppression, has had its white nigrophilists−James Hooper, the Irishman who was hanged in Cape Town in 1808 for leading a slave revolt; Thomas Pringle, who became secretary of the Anti−Slavery Society; Johan van der Kemp, who shocked even his fellow missionaries by marrying a coloured slave: woman; John Philip, missionary, philanthropist and political wire−puller, whose name is still anathema to South African upholders of the Voortrekker tradition; the Schreiners; Bishop Colenso; and many more. South African history is full of them.

Sidney Percival Bunting was a nigrophilist of modern type, a communist and agitator, whose aim was to organise revolt of the blacks rather than to plead their cause in the halls of the mighty. He had more in common with a James Hooper than a John Philip. He was better known in the location than in the drawing room. There is some danger that his life story may be forgotten. I have tried to give same account of his work and character as far as

they are known to me. I write from personal knowledge of only the last twenty years of his life. He was 63 years old when he died. He seldom spoke about himself and it has not been easy to fill in the details of his earlier career. For such information as I have been able to collect about his early days in the labour and socialist movement I am indebted largely to his widow, Mrs Rebecca Bunting, to Colonel F. H. P. Creswell, to Mr F. A. W. Lucas, K.C., to Mr Charles Mussared, to my father, and to Mr S. A. Rachlin, always a mine of information on such matters. I also wish to thank Mr Issy Diamond, Mr Bennie Weinbren, and a number of other friends in Johannesburg, who have helped materially, in seeing this book through the press.

The circulation of the manuscript among a number of persons who had known Sidney Bunting, and who had played some part in the events recorded, resulted in a controversy as to whether it should be published. Some members and sympathisers of the Communist Party felt that it would do harm to that organisation and urged that it should not appear, or at least should be re−written in such a form as not to cause offence. Others, including a leading official of the Party, were equally emphatic that it would not harm the Left movement and urged that a knowledge of the Party's past, including mistakes and shortcomings, was essential to a correct understanding of the movement. "It is necessary," they said, "to learn from the mistakes of the past." My own opinion is that the book should appear, because there should be an account of Bunting's life and no one else is likely to write one, while I have been in a unique position to do so. As for re−writing the manuscript so as not to offend anybody, that seemed to me an impossible task.

The book is mainly an unvarnished record of the facts, and Bunting wrote so much that I am able to give his story largely in his own words. I have not refrained from commenting on certain matters− nor have I been able to avoid bringing my own affairs into the narrative to some extent. Some orthodox communists may quarrel with this book, and opponents of the Left may imagine that it provides confirmation of their views. To the former I would suggest−that no true revolutionary can afford to be ignorant of the history of his party, and that here he may find valuable information on how NOT to conduct political affairs. To the latter I would say that the Communist Party in South Africa is still the only political organisation of any consequence in this country which fights in season and out for the political, social and economic emancipation of all the people in South Africa. That is a virtue which should weigh more with liberal−minded and intelligent people than any present shortcomings or sins of the past.

The Bolshevik movement has demanded and obtained from its servants a peculiar and extreme form of loyalty. It has demanded and obtained from deviators even when condemned to death, confessions which hove puzzled and amazed the world. The force which made Soviet Russia a first−class fighting power, which broke the Nazi armies before Stalingrad and is now clearing them from Soviet soil, is based on a degree of unity almost unbelievably thorough. The means by which this unity was achieved may have shocked some of us; but, in Russia at any rate, their ultimate efficiency cannot be called in question. Sidney Bunting was an Englishman whose loyalty to Bolshevism was proof against denunciation and expulsion. In this he was a true follower of the Bolshevik tradition.

In fairness to Mrs. Bunting I must state that she does not agree with much that I have written both as to the character of her husband and with regard to the Communist International and its role in South African affairs. Readers will understand that my comments, such as they are, are my own responsibility.

This book is offered as a tribute to the memory of a great man whose contribution to the cause of racial freedom in South Africa was unique.

EDWARD ROUX Cape Town. 1943

Chapter 1. NON−CONFORMIST BACKGROUND

Many of the Englishmen who came to fight in the Boer War remained to play their part in South African affairs when the war was over. Among these was a young man of 27, Sidney Percival Bunting. He arrived in South Africa in 1900. Three years earlier he had won the Chancellor's Prize, for classical languages, at the University of Oxford.

Bunting came of a distinguished family of Wesleyan churchmen. His great−grandfather, Jabez Bunting, was born in Manchester in 1779, the son of a Methodist tailor. At the age of 19 he began to preach, became a full fledged Wesleyan minister at 24 and before long was well on his way to becoming the acknowledged leader of the Wesleyans in England. There is a life of Jabez Bunting written by his second son, Thomas Percival Bunting. There were to have been two volumes, but only the first was published. An interesting light on Jabez's character i6 found in a memorandum written by him in 1803 when he was contemplating marriage. He lists the virtues and shortcomings of the young woman in whom he was interested. He is not sure that her piety i6 deep, though he thinks it sincere. She has only recently become a Methodist, having been brought up a Calvinist (Presbyterian), and she has not yet completely broken with Calvinistic views and expressions. Her dress is too gay and costly and worldly. But she would probably promise to make the necessary amendment, " On proper representation." On the whole, he decides that his judgement now speaks the same language which his affection has suggested. " And I feel my mind at liberty " he concludes, " yea, I trust, Divinely led and inclined to take the first opportunity of professing my attachment and soliciting a favourable answer. Whatever be the event of this intended application, O Lord, my God, my Father, my Friend, prepare me for it, and sanctify it to my present and eternal good."

The rigid Puritanism of the Wesleyan wag combined with a feeling of sacrifice and struggle, the struggle of a persecuted but completely justified minority against the powers of privilege and authority. Jabez as a boy at Manchester Grammar School suffered from the taunts of his fellows when they found he was the son of a Methodist tailor− a double gibe this, reflecting both on his religion and his social status. In 1803 (according to a note in Jabez's diary) Methodist soldiers in the army were still being persecuted "for attending Methodist preaching," when not on duty. At Gibraltar two received 200 lashes and another of the brethren was under sentence of 500 lashes. It was not foreign to the Bunting tradition to be associated with unpopular causes.

William Maclardie Bunting, the eldest son of Jabez, also became a Wesleyan minister. The second son, Thomas P. Bunting, was a scholar and a musician. Thomas's son, Percy William, was born in 1836. of him quite a lot has been recorded. He founded the contemporary Review in l882 and was its first editor He was knighted in 1908. From the notices which appeared at the time of his death in 1911 we can gather that he was " a man of deep aesthetic sensibility, a musician of no small order. The artistic world claimed him for its own. He took refuge from the trials and disappointments of life in the works of the great composers. Yet with aesthetic sensibilities he united enthusiasm in behalf of moral purity. He ever stood by the side of those who sought to rescue women from shame and men from yet more shameful vies. Up to the time of his death he was chairman of the National Vigilance Association, and gave the closest attention to its work. He freely risked his reputation and professional interests in this cause. Again, Sir Percy Bunting was a man of thought. He freely entertained every conception that claimed his attention, although he might not finally adopt it." 1

The journalist W. T. Stead said that Percy Bunting was " one of the soundest of Liberals and most simply sincere of Christians." His interest in music is testified to by an anonymous writer who also gives us some idea of the earlier environment of his children." No one knew Sir Percy Bunting well who did not know how large an element music formed in his life. A gift inherited in his family was well cultivated in him. When at Cambridge he was recognised by Sterndale Bennett as one of his right hand men in forming the Bach Society there

His older friends will never forget the music they first heard him play on the piano, and he was unsurpassed as an accompanist of choral or solo singing. As his children grew up many were the hours he spent with them as they

performed the best chamber music together...."

It was in the great cause of down−trodden womanhood he went travelling in company with a small band of English people, Mrs Josephine Butler's movement led Mr and Mrs Bunting in the earliest stages of their married life into many a circle abroad, to which the unpopularity of their cause−the very mention of which was considered shameful−attracted only people of the highest principle. Congresses and conferences took places in Geneva, Berne, Genoa, Antwerp, Brussels, The Hague, Stockholm. . . The Bunting children have vivid recollections of holidays abroad in their 'teens, which wound up with their parents' attendance at meetings in some foreign town, whilst they went sight−seeing as well they might, and received kindly notice from some of the best people they ever hoped to meet."

Sidney Percival Bunting, was born in London in 1873. He was one of four children−two girls and two boys. His mother, who must have been a powerful influence in moulding his character, was, before her marriage, Mary Hyett Lidgett. She died in 1919. From a booklet, Lady Bunting−In Memoriam, which was written by a group of her friends, we get an intimate picture of the sort of environment in which S. P. Bunting grew up.

Mary Lidgett also came of Methodist stock. " Her father was a man of strong character and sturdy piety. AB a young man he had found peace−in (God among the Methodists of Hull." At quite an early age she became interested in politics. The first political movement to claim her attention was the Italian struggle for freedom. Her early heroes were Mazzini and Garibaldi As a young woman she went travelling in Italy, and it was in Switzerland that she first met Percy Bunting.

Mrs. Bunting's "parlour" in London was a rendezvous for political refugees of all sorts, and for representatives of other unpopular causes. There you might meet Russians; Armenians, Poles and Italians, as well as American abolitionists, Korean nationalists, Chinese, Indians, English suffragettes, and many more. She met Booker T. Washington when he was in England, and other Negro Americans. Once the great Mr Gladstone him self came to dinner.

But it was not only the exotic and romantic cause which claimed Lady Bunting's attention. Her main interest and work was among the−poor in London. She was a constant visitor to workhouses, and she organised a society for servant girls. Though described as " unconventional " in her attitude to religion, she was strongly motivated by religious sentiments. She played a leading part in the movement for the reform of the London music halls, where, it was said, drink was sold on the premises and salacious songs were sung. She herself visited the music halls to obtain confirmation of this. She was a regular attendant at church, and continued to go (to the Presbyterian Church at Regent Square) even after she grew old and deaf and was no longer able to hear the sermon.

Young Sidney Bunting was educated at St Paul's School and afterwards went to Magdalene college, 0xford I have been able to obtain very little information concerning his character and interests at this period. Professor Freemantle, who once taught at Cape Town and who was a contemporary of his at Oxford, told me the following. Bunting, he said was a brilliant classical scholar, not only remarkable in his year, but one of the most brilliant known−at Oxford. Winning the chancellor's prize (in 1897) was child's play to him. His great ambition however was to study philosophy. But at philosophy he proved an abject failure, being quite unable to satisfy his examiners. His was an empirical type of mind. Formal logic and metaphysical systems he found muddling and unreal. perhaps we can trace in this fact the aversion he showed towards the more abstruse aspects of the Marxism he afterwards came to profess. I remember him in later life confessing that he could not manage to read ; Das Kapital. The Communist Manifesto however with its violent denunciation of the bourgeoisie, its call to the workers of the world to unite, appealed to him. " This is the sort of thing we want to study," he said, " not all this high−flown stuff about theory of value and dialectics. I once had to read Hegel at college but it did not appeal to me."

There were two influences in Bunting's university days of which we can be reasonably certain, influences which contributed to his adult outlook, though we cannot say that they alone formed his character; One of these was the music of Beethoven; the other the poetry of Robert Browning. It has been said that the poetry which means most to us is that which we read in our youth. Quotations from Browning figured prominent]y in Bunting's writings. The Bible; the classics' and Browning−these were the main sources from which he draw his numerous illusions and metaphors. But from Browning he got more than mere literary phrases to point a moral or adorn a tale.

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Fear Death?−to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote I am nearing the place ....
No I let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers The heroes of old . . . 2
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The influence of Beethoven was probably more subtle but just as strong, and led in the same direction. Romantic heroism, fighting for a cause, pursuing a major theme through the intricacies: of life−the mind of that youthful Bunting must have been full of such ideas. But at that time he had not as yet found a cause to fight for.

Chapter 2. South Africa and the Labour Party

Sidney Bunting came to South Africa on military service in 1900. What he thought at that time of the rights and wrongs of the Boer War I do not know. It is probable however that he believed in the civilising mission of the British Empire. He was not the man to fight in a cause he did not think right.

When the war was over he decided to remain in South Africa. He worked for a firm of lawyers in Cape Town and took his degree of Bachelor of Laws at the South African College. Afterwards he went to Johannesburg and worked in the legal profession there. At this time he must have been in moderately good circumstances.

Early in the Nineteenth Century a relation of Bunting's mother, a seafaring man by the name of Captain Lidgett, brought a group of settlers out to Natal. They were granted some land at a place subsequently called Lidgetton, near Maritzburg. Most of the settlers failed to make good and the land lay idle until about 1904, when the family in England decided to plant it under wattle. John Lidgett, Bunting's cousin who was then resident in Johannesburg, was made manager of the new venture. The whole family bought shares to finance this wattle plantation. Bunting also took a few shares in it, not many, and was made director at a salary of 100 pounds a year.

He still retained a great interest in music and assisted in founding the Johannesburg Musical Society in 1902. He became well known as a musical critic, and wrote in this capacity for the newspapers. He played both the piano and the viola. It was curious to see this man, with his huge hands, playing the piano with such a delicate touch. One wondered how those thick fingers could fit between the keys. It was because of the same enormous fingers that he preferred the viola to the violin. As a pianist he was, like his father, chiefly known as a sympathetic and efficient accompanist.

For the next few years music seems to have claimed most of his attention. About 1905 or 1906 he was often to be met at the Wyberghs'. They were cultured people, interested in music and ideas. Some years later Wybergh was the editor of the Labour Party's weekly newspaper, but in 1906 he had not yet become a socialist. Bunting's interest in politics may have been stimulated by Wybergh's growing absorption in the subject. Johannesburg has always been a centre of violent political activity. In those days memories of the Reform Movement and the Jameson Raid were still strong.

In I905 the question of a labour supply for the Witwatersrand gold mines became a burning issue. The war had been fought largely in the interests of the mine owners. Now that the Kruger government was gone and the Transvaal was in the hands of a government sympathetic to the claims of high finance, the wines looked forward to an era of prosperity. But without adequate supplies of cheap labour there could be no future for the

Witwatersrand Native labour could be got, but only in inadequate quantities. The highly developed indentured labour system, with its accompanying labour tax on all adult Natives in South Africa, with its control over the Protectorates and its elaborate network of recruiting agents, was yet: to come; (Rhodes had shown the way with his Glen Grey Act in the Cape ten years before.) The mine owners conceived the idea of importing indentured Chinese labourers from Hong Kong. In spite of opposition they went forward with the scheme and by the beginning of 1906 there wore 50,000 Chinese coolies working on the mines.

The opposition came from various quarters, from the newly formed Labour Party, and particularly from the White Labour Policy Association. The latter was led by F. H. I'. Creswell and Peter Whiteside. Creswell had been an engineer in the employ of the mines. He had tried to persuade the mine owners to use white labour for unskilled and semi skilled work. White skilled labour there was in plenty. The new scheme involved the employment of whites as unskilled workers new idea in South Africa. It was not, as Creswell has stated emphatically, a proposal to run the mines with white labour only, but to use what ever labour was available, whether white or black. After the Boer War there were large numbers of unemployed Europeans in South Africa.

Creswell believed that his scheme would work, but the mine owners did not support him; They decided to import the Chinese. Creswell resigned his job and entered the political arena. When the first elections for the Transvaal Parliament were held, in March, 1907, Creswell stood as an independent but was defeated by 39 votes.

Bunting's sympathies appear to have been with the mine owners. Both he and Creswell were members of the Atheneum Club. When the news of the election results came through, Bunting was overheard in the club saying, " Well, Creswell is defeated. That's one good thing."

The election victory of the Liberals in Britain in 15306 led to the settlement of the " Chinese question." By the end of 1907 the bulk of the Chinese had been repatriated. But the South African Labour Party remained a " white labour " party. This in spite of the fact that white workers were outnumbered by black workers in South Africa by more than four to one.

In 1908 Bunting went on a visit to England. In that year his father was knighted, and he may have gone to take part in the celebrations. On the boat on his way back he met members of the Australian cricket team, returning via the Cape after a tour in England. With them he discussed the white labour policy, by this time firmly established in Australia. Back in Johannesburg, he confided to Creswell, "There may be something in this white labour policy of yours."

He always appeared to give in grudgingly. And yet he felt he had to " come out with it " when he changed his mind. " I have never known anyone," said Creswell, " who believed so firmly in doing what he thought was right regardless of consequences.

"A report in the Johannesburg star for October 4, 1909, announced the formation of a "White Expansion Society " whose object was to "promote the improvement of present conditions and the rapid expansion of 8 permanent European population, both agricultural and industrial, in South Africa." Patrick Duncan was president and S. P. Bunting honorary secretary.

." From what we know of his ancestors, this seems to have been in the Bunting tradition. Once he had accepted in theory the correctness of Creswell's position he had to do something about it. And so in 1910 during the first elections for the Union Parliament, when Creswell stood, this time as a Labour candidate in the Jeppestown constituency, Bunting came forward to help him. He closed his lawyer's office for a month and flung himself heart and soul into the fray. " Without him," said Creswell, "I should probably have lost the fight." Bunting had not yet joined the Labour Party, but he was evidently thinking about it In September 1910 he said gruffly to Creswell, ' Might as well join the Labour Party. Won't do any harm." Bunting had a peculiar voice, a sort of modulated bark with a distinct flavour of Oxford.

So he joined the Labour Party and from that day his life was given to politics.

But he had some way to go before he became a convinced revolutionary. Charles B. Mussared, who knew him at this time, says that Bunting was then still more of a liberal than a socialist. Mussared, who was working on the mines and who had taken an active part in the trade union movement on the Rand since 1903, had started a fund for the Tonypandy strikers in South Wales. Bunting came and helped. They raised a lot of money from the trade unions. According to Mussared this helped to give Bunting a better idea of the sufferings of the working class. His sympathies became more definitely proletarian.

In 1913 came the strike of the Rand gold miners, with riots and shootings−the " July Strike," as it came to be called. It gave to the young labour movement its first crop of martyrs. It roused passions. It started the wave of Labour expansion which went on with gathering force till it crashed on the rocks of divided doctrine with the outbreak of the Great War in August, 1914. The strike had been brewing for some time. It began with a dispute−on the New Kleinfontein mine on the East Rand, where wages had been reduced; but within a few days it became a general strike involving the railways, the trams and almost the entire industry on the gold reef.

A mass meeting on the Johannesburg market square was dispersed by mounted police armed with pick−handles. The crowds then rioted, burning down the central railway station and the Star newspaper offices. They then surged towards the Corner House (headquarters of the Chamber of Mines) and the Rand Club (chief rendezvous of the mining magnates). Here a British dragoon regiment opened fire, killing some dozens of people and wounding many others. But the Government had few troops or police at its disposal and the strike ended in a truce in terms of which the workers' representatives called the strike off and the Government guaranteed that there would be no victimisation, while undertaking to inquire into the grievances of the men.

Of Bunting's views on the July Strike we can be left in no doubt; An article from his pen appeared in the Worker of July 10. I have Bunting's file of the Worker, and though the article in question is not signed, it has been re edited in his hand writing, apparently for publication elsewhere. In any case there can be no mistaking Bunting's style. He begins by saying that it is not his intention to copy the Rand dailies by refraining from comment for fear of inflaming public opinion. Nothing that he could say would inflame public opinion more than it was inflamed already. Never (he goes on) in the history of industrial warfare had the response to the call for strike action been so complete or ranged through so many industries. No stirring orations, like Henry the Fifth's before Agincourt, were required. The volunteer movement when Napoleon threatened England from Boulogne was not more eagerly taken up. (Bunting often interspersed his newspaper articles with historical and sometimes classical allusions.) The whole industry . of the Rand was brought with comparatively little effort to a standstill. Starting on the East Rand the centre of gravity moved, as the strike became general, to the centre of Johannesburg. The mining magnates saw the thing at their very door. The " mob," on whom for weeks the parasites of the town clubs 3 had been praying for a chance of turning maxims and cold steel, were concentrating into a confined area, to air their grievances and to be butchered to make a Rand Club holiday. The workers were holding a big meeting on the market square. They were ordered to disperse, but before they could do so the troops came, horse and foot, armed to the teeth.− A brutal charge was made and many were injured. The crowd then marched to the station to find more armed men awaiting them there. These however were soon overpowered, though at the cost of more casualties (none fatal), and the trains were stopped.

The burning and looting of part of the station (Bunting writes) was practically the only serious piece of comparatively pointless and ill−directed " hooliganism " that occurred. The rest of the so called " outrages," such as the burning of the offices of the Star newspaper had abundant explanation or pro vocation behind them. And those who demonstrated before the Rand Club building were not far wrong in looking upon it as the shrine and temple of the "upper class consciousness" against which they were out to protest and fight.

Bunting goes on to describe the subsequent shootings, the negotiations between the strike committee and the Government, and the peace settlement. He concludes the article: "And so ended the first act of South Africa's

working class revolution, whose end is not yet."

The man who wrote this account had changed his ideas rather radically since he arrived in South Africa thirteen years before.

The July strike was only the beginning of a battle between the white miners and the Chamber "which went on at intervals for a dozen years or so. The workers had won a partial victory. but the−Government (with Smuts and Botha in the saddle) and the Chamber of Mines were not willing to let it go at that. Both sides prepared for the next round. Bunting was in the thick of it.

At the end of July he became secretary of the Trades Hall Society, a part−time occupation−he still kept his legal practice going. By December 1913 he was already campaigning in Bezuidenhout Valley as official Labour candidate in the provincial council elections due early the following year.

The next major clash on the industrial field came sooner than most people expected. It stated with a strike of the railwaymen, who were government servants, in the second week in January, 1914. Again there was the threat of a general strike on the Rand, with the miners coming in also. But Smuts and Botha were prepared and immediately the Government took drastic action. Poutsma, the railwaymen's leader, was arrested, it was said, on a trumped−up charge. This was followed by a declaration of martial law before the strike leaders could act. Secretly the Government arrested nine of the leading trade unionists, sent them by express train to Durban and placed them on the steamship Umgeni for deportation to England. The subsequent events are well known−the storm of indignation against the Government when the public realised what had happened, the efforts of the strikers and their friends to secure a writ of habeas corpus declaring the deportations illegal, the unsuccessful attempt by Lucas and Creswell to board a tug and intercept the Umgeni when it passed Cape Town on its way to England, the stormy debate in Parliament when Smuts asked for and received a vote of indemnification, and the tremendous labour meetings which welcomed the deportees when they arrived in London.

During these exciting times Bunting was in and out of the Labour Party's office in Johannesburg all day long. He and F. A. W. Lucas acted as legal advisers to the Labour Party.

Smuts and Botha smashed the strike. But it was done at the cost of their popularity in the country. The Labour Party grew by leaps and bounds. . In the Transvaal provincial elections in March, 1914, the Labour Party secured a majority of one. Bunting was returned for Bezuidenhout Valley with a substantial majority.

It was during this election campaign that I first saw Bunting. My father, Philip Roux, was the secretary of the Bezuidenhout Valley−branch of the Labour Party and his druggist's store was a centre of political activity.

I remember going with my father to here Bunting speak at an election meeting in the southern part of the valley. It was the first political meeting ever held in that part of the constituency. A crowd of a hundred or so gathered in the dark on an empty plot and listened to the speakers who spoke from an empty box lighted with a solitary lantern. I was only ten years old at the time and my recollections of what was said at that meeting are scanty. Nor could I see the speakers clearly. I remember the chairman saying that perhaps Mr Bunting was not well known as yet to most of the audience, but he described the speaker as a coming man in the Labour movement and one whom his listeners should get to know.

Up to this time Bunting's political activities had been largely behind the scenes. He was not a good speaker. I remember my mother saying that Bunting was " difficult to listen to."

The chief achievement of the Labour majority in that provincial council−the second after Union−was the extension of free secondary education to all European children in the Transvaal It also introduced for the first time a measure for the rating of site values.

About this time Bunting showed an increased interest in the Afrikaans speaking (Dutch or Boer) workers. He realised that a labour movement which confined its attention to the largely English speaking aristocracy of labour was not likely to become a really effective popular party. It should also work among the Afrikaans speaking country folk, the plattelanders. It was the commandos from the backveld who had proved the Government's main support during the period of martial law in January. During his election campaign Bunting had held meetings in the more rural parts of his constituency where he had come into contact with Afrikaner audiences. He decided to learn Dutch (probably Hollands) and lived for a time with the Rev Brandt's family. As yet there is no hint of any special interest in the real underdog in South Africa−the black man.

During the first half of 1914 it seemed that the South African Labour Party had a great future.

Its membership was growing rapidly; branches were being formed all over the country. Parliamentary by−elections in industrial areas had gone in its favour. It had captured the Transvaal Provincial Council. It had the support of the great majority of English speaking workers, and it was becoming increasingly popular with the middle classes. The Dutchmen too were coming in, though here there was competition with the new Nationalist Afrikaner opposition led by General Hertzog, who had broken away from Botha and Smuts.

But this spectacular growth of the Labour Party came to a sudden halt in August, 1914, with the outbreak of the first world war. The South African Labour Party was split−as were almost all labour and socialist parties throughout the world−into pro−war and anti−war sections. With a pro−war majority all hope was lost of winning the Dutch workers, who went over to Hertzog more any more. With war−fever growing, the Labour Party could not hope to compete with the out and out jingo parties. The general election of 1915, which, had there been no war, might have resulted in Labour becoming the strongest group in Parliament, found the party divided and weakened. Its chance of winning a majority of the white workers in South Africa seemed to be lost for ever.

For Bunting the outbreak of war marked a further significant development in his political outlook.

Chapter 3. War on War

To the members of the South African Labour Party, as to many people in that Victorian world, the war came like a bolt from the blue. To fig}it for one's country, or to oppose the war: these were the alternatives. There was great confusion among the leaders of the party. Some few on either side took a definite stand from the very start. Creswell, the leader of the Party, immediately offered his support to the Government for " seeing the war through," as he put it. He was followed by his half−dozen fellow labourites in Parliament, the only exception being W. H. Andrews, who however did not come out against the war till some months later.

Wybergh, who at this time was editing the Worker, was also pro−war. He had a leading article on August 6 calling on every worker to support the Government. " When a trade union is engaged in a struggle," he wrote, "it is the right and duty of every man to use his own intelligence in deciding whether or not the terrible necessity for a strike has arisen. But once a strike has been declared it is the duty of every man, whether he up proves or not, to take his share in the work and the risks involved. If he does not he is rightly called a scab, even if he doesn't belong to the union at all.... In the same way the man who, When his country is at war, refuses to do his duty is a scab and deserves the contempt of all." In the next issue The Worker published a letter from my father asking that his name be put at the head of the Worker scab list, because he "refused to murder another man with whom he had no quarrel." Other members of the Party w−ere equally emphatic in their opposition to the war, among them Colin Wade, member for Germiston in the Provincial Council, and David Ivon Jones, the secretary− of the Party.

Bunting was not among those w ho had their opinions all ready formed on August 4. It was said of him that he always took some time to make up his mind; but when he had formed an opinion wild horses would not tear him from it. My father recalls a meeting between himself, Bunting and some other members of the Party which took

place in his shop a few days after the war was declared. Bunting, he says, did not know where he stood. He was looking for advice. A few days later, however, he had decided that he could not support the war. Creswell, returning from the Parliamentary session at Cape Town about the middle of August, found Bunting definitely anti−war. At that time Bunting was sharing a house with the Wyberghs. It was an old wooden bungalow in the northern suburbs on a hill overlooking Orange Grove, and built during the Boer War as officers' quarters. On the wide verandah Creswell and Bunting sat and argued. Bunting held that if everyone could refuse to fight there could be no war, and therefore it was everyone's duty to refuse to fight. Creswell could not agree with this. " If you are attacked, you have got to fight," he said.

Now that Bunting had decided on the moral aspect of the question, it was, as always, necessary for him to do something about it. Merely to be anti−war was not enough; one had to act anti−war. And so you find him among the group of left wingers who founded the War on War League in September, 1914. They made him treasurer.

The War on War League did not come to be a political party. The majority of its leading members were also members of the Labour Party and endeavoured for a time to remain there.

There was an anti−war majority at the Labour Party's annual conference held in East London in January, 1915. But the anti war section did not force the issue and left it to individual members to do as they pleased.

A curious situation arose ill the Transvaal Provincial Council where the Labour caucus was divided on the war issue, at least seven of the twenty Labour members being anti−war. " There, when a Unionist, in the obvious hope of exposure and emphasising a Labour split, forced the war debate .... the Labour men accepted the challenge with equanimity; and having expressed their divergent views without reserve, they proceeded to the next business, continued to pass the measures they were elected to pass, and voted solid as before." 4

As war fever mounted, the pressure on the Labour Party to rescind the East London decision grew rapidly. A special conference w as held in Johannesburg on August 22. By 82 votes to 30 the delegates decided " to support the Imperial Government wholeheartedly in the prosecution of the war. " In a short time all avowed anti−war members had either resigned or been expelled.

By this time the members of the War on War League felt that that organisation had served its purpose. What was wanted was a political party to preach the doctrines of international socialism. An " International Socialist League of South Africa" was therefore formed and the first issue of the new weekly paper, the International, appeared on September 10. The Chairman of tile new organisation was W. H. Andrews (previously chairman of the Labour Party); the vice−chairman were J. A. Clark and A. F. Crisp, both members of the Transvaal Provincial Council; G. Weinstock, formerly treasurer of the Labour Party, was treasurer; and the secretary, David Ivon Jones, had been the Labour Party's secretary.

Bunting, of course, was a foundation member of the I.S.L. In the third d issue of the International appeared an article of his headed " A World to Win." His outlook had developed. since he spoke to Creswell at the bungalow a year before. "By itself mere Internationalism, beaming at every foreigner, cuts as little ice as mere anti−war pacifism at any price. Your genteel Peace Societies, your Y.M.C.A.'s, your boosting of Teuton music or chemistry or of English sport, have been tinkling cymbals. The only `war on warites' who have proved worth taking into account are Socialists; and the only Internationalism with anybody in it, events have shown, is International Socialism. Not negative opposition to war or to national pride, not even the mere denial that the British workers had any quarrel with the German workers, but the positive common Cause, the thing worth fighting side by side for, is what makes things go "

Bunting was always condemning his own past. The things in Which he once believed he came to doubt, then to disbelieve and then to attack bitterly. The British jingo, the pious Christian pacifist, the member of an exclusive club, the mere "Labourite"; all these he had been (or imagined he had been), and all these he attacked in turn.

When he wrote it was as though he were arguing with his previous Belt, repeating the old ideas and demolishing them one after the other. Here was the Non−Conformist conscience: the devil was within as well as without, and had to be suppressed ruthlessly.

Chapter 4. Approach to the African

It was often difficult for European radicals to understand the attitude of the South African labour movement to the black man. To Socialists in England it would seem that a labour movement in a colonial country should be primarily concerned with the vast mass of socially−oppressed and economically exploited Natives. The South African Labour Party, in spite of its constitution, was not a socialist or even a labour movement at all in the true sense of the word. It was essentially a political party of an aristocracy of lab our trying to maintain a remarkably high standard of living in the face of competition from the low paid masses of Native Africans. The South African tradition (except in the western Cape, where artisans were originally coloured slaves) was that skilled work was reserved for whites and all unskilled labour was done by blacks. The Labour Party sought to maintain this tradition. It was concerned in preventing any encroachment by Africans on the traditional spheres of skilled labour and in maintaining and improving white wages and conditions. Such an attitude is quite understandable in a world where organised groups arise almost automatically to protect vested interests. What is not so easy to Understand is tune liberal intellectuals from Europe should come to South Africa, join the South African Labour movement and accept without question the traditional white labour attitude towards the black worker.

Sidney Bunting was ten years in South Africa before he joined the Labour party. It was five more years before he developed an interest in the black workers. On the face of it it seems a strangely slow development; and yet it was much more rapid than that of many other South African " socialists,' who continued to regard the black people, if not with antagonism , at least with a feeling of complete indifference.

That Bunting ended in the nigrophilist camp was perhaps inevitable in a man of his character. He had joined the Labour Party because he sensed the grievances of the white workers and admired their struggle against a powerful Chamber of Mines. The July strike had filled him with bitterness against a ruling class and its government, which did not scruple to shoot men down and to imprison and deport without trial He had accepted the idea of a working class revolution as the great goal of humanity. He had seen the necessity of bringing in the Dutchman. When the war broke out he had accepted the logic of his position as a socialist: his loyalty was to the working class not to any national government. Now the logic of events had made him a leader of a group of international socialists. As an international socialist he could not but realise that the main social fact in South Africa was the subjugation of a black majority by a white minority. The slogan of his Party was "Workers of the world, Unite !" That could mean nothing else than that white and black workers must unite together. It meant that a socialist must preach inter racial working class unity. And more than that. For Bunting it came to mean that a white socialist, regardless of consequences, must go out into the highways and byways and help the black workers to organise for freedom.

It was, I believe, some time in 1915 that Bunting came to this decision. There were some in the I.S.L. who agreed with him; there were many who in fact did not. They were willing to admit, in theory perhaps, that the black workers were the most exploited section of the community. But it was quite another thing to court the persecution of the authorities and the hostility of the bulk of the white workers which would inevitably follow if Bunting had his way. And so there began a struggle in South African socialist ranks−a struggle between those who believed that the black worker should be the prime factor in the socialist movement and those who believed otherwise. This struggle has taken many forms. It was not concluded in Bunting's time; it goes on to this day.

Among those who were prominently associated with Bunting in the inner−party struggle for the recognition of the black worker was David Ivon Jones. He was an interesting character who to−day has been largely forgotten, a consumptive who came to South Africa for his health, a man full of dynamic spiritual energy, a good linguist. I have mentioned him as secretary of the Labour Party and as one who broke with the official leadership on the war

issue. Whether it was Jones or Bunting or both together who started the nigrophilist campaign in the I.S.L. I have not been able to ascertain. Jones, writing on October 1, 1915, on the " Parting of the Ways," said: " An Internationalism which does not concede the fullest rights which the Native working class is capable of claiming will be a sham. One of the justifications for our withdrawal from the Labour party is that it gives us untrammeled freedom to deal, regardless of political fortunes, with the great and fascinating problem of the Native. "

The I.S.L. put up two candidates for the Parliamentary elections in 1915: J. A. Clark and W. H. Andrews. Andrews stood for the constituency which had returned him some years before. But Clark and Andrews together got only 140 votes. It was a " Khaki election "; the Labour Party also lost seats; Creswell, in spite of his " See It Through " policy was defeated in Bezuidenhout Valley by thirteen votes. Andrews retired for the time from professional politics. He went " back to the bench," getting employment in an engineering shop in Durban.

Meanwhile the anti−war activities of the League were rousing the resentment of the authorities and there began a series of legal prosecutions of leading socialists. In the first of these, Bunting, Dunbar and Jones were arrested, because of speeches made at a public meeting. In those days there were no " war emergency regulations " and mere opposition to the war was not a criminal of fence. The prosecution found it impossible to frame a charge. Cramer, the public prosecutor, had a most unpleasant task to perform. " I am sorry," he said, " I am not now in the position of asking for a substantial penalty. Mr Bunting may smile (as I see he is doing) as much as he likes, but I shall assure him that next time I shall press for a substantial penalty."

The I.S.L. held its first national conference in Johannesburg on January 9, 1916. Bunting came forward with a ' petition of rights " for the Native worker. His resolution read " that this League affirm that the emancipation of the working class requires the abolition of al] forms of Native indenture, Compound and passport systems; and the lifting of the Native worker to the political and industrial status of the white." This did not meet with the unanimous support of the conference. No one openly expressed race prejudice or denied that the black man was entitled to freedom. But there was an attempt to avoid a specific Native program me by asserting that there was no Native problem, only a á worker's problem." An amendment by Dunbar to this effect was lost. Colin Wade then got the last part of the motion changed to read " and the lifting of the Native wage worker to the political and industrial status of the elite; meanwhile endeavouring to prevent the increase (in numbers) of the Native wage workers, and to assist the existing Native wage workers to free themselves from the wage system." Reviewing the conference, Ivon Jones remarked in the next issue of the international: " There were some misgivings on the result of the debate on the Native question − Bunting's achievement. The misgivings arose from the inclusion of ' political rights ' in the status which Native workers should aim at. However, the motion was carried by an unmistakable majority."1

There were those in the League who thought no doubt that the conference decision On tile " Native question," theoretically correct though it might be, would remain at that, a mere ex press ion of opinion. But I have already pointed out that with Bunting pious attitudes were not enough. He started to work to get his fellow− socialists to live up to their resolution. From now on, article after article by him appears in the International, all hammering away on the Native issue. " The solidarity of labour fails the moment it is divided on colour, race or creed and the socialist philosophy fails if there are more races, colours or creeds in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in its philosophy ". (International, February 18, 1916).

But more than this. Bunting was now working to bring the black man to the movement−into the League itself. Tilts was something Which made some of his fellow socialists gasp. Bunting mentions in the article just quoted how Saul Nsane and a number of other Africans were cordially welcomed at all I.S.L. lecture class in the Johannesburg trades hall. In April George Mason, one−time deportee, now back in South Africa, was induced to give a lecture on " Trade Unions and the Native Question." Mason had been one of the few members of the trade unions anal the Labour Party u ho had urged the organisation of the African workers, and, at the Kleinfontein mine in July, l.1913, he had managed to persuade the black workers on strike with the whites. At this lecture Jones records that he usual monotone of white faces in the audience was broken in the presence of a dozen dusky

ones, representatives, more or less, of an awakening million u ho may not be ignored in the capitalist scheme, tat less in the socialist one." Two months later further new− Ground was broken when an African actually addressed all audience in the Trades Hall. He was Robert Grendon, editor of the African National Congress newspaper, Abantu Batho. In January, 1917, the socialists contested a parliamentary by election in the Johannesburg constituency of Troyeville. Colin Wade was chosen as the I.S.L. candidate and he was opposed by Creswell, who was serving with the army in German East Africa. The " capitalist party," the S.A.P., also had a candidate. Colonel Creswell, " the boy in khaki," was the popular favourite. Apart from labour support he [had] the powerful backing of the Rand Daily Mail. He topped the poll. Colin Wade scored only 32 votes, " the lowest yet recorded for I.S.L. " as −the International commented at the time. This extremely low vote was attributed not merely to the general unpopularity of the anti−war cause but also to the League's openly pro−Native policy. Wade's election manifesto contained incidental references to the slave status of the African workers and had called for industrial organisation irrespective of race, colour or creed.

Jones took comfort in the fact that the great mass of the proletariat, in which the I.S.L.,., if it were not to be utopian, must find its economic basis, was black, therefore disfranchised, and therefore not represented in the Troyeville electorate. "Whether it be 82 votes or 2 votes, this must increasingly become the political issue for us: freedom to combine and political rights for the Native worker. "

The I.S.L. was making contacts with Africans. Black men were attending their meetings periodically as listeners and sometimes even as speakers. But something more vital was needed, as both Bunting and Jones realised. In July, 1917, they started what were described as " a series of gatherings of Natives to study the working class movement. " These soon resulted in the formation of a black workers' union. The idea was to develop it on the lines of the American I.W.W. as an " all−in union" for unskilled labourers When asked what they wanted, the Africans had replied " Sifuna zonke " (We want everything), and this was taken as the motto of the new organisation, which they decided to call the Industrial Workers of Africa. Socialist leaflets began to appear in Zulu and Sotho.

The fact that while socialists w ere beginning to take an active interest in the black workers did not go unnoticed by the authorities. Members of the Government including Botha, The prime minister, began to make speeches denouncing the white men. who were fomenting unrest all long the blacks. It was said that the Government had detectives on their track but it was necessary also that public (i.e. white) opinion should be aroused.

There was considerable development of Native African politics at that time, by no means all of it due to the handful of white socialists in Johannesburg, though they Undoubtedly did all they could to help it. In February, 1918, there was a boycott of the concession stores on the mines, ascribed by the Rand Daily Mail to the " sinister influence of socialists and pacifists." It was also hinted that German gold was subsidising the movement. Questions were asked in Parliament and Botha answered that the Attorney−General was deciding whether criminal proceedings should be taken.

In June, 1918, the so−called " bucket strike " broke out. Those were the days before water−borne sewerage became general in the " Golden City." African sanitary workers, feeling the pinch of the rising cost of living and inspired no doubt by a successful strike of the white municipal workers, " downed buckets" and demanded sixpence (other reports said one shilling) a day more. The authorities drafted in Native police as scabs. But there were not enough of these to do more than attend to schools, hospitals and the like: private residences had to be neglected. The strikers numbering 152 were arrested and sentenced to two months' imprisonment under the Master and Servants Act. The Chief magistrate, Macfie, addressing the bucket carriers after sentence had been passed said: "While in gaol they would nave to do the same work as they had been doing, and would carry out that employment with an armed escort, including a guard of Zulus armed with assegais and white men with guns. If they attempted to escape and if it were necessary, they would be shot down. If they refused to obey orders they would receive lashes as often as might be necessary to make them understand they had to do what they were told."− Cape Argus, 11/6/18.

The authorities then took action against those Whom they Considered to be the instigators of the strike. Five Africans (leaders of the African National Congress and three Europeans (members of the I.S.L.) were arrested and charged with incitement to violence. Their names were J. D. Ngojo, A. Cetyiwe, H. Kraai, D. Letanka, L. T. Mvabaza, S. P. Bunting, H.C.Hanscombe, and T.P.Tinker The preliminary examination in the magistrate's court on a charge of incitement to violence attracted great attention and the occasion w as used by the socialists to 'put over" to the general public as much propaganda as possible. This was the sort of occasion in which Bunting delighted, and here his legal knowledge stood him in good stead. The Crown tried to show not only that the socialists, working through the Industrial Workers of Africa, were the chief cause of the " bucket strike " and a strike of Native miners which followed it, but that they were responsible for a dozen other happenings all over the Witwatersrand where Africans had gone on strike or rioted in protest against passes and other wrongs. The accused had no difficulty in showing that they had played no direct role in any of the strikes or riots; in fact their first knowledge of the "bucket strike" was a report in the press. They were concerned in propagating the doctrines of socialism and industrial unionism. They believed in strike action but only When it was prepared by adequate trade union organisation. They had considered that the Natives were not well enough organised for strike action and had advised accordingly. .As the case proceeded the public prosecutor looked more and more foolish, and, though the accused were committed for trial, the Attorney−General refused to prosecute and the charges were withdrawn.

In the course of the proceedings it came out that the Criminal Investigation Department had sent a large number of black detectives to join the I.W.A. One of them had actually become secretary. Tile charge against the socialists was based chiefly on the affidavit of an African detective, Luke Messina, who as a result of the trial was charged with perjury and confessed that he had made a false affidavit against Bunting at the instance of the authorities. (International, 26/9/19.)

One of the results of the I.S.L.'s interest in Africans was the expulsion of the socialists from their offices in the Johannesburg 'Trades Hall (in November, 1917). This was preceded, in September, by an order from the Trades Hall Society declaring that in future rooms in the building would be let for the use of Europeans only. In protest Bunting resigned the secretaryship of the Trades Hall Society, his place being taken by J. Gow−, the secretary of the Labour Party. For the next issue of the International Bunting wrote a long article denouncing all " colour bar " labourites. He referred to an incident a few weeks before when the members of the administrative council of the S.A.L.P., on seeing some non−Europeans on their way upstairs to attend an I.S.L. conference, "scuttled out of their meeting room below and over to the Grand National Hotel like women who have seen a mouse or tenants who have discovered bugs.... The Trades Hall resolution ... brings to a head the most important issue in the Labour movement in South Africa

. . It is a challenge to the Socialists who recognise the class struggle; u sneering intimation to the underpaid, uneducated, unskilled toilers that they need not hope for the co−operation of the whites, who, on the contrary, will oppose their efforts at emancipation; a wilful decision of the ' trustees ' of the working class movement to sell it for a ' place in the sun,' where they clink glasses with magnates, with the d−d niggers as their footstool.... The wages system for ever, they chuckle, provided ours are high and yours low an injury to one is an injury to all−unless he's black. Down with capitalist exploitation−of ' Europeans ' only ....

" Fools! Do they not see that they are tools in the hands of the capitalist, who flatters and pampers them not because he doesn't want cheap black labour, but because he does; who retains them as white boss boys, trading on their silly pride, while tie educates the Natives eventually to oust them; who uses them not to keep the ' nigger ' out but only to keep him down, and shoot him down when required.

' No, they do not or will not see it. Then tear down that blasphemous legend ' Labor Omnia Vincit ' over the Trades Hall gateway. And substitute ' All hope abandon ye Who enter here,' for the solidarity of lab our, the hope of the world, is by that snobbish, churlish resolution abandoned, spat upon and disowned! "

Chapter 5. Storm and Stress

In addition to his activities on the Native field, which had now become a dominating interest in his life, Bunting during those hectic war years was engaged in the general rough and tumble of socialist agitation and propaganda. He had taken over much of the hum drum work of the movement. He was always−s busy writing for the weekly paper. When Jones was away or ill he acted as editor. He eventually became treasurer of the League. He tried to carry− on his lawyer's practice, though much of his legal work too was in connection with the movement and it is doubtful whether he made much money out of it. Fortunately he still had a small income from his investments in the wattle plantation which helped to keep the wolf from the door.

There were quite a number of arrests and police raids, in most of which Bunting figured. In almost all cases the police failed to secure convictions. In August, 1916, Jones was arrested in connection with an anti−war pamphlet, entitled Let Saints on Earth in concert Sing. Bunting, as legal adviser, quickly appeared at the charge office, only to be arrested himself and charged jointly with Jones. They were charged with contravening the Public Welfare Act by communicating matter ``calculated to create alarm or incite public feeling." Bunting was sentenced to six weeks' hard labour or £25 fine. Jones' case was held over pending Bunting's appeal to the Supreme Court' which quashed the magistrate's verdict. In this trial' as in others' F A.W. Lucas' gave his services as advocate. He had been on a visit to Europe when the split occurred in the Labour party On his return he took his stand with the antiwar section but did not join the I.S.L. from whom he differed on theoretical grounds. Lucas by this time was a fervent follower of Henry George and his theory of the single tax.

Bunting was an active member of the Transvaal Provincial Council till the end of his term of office in 1917. Lucas recalls that on one occasion when the Labour members tried to prevent an adjournment there was an all−night sitting and Bunting spoke for four hours, quoting at times from the Bible and at others from the Declaration of Independence. In March, 1917 Bunting moved a motion in the council condemning the martial law censorship regulations and recommending their repeal by the Union Government. The motion was within an ace of being passed and would have been had not one of the Labour members, George Hills, ratted, making the voting 19 for and 20 against. Bunting and Colin Wade were the chief participators in the debate.

Bunting stood again for the Provincial Council, in June, 1917, but without success. Revolutionary Socialist candidates at any time would have had little chance of being returned, and with war fever still raging an anti−war candidate could hope for little more than a token vote. Bunting's old constituency, Bezuidenhout Valley, was an English area, and he realised that he would get few votes there. The cosmopolitan constituency of Commissioner Street was therefore chosen. The League put out election leaflets in Yiddish' as well as English. Meetings were held in the Jewish quarter, with speakers in Yiddish. All to no avail. Bunting got only 71 votes, which the International optimistically described as an improvement on Colin Wade's 32 votes in Troyeville at the beginning of the year. Andrews did very much better at Benoni with 355 votes.

From 1917 onwards the attention of South African socialists was drawn more and more to the epoch−making events in Europe. The Kerensky revolution made them prick up their ears. Socialists all over the world were sending delegates to the Stockholm Socialist Reace Conference, and the League, not to be outdone, nominated Andrews as their delegate. He left in August, 1917. He returned a year later, having failed to get further than London.

In November, 1917, came the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, welcomed by the South African socialists as tangible proof of the ultimate triumph of their faith.

In December' 1916' Bunting married. Like his great−grandfather he chose a wife from "within the movement." She was Miss Rebecca Notlowitz' a Jewish emigree from the Baltic. Like many of the Jewish comrades brought up in the socialist movement in Russia, she was full of the most intense loyalty to the cause, an active participant

in the daily work of the League.

Of Bunting's lovemaking there is little on record. It was probably done in the midst of a whirl of committees, public meetings and propaganda. Sometimes they had a quiet interval on a Sunday afternoon when they went walking and Bunting read passages from Browning' perhaps in an effort to help Rebecca with her English. There were two sons born of the marriage−Arthur and Brian.

Chapter 6. Aftermath of War

With the end of the war in November, 19l8, the revolutionary movement all over the world grew rapidly. Also the censorship of news which had existed during the war years, was lifted to some extent. The pages of the International became filled more and more with reports of overseas events, the great Russian revolution, the overthrow of the old government in Germany, strikes all over the world. The white membership of the I.S.L,,. began to grow rapidly' though it never became a really large organisation. 5 Native affairs began to play a smaller part in the activities of the I. S.L. as well as in the pages of its newspaper. Who could be bothered with politically backward and largely unorganised Africans when such resounding events were happening overseas? Work among Africans, never very popular with the rank and file in the League, was crowded out or left to a few ``cranks," of whom Bunting and Jones were the most outstanding and persistent.

These two manfully struggled on, trying to educate the white workers in general and their fellow socialists in particular on the importance of what they called the " black proletariat." Jones started night classes for Africans' teaching them to read and write. He got them to write on their slates " Workers of the world unite ! You have nothing to lose but your chains and a world to win." But few Natives actually joined the League. They felt uncomfortable and shy at white meetings. The Industrial Workers of Africa did not long survive the " Bucket Strike." constant police attention probably scared Africans away.

In 1919 there was a wave of Native strikes, riots and pass burnings' which, in so far as they were not spontaneous unorganised outbursts, were directed by the African National Congress. There were numerous arrests and imprisonment's' and Bunting appeared frequently in the Johannesburg magistrate's court as attorney defending Africans who had fallen into the clutches of the police. One day at the end of March' 1919' while coming out of court' he was set upon by a lunch − hour mob of whites and " frog−marched." 'this consisted of being carried face downwards by four ruffians, each of whom had hold of a limb.

Now it so happened that the wave of Native unrest' the pass burnings and the riots (the latter consisting chiefly in the beating up of Africans by the white mob) coincided with a strike of white municipal workers which led to the so−called "Johannesburg Soviet." The striking tramway men had decided, in order to keep the public on their side' to run the trams themselves for the duration of the strike. This they did under the direction of a strikers' "board of control'" and it was this organisation which came to be described as a "soviet."

At a meeting between the Town Council and a strike deputation "Councillor O'Hara drew attention to the considerable Native unrest in town, and asked if the strikers were going to stand by the community in the event of any Native trouble. Several members of the strike deputation gave an assurance that they would stand by the Council in this particular matter" (Star, 31/3/19). It is clear that by tile " community " was meant the white population and that there was no question of any fellow feeling between white and black strikers.

It also happened that two days before the " soviet " was started two alleged Bolshevik emissaries' who declared they had come straight from Red Moscow' arrived in Johannesburg. They addressed a crowded meeting in the Johannesburg Town Hall (where of course it was illegal for Africans to be present) amid scenes of the most unbounded enthusiasm.

Hot from being manhandled by the white mob and with his brain teeming with all these events' Bunting sat down to do his weekly write−up for the International. What he wrote on this occasion is such a good example of his rather complicated style, his passionate appeal for justice for the black man, and his bitter contempt of all hypocrites, particularly those so−called socialists and communists who shared in the general race prejudice' that I shall quote him at some length. He begins by describing the setting up of the white strikers, 'Board of Control' and goes on to say: " To criticise the personnel or intelligence of the Board would perhaps be out of place here. We can at any rate congratulate the municipal workers on having grasped the idea that the old−fashioned strike for better conditions, often unsuccessful and yet more often ruinous to the workers' funds is being replaced today by the movement for Workers' Councils, destined not merely to 'control' industry and public institutions but to take them over from the present private owners or bourgeois public bodies and work them in the interest of the working class."

Here follow certain obvious criticisms of the Board. It did not represent even the white workers as a whole but only the municipal employees. "the organised workers of private industries were not invited to send their delegates." It made no attempt to extend its activities beyond Johannesburg, to call into being similar councils in other areas. It had announced itself as a "temporary institution" pending the settlement of the strike, which of course was not the idea behind the soviets.

' But,," he goes on, what is far more fundamental is its glaringly limited and sectional character within the ranks of the working class. Where did it reveal that solidarity of Labour, the hope of the world ? Municipal workers, indeed ? Where were the masses, the underdogs of Bantu race who far outnumber the whites in Municipal employ ? Where, for instance, on this Board, were any delegates of the Sanitary Boys whose demand for 1s. a day rise nearly a year ago was at the time and has ever since been haughtily ignored by the whites? Presumably they were to be 'controlled ' by the 'Board of Control '−the very word ' Board ' suggests all−powerful directors' not communists' and 'control ' of any except non−workers is not the meaning of Bolshevism.

"The International Socialist League . . . can firstly improve the occasion by again preaching the eternal verities of the movement in South Africa; and is thus in duty bound to repeat its warning' as before, that no workers' movement or revolution is worth the bones of a single champion which ignores or excludes the vast mass of the workers of this country' the most flagrantly opposed victims of the most glaring form of capitalist exploitation' the exploitation of the black races and their labour by white capital: for that is after all broadly the summary of the labour position in South Africa. And if the upper white artisans are not with these masses' they are against them; they are consciously or unconsciously kicking against the pricks of the proletarian movement they profess to espouse.

"If indeed there were ' nothing doing ' on the part of the underdogs, or if the attitude of the white workers were one of only benevolent neutrality to them, their position would be more excusable. But there is something doing down below there: a movement of emancipation far more national (or rather international), more far−reaching, more cutting at the root, more brave and self−sacrificing, than mere white Bolshevism can ever be; a passive resistance movement at present in protest against that outward and visible sign of semi−chattel slavery of the Natives, the Pass Law.

"Nor is there much sign of benevolence either. On the contrary, the Municipal Workers' spokesmen have even been offering to help quell the ' Native menace and the Central Strike Committee passed a resolution last Monday which while graciously admitting that the Native was entitled to organise to improve his position, offered assistance to the (Government to prevent outrages on white women and children. Outrages on white women and children ? What right have these people, who could not work for a day without a horde of ' outragers ' to serve them, who are ensconced in a labour system which demands hundreds of thousands of these `outragers' as its indispensable basis, to complain of Black Peril? And for that matter when has 'black peril ' ever resulted from a Native movement for emancipation? But more than this' what protest have these men made against the outrages on black men and women taking place daily under their eyes in Johannesburg this very week? Why have they not

offered their services to these their fellow−workers to protect them from the police and troops just called in to shoot them down and from the aiding and abetting white mob? What have they to say against the wholesale outrages' the burning injustices committed on black workers daily in the so−called courts of justice? Against the determined refusal, despite all the rise in the cost of living, of any increased wage to these toiling, sweating slaves?...

"As this paper has often pointed out, the capitalist class see the point and seize their opportunity. It is a godsend to them that a Native strike is running simultaneously with the white one. As long as they can thus count on the middle−class obsession of white workers who want a revolution merely to install themselves in command of the subject race, they are quite safe. While the orator shouts ' Workers of the world unite,' someone whispers ' the Kafirs are rising' −oh, then, presto, let's bury the hatchet with our bosses, who will give us guns instead to shoot their slaves with ....

"It is humiliating to have to keep on emphasising that the essence of the Labour movement is Solidarity, without which it cannot win. The outstanding characteristic of the capitalist system in South Africa being its Native labour, the outstanding movement of the country must clearly be the movement of its Native labourers ....

"The Johannesburg lunch−time crowd, many of them no doubt Trade Unionists fresh from cheering Bolshevism in the Town Hall, not only jeered at the outrages but helped to catch and belabour any male or female Native luckless enough to be abroad at the time, proceeding afterwards to mob the editor of this paper as a presumed sympathiser with their victims ' Native menace ' indeed! What gross distortion is this? Who are the menacers but the whites armed to the teeth' who the menaced every time' if not the timid' unarmed defenceless blacks, who voluntarily collect all sticks when they hold meeting; our miserable slaves' who cannot even ' act constitutionally, without the whites−English and Dutch−standing to arms, whose reward for every Petition of Right is to be told they are 'disloyal to the King '−what wonder?−and' while flouted by officials indoors' to be kicked by Cossacks outside' or kicked, mauled and battered in their hundreds to and at the Marshall Square cells, like Homer's 'souls sent gibbering to Hades'? Is it nothing to you, all ye 'Bolshevists ' who pass by? Or you 'Spartacists,' can you see Spartacus' the slave leader, or Liebknecht who took his mantle joining in yesterday's lynching affray'? ....

'Ye fools and blind' Can you not see that by taking up this white against black red herring you are straying exactly where de Wet, Minister of Justice, Mentz, Minister of Defence, and some of you so−called Labour leaders want you to stray ? That you are playing completely into Capitalism's hands? That by scaring you with native risings, and flattering you as the ' ruling class ' of Labour, the master Glass drives you clean away from that united action of the industrial workers of Africa before which alone it trembles? Well, well, then, go on in your old ruts: let your Native fellow workers, like the Russian moujiks, be more progressive than you, and, if you will not help their advance, let them advance without you and in spite of you!"

Hard on the events in Johannesburg came more excitement and trouble for the white socialists' this time in Natal. Jones had gone to a sanatorium at Maritzburg to be treated for his consumption' and, while he was there' he and the local socialists had improved the occasion by putting out a little pamphlet called The Bolsheviks Are Coming, which, together with a translation into Zulu and Sotho, they distributed in numbers among the population in Maritzburg and Durban. Jones and Green, the leader of the Maritzburg socialists, were immediately arrested by the police. In a bitter article in the International Bunting wrote: " To emphasise their British love of freedom and fair play, the employers of Comrade Green have sacked him, his wife has been turned out of the cafe she has been keeping and Jones has been ordered to leave the Health Institute in Longmarket Street."

Jones and Green were charged with inciting to public violence and also with failing to submit their pamphlet to the (Censor before publication. The thing which seemed to annoy the authorities most was that it was addressed " to the Workers of South Africa−black as well as white." The two socialists were sentenced by the magistrate to a fine of £75 and four months' imprisonment each, and 10 pounds or one month' each. However, the appeal to the Supreme Court succeeded and the prisoners were finally discharged.

In July, 1919, the I.S.L. started a campaign to raise funds for buying its own printing press. The press meant further work and trouble for Bunting. At first things went fairly well. The Bolshevik revolution had created great enthusiasm particularly among the Jewish community. Coming to South Africa as poverty−stricken refugees, many of them had "made good," in fact had become capitalists, great and small. But numbers of them retained a warm sympathy for the revolutionary movement, a sympathy which they were quite willing to express in Gash. They looked to the International to supply news of the happenings in Russia' which it did. As time went on however, and the Bolshevik revolution failed to spread over the globe, this enthusiasm died down and it became more difficult to obtain money. Bunting kept long lists of "sympathisers" and was always moving about collecting whatever he could get for the press. Running the press was a constant cause of anxiety. Skilled white artizans, members of the Typographical Union, were employed. Their wages were high and had to be paid promptly every week. The manager of the press was a reliable fellow and a good printer; but he was said to suffer from lead poisoning, he had an uncertain temper and had to be handled carefully.

One cause of trouble was Bunting's handwriting' which was atrocious, and he was always redrafting and altering his manuscripts till they looked like jig−saw puzzles. The linotypists had a bad time.

In February, 1920, there was a big strike of African miners. Over 40,000 came out. The strike was broken by the simple process of drawing a police cordon round every compound. Each group of workers thus isolated was told that all the rest had gone back to work In the absence of an African miners' union or central strike committee this method eventually succeeded' though not without bloodshed. European civilians also joined in the fray' attacking with "revolvers and other weapons" a meeting in support of the strikers called by the African National Congress at Vrededorp ' Johannesburg.

There was the usual scabbing of white. workers on black strikers and, as Bunting said, "no single clear call from any trade union leader." ' The demands of the Natives are vague," he wrote. "The strike is undoubtedly an instinctive mass revolt against their whole status and pig level of existence. The Native Congress has had very little to do with the movement other than to hold a watching brief. The strike is in no man's control. Organisation with the compounds there is' of course' but of necessity there can be very little definite organisation between mines owing to the 'cordon sanitaire' of police ringed round each compound."

The strike is peaceful at first, but " violence is provoked at last." The police try to force an entrance into the compound at the Village Deep Mine. The Bantu miners resist and eight are reported killed. Rumours are "very insistent" that the strikers on several mines have been driven down below at the point of the bayonet.

The I.S.L. issued a magnificent Don't Scab leaflet largely Bunting's work) appealing to the white miners, but without any obvious result. The leaflet said: "White Workers ! Do you hear the new Army of Labour coming ? The Native workers are beginning to wake up. They are finding out that they are slaves to the big capitalists. Food and clothing are costing more and more, but their wages remain the same, away down at the pig level of existence.

"But they want to rise Why not? They want better housing and better clothes' better education and a higher standard of life.

' They have seen the white workers getting more and more wages to meet the rising cost of living. They have noted that our power is due to organisation and they are following suit. They are uniting in a new Army of Labour.

"White workers ! Do not repel them ! The Native workers cannot rise without raising the whole standard of existence for all.

" They are putting aside their tribal differences and customs; they are entering the world−wide army of labour. They are putting aside sticks and assegais and are learning how to withhold their labour unitedly with folded arms. They are learning how to win the respect of white people by peaceful picketing and organisation. They are falling into line with the trade union movement of the whole world. It is an insult to the Trade Union movement to bring in troops when any workers go on strike, as if they were unreasoning savages. The fact that they can combine proves they are nothing of the kind.

"When White workers go on strike they enrol Special Constables. Do not allow yourselves to be enrolled as Special Constables against Native strikers. It is an insult to your own Labour movement.

"White workers! On which side are you? When the Native workers are on strike we are all thrown idle. Thus they prove that all sections of Labour are interdependent, white and black Solidarity will win!

" White miners! Don't you feel humbled when you cannot go down below because your hammer boys won't go down? Learn the lesson ! Your interests and theirs are the same as against the Boss.

"Back them up ! The Chamber of Mines will be asking you to take up the rifle to dragoon the Native strikers. Don't do it ! That would wreck the Labour movement in this country.

" Be on the side of Labour, even Native labour, against our common capitalist masters. The Natives have shown that they can stop the mines as well as you can. Get them on your side.

− " Beware ! The Chamber of Mines may use the crisis to break the white unions. They may march the Natives back to their kraals under armed guard find starve them into submission on the road. Meanwhile the white workers will be starved into accepting the masters' own terms.

Therefore, DON'T SCAB! DON'T SHOOT! Don't take a rifle against your own hammer boys, and see that if the Natives are sent back to their kraals they go by train, where they may− be under public inspection all the time."

It was a tragedy that such a moving appeal should fall on deaf ears. The belief, implicit in all Marxist propaganda, that fundamentally the interests of all workers are one, was never questioned by Bunting. And yet the white workers believed that they had nothing in common with the blacks. A realist, not obsessed with the Marxist doctrine, might have pointed out that the white miners earned ten times as much as the blacks, that many of them employed black servants in their homes, that n victory of the Black miners would have increased the desire of the mine−owners to reduce the status of the white miners, since any Increase in black wages would have to be met either by a reduction in white wages or a reduction in profits.

Bunting knew all this, but still he kept on, hitting his head against the stone wall not only of racial prejudice but of the economic fact which bolstered up the prejudice.

Ivon Jones left for Europe in May, 1920. He went to the South of France and while there met Karl Radek with whom he became very friendly. Radek invited him to attend the Second Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. Jones stayed on in Russia. From the point of view of his health it was the worst place for a consumptive to be. He died in a Crimean sanitorium in 1924, but not before he had learnt Russian and translated a number of Lenin's early writings into English. In this work he was a pioneer−at that time Lenin's writings were almost completely unknown to English−speaking r ' socialists.

Jones' departure left Bunting to fight a lone fight He was the only remaining leader in the I.S.L. who was really enthusiastic about work among the blacks.

In 1921 the International Socialist League was merged in the new Communist Party of South Africa which became affiliated to the Communist International with headquarters in Moscow. The unity conference was held in Cape Town and resulted in the merging of the I.S.L. the Industrial Socialist League (a Cape Town group)' the Marxist Club of Durban and one or two smaller bodies. Bunting was one of the delegates of the I.S.L.

The new party was still almost exclusively a white party and it is significant that under its new name the I.S.L. returned to its offices in the Johannesburg Trades Hall. The majority of the executive felt that their main work was among the trade unions and that the Trades Hall was a strategic centre.

Chapter 7. Rand Revolt

In 1922 came the last great white miners strike or "Rand Revolt.," All the white miners at that time 22,000 in number, struck work in protest against the decision of the Chamber of Mines to dismiss some 2,000 "redundant" white workers' thereby decreasing the ratio of white to black workers on the gold mines. The white coal miners and the employees of the V.F.P.. Company' which supplied electric power to the mines' also struck at the same time against wage reductions. On the coal mines the strike failed to bring the industry to a standstill' the proportion of white miners there being very much less than on the gold mines. On January 27 the Inter−national reports that "after three weeks' idleness the white workers on a section of the Transvaal coal mines find that the withdrawal of their labour has resulted in the mines being run without them at most normal, and in some cases above normal, output. The Native miners plus a few white officials have kept and are keeping the mines going' while some mines in the Transvaal and all the mines inn Natal remain unaffected by the strike . . . There is no longer a strike in the coal mines: there is simply a thousand or fifteen hundred men out of work.',

The position on the gold mines was different. There the white miners were able to hold up mining and milling operations, mainly because of the fact that the engine drivers were no longer working the skips and amateurs could not replace them. Large numbers of African miners were no longer able to work and some thousands were sent back to the reserves, thus saving the Chamber the cost of feeding them.

The strike soon developed into a general fight by white labour for the maintenance of the colour bar in industry. The opposition parties in Parliament, the English "" Labour Party ' and the Boer "Nationalist Party," strongly defended the strikers. Under the slogan "for a white South Africa,,' they organised meetings throughout the country. Boer farmers, many of whom had relatives working on the mines, sent quantities of foodstuffs to assist the strikers. "Commandos" were formed on a semi−military basis. They marched through the streets with banners, while terrified Natives scattered to right and left. One of these banners contained in itself an interesting epitome of the ideology of some of the strikers. It was an old banner, originally used in some previous Labour or Socialist demonstration and it bore Karl Marx's slogan, "Workers of the world, unite!" Someone had "'modernised" it so that it read : "Workers of the world, fight and unite for a White South Africa !'.

The strike placed the socialists and communists on the horns of a dilemma. The sentiments of the strikers and their leaders' with a few notable exceptions, were strongly anti−Native. The slogan, `" a white South Africa,,, was one which no true socialist could support But workers were on strike; there was war between "capital" and "labour"; the Government was drafting thousands of troops' police and special constables to the Witwatersrand with the obvious intention of shooting down the workers on the slightest provocation. Smuts, the Prime Minister, had said, after the early negotiations had broken down' that the Government should no longer intervene in trying to effect a settlement but would "allow things to develop." Almost all the socialists felt that they had to support the strikers, though some few of them made reservations. In fact the majority of the Communist Party flung themselves wholeheartedly into the struggle and left the `'reservations,"−to Bunting. I remember seeing, Bunting often during those hectic weeks. He never spoke at any of the hundreds of meetings. Other members of his Party did; some of them, particularly Bill Andrews, were leading orators. Whether Bunting was deliberately ignored by those who organised the meetings or whether he chose to take a back seat I do not know. 6 Probably had he

pushed himself forward they would have let him speak, for soap box men were in demand; though what he would have said would not have been popular. Like a gruff bear he would go about among the crowds" mumbling his criticisms to those who cared to listen" and always with a bundle of internationals under his arm. In the Party paper he was able to have his say.

He tried to "rationalise" the Communist support of the strike. In the International in the second week of the strike he wrote: "This strike is sometimes called a strike against the abolition of the colour bar. But although anti colour feeling runs high" the true issue is not racial. Essentially it is a strike against the further lowering of wages which the capitalists of the whole world are trying to enforce; essentially it is not a strike of white men as whites; it is a strike of workers as workers....The colour bar taken literally as a restriction on non European workers is of course unfair. To the extent, however" that it helps to keep up higher wages and the number of those drawing them" it serves the interests of all workers. Nor would its abolition benefit more than a mere handful of Coloureds or Natives."" He suggests that the strikers should adopt "" The unanswerable slogan of equal pay for equal work."" If the Chamber would adopt this principle "not a dozen white men would be displaced."

Bunting here professes the accepted view of the white Socialists that the interests of both black and white workers are ultimately the same (a view which I have criticised above at least in as far as its application to the mines is concerned). Believing in this identity of interest he appeals to the strikers to become "class conscious" and not to be drawn into attacks on Natives. "One of the surest methods to defeat a white strike in South Africa is to get up a "Kafir rising cry" as was done for instance in 1919: the workers forget their own cause and rush off to shoot niggers just what the bosses want in order to keep their proletariat terrorised. Slaves" attack your enslavers" not their enslaved: hit the masters" not the men""

A few of the strike leaders held this point of view" particularly the leaders of the so−called "Council of Action", Spendiff Fisher and Shaw. These were members of the Miners" Union who had been expelled from that body some time before for conducting an " illegal strike"' i.e. a strike not authorised by the Executive. When the big strike broke out they came for ward as an alternative or " Left" Ieadership in opposition to the moderate or "Right" leadership of the official executive of the miners' union and the South African Industrial Federation. They were joined by W. H. Andrews' secretary of the Communist Party. As the strike developed and the extremists came more to the fore' leadership tended to pass out of the hands of the Federation into those of the Council of Action which aimed at a general strike. On the other hand the Boer elements in the commandos were working for an armed revolt. It was in the commandos that most of the anti−Native feeling found expression. Spendiff and Fisher made it their business to combat this. On one occasion when a strikers' mass picket was trying to "pull out" the workers at the Johannesburg telephone exchange' crowds of interested sightseers gathered, among them many Natives. At one point a group of strikers " broke loose " and started assaulting the Natives . Fisher noticed it. Running hastily to the spot he forced the whites to stop. Pointing to the cordon of soldiers encircling the telephone exchange he shouted " There's the enemy. Leave the blacks alone. '

But the Buntings' Spendiffs and Fishers were unable to check the rising tide of anti Native feeling. At Fordsburg and Apex there were clashes between whites and blacks. At Prim rose' near Germiston, the strikers attacked the compound with guns and a number of Africans were shot. Other Natives were killed at various points along the Reef. 7

Meanwhile in Cape Town the racial issue was becoming paramount. The white trade unionists called big meetings and collected funds in aid of the strikers. The (Coloured and Native organisations called rival meetings to protest against the idea of "a white South Africa" and against the Native pogrom which they alleged with some truth was taking place on the Rand. The largest of these meetings was addressed by Dr. A. Abdurah man, the Coloured leader, and by Clements − Kadalie, of the I.C.U. (We shall hear more of the I.C.U. Iater.)

The strike culminated in the expected armed revolt on the Witwatersrand. The strikers seized certain areas, disarmed the police, and set up their own councils ("soviets" they were called by some enthusiasts). The revolt

was suppressed with much bloodshed and for some months Johannesburg and the− Witwatersrand were under marital law.

Spendiff and Fisher died in Fordsburg, a white working class suburb of Johannesburg, which was held by the strikers for some days and retaken by the Government forces only after it had been bombarded from the air and by artillery. At the graveside of Spendiff and Fisher I heard a young Afrikaner striker speak. He said: "We fought for a white South Africa. We do not wish to oppress the Native. But we want to maintain a standard of living for our wives and our children." It was the only occasion during the whole of the strike, which lasted nearly three months, that I heard any expression of Afrikaner striker opinion which was not hostile to the black man.

The (Communist Party report of the strike took the form of a pamphlet called Red Revolt and The Rand Strike written by Bunting. His attitude was summed up in the quotation from Browning on the front page−"That rage was right in the main, that acquiescence vain. " The workers were right in striking and fighting: they were wrong in making of their case a racial issue.

Chapter 8. To Moscow

From the beginning of March till the end of May, 1922, the International was not published. The revolutionary movement was "underground." Hundreds of ex−strikers, trade union leaders, labour and socialist politicians were in gaol or hiding from the police. There were a number of summary (and quite illegal) executions of strikers by the military. Bunting was also involved in the general round−up by the police and was kept in custody for two weeks, but he was then released as there was no specific charge against him. During this period of martial law he wrote his pamphlet Red Revolt and prepared to go overseas, where he had been meaning to go for some time, partly to take a holiday and partly to report to the Communists in Britain and Russia the recent events in South Africa. There was a gathering in the Party offices in the Trades Hall, where Bunting was presented with " a case of pipes and a morocco bound copy of 'Red Revolt' containing the signatures of a large number of members of the Party, and Mrs Bunting with a gold brooch with the Soviet Star and emblem in enamel." They left with their two sons for I)urban on June 2, 1922.

Writing from London on July 27, Bunting says: " Having spent a month since arrival in the bourgeois circles I started life in, I feel rather like Walton Newbold when he says: ' I don't know much about Communism, but I can tell you a lot about Capitalism.' Thus, to get in touch with the workers, we have had to go and look for them, not always successfully even, dare I say, in Communist circles." He described the rather backward political outlook of the third class passengers on the boat going over. Among them were " some proper White (Guards who, seeing our young hopeful of four and a half with a tiny bit of red flannel at the end of a stick, told him to' take it down or he would be pitched overboard."

Bunting found in the British Labour movement very little of that growth in revolutionary spirit which had seemed to promise so much in the years immediately following the war.

" We arrived just as the Labour Party had turned down, by a greatly increased majority, the Communist Party's application for affiliation; and soon afterwards the Miners' Federation, by eight to one, declined to join the Red International of Labour Unions....Here are Henderson, Thomas, Macdonald and Hodges carrying with them the great mass of the workers in preaching negotiation and peace with the masters, or deriding the heroic efforts of the Soviet Government, or parrying, without a single genuine or honest argument, the plea of the Communist International .... One can almost fancy these leaders recruiting British workers to crush ' Lenin and Trotsky ' where the Churchill's ' fear to tread.' " However, " Tom Mann says that class consciousness is spreading fast all the time."

Of any hope of emancipation for the colonial peoples he found little evidence in Britain. Though " Bloomsbury is

alive with members of the subject races of India and Africa learning to be Western, i.e. bourgeois, even if anti British, and parading with English lady companions to show how civilised they have become.... Yet the workers of those countries, as of Britain, remain as much as ever the slaves of what, even if it is less British., is only the more the crushing power of exploiting Capitalism."

On their way to the Soviet Union the Bunting's spent some days in Berlin. Bunting's letter, dated Berlin, August 15, 1922. gives a most interesting account of the German capital under the shadow of inflation. " It is still a great capital, but no longer the ' brilliant ' capital, beloved of Capitalism, that it must have been in the Kaiser's day.... The town has something of a fly blown look about it, as if for the last few years it had had to subsist on its past glories. But, besides that, it must be conceded that the war to end war has really 'abolished militarism,' so far as obtrusive appearances go, in Berlin. There are still plenty of troops ready to suppress Communists, no doubt; but they must be kept behind the scenes. Beyond a little display of flags and swords by some students bedizened in grotesque uniforms (a little covert Monarchist demonstration of no importance), we have noticed no public rattle of the sword.... Patriotism is discredited. With this goes what is surely a great improvement in manners both as compared with the Germany one knew or imagined before and with England to−day. There is no swank worth mentioning in the Berliner now, not even among the bloods, such as they are, and the ' upper ten ' do not parade their á superiority,' nor do ' Hoi Polloi ' acknowledge it at all as grossly as in England; people of all conditions live in the same quarter, the same buildings even, and throng the same. boulevards and restaurants in one jostling crowd−without ostentatious 'respect of persons' and without servility, except that tipping is extremely prevalent....

' The Government here is a Coalition Government led by the Social Democrats, with whom the Independent Socialists are uniting to the exclusion of the Communists. It is a petty bourgeois, in short, a 'Labour' Government, the most effective and deadly weapon Capitalism has yet invented against the working class."

Bunting notes that arrests of Communist speakers and editors are pretty frequent, but the Party seems not to be weakened but rather strengthened by the persecution. The Party is no longer an association of 'peculiar people' but a powerful and active political party with widespread and genuine support from the workers throughout the chief industrial area of Germany. The visitors went to a social and heard the communist violinist Soermus and, what specially delighted Bunting. recitations by the Communist 'speaking chorus' who declaimed revolutionary poems in unison, forty or fifty voices together, with great effect, as though they meant it. " What is striking in all these meetings is the very outspoken revolutionary sentiments expressed and the immense fervour, conviction and enthusiasm, not to say violence, with which they are expressed.

What they call 'sedition' or 'incitement to violence' in South Africa is nothing to it 1 "

From Berlin the Buntings went on to Moscow, to that "Mecca of the working class movement." In Berlin everything was going down; in Moscow everything was going up though from a low level, as Bunting admits, the workers having "touched bottom" in an economic sense during the civil war and the famine.

On the day after their arrival they attended a monster demonstration at the Red Square on the day of the young Communists. " One hundred thousand were there," writes Bunting, "in serried ranks with scores of bands and countless banners, expressing confidence in the revolution and vowing death to world capitalism. Here, after all, is the secret of the Soviet Power. And what humane and intelligent faces; Yes the soldiers and police too; not those brutalised enemies of the workers, those dogs we know too well, 8 but decent kindly fellows, who appealed in friendly tones to their ' comrades,' the young people, to keep the line, and were responded to as comrades. "

The great thing in Russia, says Bunting, is the political liberty which the workers have gained, and he writes at length, as "one who has some experience of Marshall Square," contrasting the persecutions of Johannesburg and the freedoms of Moscow. "Whether Moscow is described as hell (as a Riga doctor called it to us) or as heaven, is mainly a question of class point of view. To us, for our part, this first Marxian step of proletarian political control, as the prerequisite of workers' control of industry, seems more important, more valuable, more far−reaching and

wonderful than ever. It makes the stimulating atmosphere of Moscow so congenial that, in spite of facts that some Randites would not look at, but which we enjoy the more because we feel it is about the same as most others get here, in spite of distance and (to me) unknown language [Mrs :Bunting of course could speak Russian fluently], in spite of the call to action at home, we shall, I feel sure, be sorry to leave it when our time is up. "

As a musician Bunting was impressed with the Moscow orchestra of eighty performers who played, without a conductor, Liszt's Prelude and the Meistersinger overture. he filled many columns of the International with writing about Russia. In a little while " Russia is all agog with the Fifth Anniversary of her Revolution and coinciding with it, the opening of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International," which Bunting attended as the delegate of the South African Communist Party. Ivon Jones was away ill in the Crimea, and poor Mrs. Bunting, after coming all these thousands of miles to attend the (Congress, was taken ill and had to miss it. Bunting describes at length the demonstration of the army in the Red Square with 'Trotsky taking the salute and 30,000 soldiers cheering him.

At the Congress Bunting heard speeches by Lenin, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Radek, Losofsky and Trotsky, who spoke one day for 7.5 hours on end, using three languages in succession. He does not say anything in these letters to the International about discussions on South Africa, but he does mention the crowds of Non−European delegates−"from Turkey to China and Japan. "

The Buntings left Moscow on November 20 and were back in London on December 14. Mrs Bunting was still ill and they had to postpone their departure for South Africa. 9 They arrived in Cape Town in March, 1923.

It might be asked what effect had Bunting's visit to Moscow and his attendance at the Fourth Congress upon his ideas about Communist discipline and doctrine. In an "open letter," published in the International on March 30, he deals at length with two matters which the Congress had discussed and which were also causing controversy in the South African Party, viz.: "immediate demands" and the "united front."

This was chiefly in reply to certain Cape Town members who took a "left" attitude on these questions. One gathers that the type of united front advocated was what subsequently came to be called the "united front from below," though Bunting does not use this expression. By supporting "immediate demands" the Party will gain the support of the masses even though these demands appear on the surface to be "reformist" and not "revolutionary"−and thus discredit the Labour Party. " The charge against the Second International, and here against the S.A. Labour Party, i8 not its support of daily demands, but the fact that in effect, in any crisis, being anti−revolutionary, it nearly always comes down on the side of the bourgeoisie and betrays the workers, until today, as Zinoviev says, 'it is the main proof the bourgeoisie.' If the Labour Party carries out its professions it would be unobjectionable, if insufficient. The Communist Party, with revolution as its prime aim, certainly endeavours to emphasise and intensify the struggle as such, the demands themselves, rather than any supposed remedies."

And he quotes the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels, the only bit of classical communist literature he really knew by heart: "The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate and momentary aims and interests of the working class, but in the movement of the present they also defend the future of that movement."

Bunting, in all his political statements, insisted on putting things in his own way. One notices an absence of the formal phraseology which one expects from the doctrinaire communist. In 1923, it is true, such "Imprecor Language" (as it subsequently came to be called, after the abbreviated name of the lnternational Press Correspondence, the official organ of the Comintern) was not very noticeable even in MOSCOW. Later it became very common, but to the end of his days Bunting never used it.

In view of what happened later, his views on opposition official doctrine inside the party are worth recording. "The alternative to this real support of daily demands is, especially in ,times of crisis, not merely to ignore them

or stand aloof from them, but to oppose them, in other words to support the other way−that is what it comes to−which I gather is more or less what some of those I am addressing [certain "leftists" in Cape Town] actually did in connection with the Rand strike of last year. Can they not see that that is coming dangerously near to playing traitor to the working class, a crime far more unforgivable in Communists than even in the Labour Party?" And again: " Hence it is almost incumbent on our Party to accept this view as a matter of discipline; and Comintern discipline becomes a more important matter every year, every month. It was noticeable how at the Congress one party after! another would say: ' Yes, the United Front, etc., is all very well for other parties, but not for us'; but no one else ever agreed with them, not even those who made the same claim about their own country; each thought his own country exceptionable but all the rest normal; and the result was that the Congress turned them all down and exempted nobody . . . Let us drop the bigotry which dates from older days, when the socialist movement was more of a debating society, and consequently bred splits, left and right wings and so on. The Communist International is leaving all that behind.... To day the Comintern is an engine, a conquering force. . . It is a power which is determined to win the world in our day. lt should be our privilege, not to stand on a Cape Town dunghill and crow that we know better, but to march in solidarity with it to win the world victory we all desired. Just because the Party must go right into the masses it must keep its own quality of membership up to the highest possible mark. It is there that ' purity ' is necessary. our members must be, to the last man, ' unspotted from the world.' "

Five years later Bunting himself was to be accused of the crime of ' South African exceptionalism,' and he was displaced from his position as a leader of the Party on the very grounds that the Party should be made "pure."

Chapter 9. Victory Of The Nigrophilists

Exciting events had been taking place on the Rand while Bunting was away. During the strike, the "Red Revolt" and the period of martial law which followed, the Government had arrested hundreds of strikers and labour sympathisers. The courts began to work at top speed. Long terms of imprisonment, and death sentences too, were meted out to those who had taken up arms against the authorities. In November, 1921, three of the strikers (Long, Hull and Lewis) died on the gallows in Pretoria singing the " Red Flag." The Government was planning to hang others, but the demonstration at the funeral of the three men was so enormous (the procession was about four miles long) and the Government was becoming so very unpopular, that there were no further executions. Tom Mann, the veteran socialist leader, came out from England to help the campaign for the release of the strike prisoners.

The struggle was by no means over when Bunting came back to Johannesburg. He took over the secretaryship of the Communist Party and the editorship of the International from W. H. Andrews, who left in May, 1923, to take his seat on the Executive Committee of the Communist International, to which he had been elected by the World Congress held in November.

It was from this time that I began to get to know Bunting more intimately. I, and a number of other young people, had formed a Communist youth organisation in 1921. By the end of 1922 I was taking quite an active part in C.P. affairs, distributing leaflets, selling the International, speaking at street corners, and attending the inevitable committee meetings. In 1928 I joined the Communist Party and was shortly put on the Executive Committee as a representative of the Young Communist League.

When I first came into the communist movement my attitude on the "Native question" was not much different from that of many of the other members, both in the youth section and in the party. As far as I remember I was not consciously hostile to or prejudiced against black men. The "workers of the world" were the white miners, tramwaymen, building artizans, and so on, who had trade unions and fought strikes. The blacks were simply disregarded. When the Young Communist League addressed itself to the "working youth" it meant of Course the young white workers, apprentices, and so on. My conversion to "labour nigrophilism," if I may call it that,

occurred some time in 1923, and was due largely to Bunting's articles in the International. Another who influenced me in the same direction was Willie Kalk, a young cabinet maker of German origin−whose father had been a social democrat in Germany. Willie Kalk and I soon began to urge upon our fellow members of the Y.C.I. that our main job was to preach communism to the young Natives. We wanted to bring the "Native youth"−with whom we had as yet made no contact and of whom we knew very Iittle−into the organisation. We at once met with opposition. Sarah Sable, our secretary, feared and disliked Natives, and we got no support from her. Solomon Sachs, one of our most forceful and capable members, admitted that the Native youth should be organised, "but," he said, "in a separate organisation."

At the first annual Conference of the Y.C.L.−held, 1 think, early in 1924 we had a stormy debate on the subject, where Sachs carried the day and the "pro Natives" were in a minority of three. We, the ,nigrophilists, were not prepared to accept defeat and we appealed to the executive committee of the Young Communist International, which had its headquarters at that time in Berlin. The Y.C.I. gave us its wholehearted support. Sarah Sable retired from league activities and Sachs left shortly for a visit to England and the Soviet Union. So Kalk and I had things our own way. The Y.C.I. became officially pro Native, though it was a long time before our work among Natives actually bore fruit, and then it was the adult Natives rather than the "youth" among whom we began to work.

The nigrophilist group in the Party was pushed very much into the background by the 1922 strike and the exciting events which followed it. Bunting, as I have said, was playing almost a lone hand. In 1923 and 1924 the main interest of the Party was the defeat of the Smuts Government and all efforts were directed to this purpose. Nothing else seemed really to matter. A united front of the Labour Party and the Nationalists came into being. It came to be known as the Nationalists−Labour " Pact. " To the Pact the Communist Party gave its almost unqualified support.

The general election, which took place in June, 1924, was precipitated by a number of by elections which went against the Government. Smuts, always impatient, was not prepared to wait till 1926 when an election would in the ordinary course of events have become due. He released the remaining strike prisoners and hoped that this gesture would win favour with the electorate. In fact it did not save him but was taken as a sign of weakness.

Both the Labour Party and the Nationalists were known to be anti−Native in outlook, but even they for the moment seemed to be learning the lesson of working Glass solidarity−at least in the Cape where a certain proportion of the African and Coloured workers had the vote. The Labour Party in Cape Town invited representatives of the I.C.U. and other Native organisations to meet them in conference. The Labourites went so far in wooing the Non Europeans of the Cape that they actually had a Coloured delegate, from one of the Cape Branches, at their national conference early in 1924.

The Nationalists also were prepared to drop their nigrophobia for the time being for the sake of getting Native votes in the. Cape. In fact even prior to the Rand Strike (in 1921) General Hertzog, their leader, had written to Kadalie, secretary of the I.C.U., enclosing a donation and asking for co−operation for the "common good of South Africa" and for sympathy between the "white and the black Afrikaner."

So Bunting and those of us who thought as he did had few qualms in supporting the candidates of the Labour and Nationalist parties in the election campaign.

But we did try, without much success, to keep the "Native issue" well to the fore in Communist propaganda during the election campaign. I re member the executive meeting at which we discussed the election manifesto to be issued in the name of the Party. The majority of the committee, including Andrews, who had arrived back from Moscow in February, 1924, were not keen on mentioning the Natives at all. Bunting, Kalk and I on the other hand wanted the Natives brought in. We managed to get two matters which concerned Natives included in the "list of demands." One was "the abolition of pass and passport laws and mine workers' records of service"−the last a comparatively unimportant grievance of white miners; included here so that the white workers should not be

unduly offended at being asked to help in the struggle against the pass laws, which would otherwise have been a purely Native grievance. The other demand was for the "extension of educational facilities to all sections of the population. " Again no specific mention of Africans was made, and the readers of the manifesto were left to infer that we meant that black children should have free education−an inference which would not be easy, as many of them, if asked how big was the population of South Africa, would have replied "a million and a half," unconscious of the fact that there were six or seven million Non Europeans besides.

However, Bunting drew up the manifesto, and there were parts of it which the executive for very shame could not erase. He wrote: "We are out to bury Caesar (i.e. Smuts), not to praise the Pact." The Smuts Government had "frankly governed the South African people, White, Indian, Coloured and Native, with the sword. Its career of bloody repression of the workers is without parallel in any other part of the British Empire with the exception of India.... In a country so politically backward as South Africa from the working class point of view (though advanced from the capitalist point of view) the defeat of the South African Party Government will in itself mean an appreciable step forward in the march towards complete emancipation. "

The election, in which the C.P. put up no candidates−to do so would have split the anti−Government vote; for the Communists were not admitted to the Pact−resulted in a victory for the Labourites and Nationalists. Labour gained five seats giving them a total of 18 Members of Parliament. Two Labour members, Creswell and Boydell, accepted seats in Hertzog's cabinet.

It soon became clear that the new regime was going to be just as reactionary as the old one in its attitude to the African people. In fact it seemed that the Natives had fallen out of the frying pan into the fire. The white workers who had gone on strike and taken up arms for a "white South Africa" were defeated on the industrial field in 1922; but they won a political victory in 1924. The Pact Government was soon to entrench the white workers as an aristocracy of labour by writing into the constitution of South Africa a law which made it illegal for black persons to be employed in skilled work. The " Colour Bar Act" did not come until 1925, but already in August, 1924, the new Government began to put into practice its "civilised labour policy" which consisted in sacking Natives in Government employ and replacing them by white men. Protests by the I.C.U., which reminded Hertzog that they had supported him in the election, were of no avail.

This new situation strengthened the hands of Bunting and the other nigrophilists in the Party. In the Cape the Native union, the I.C.U., was going from strength to strength, and it had begun to spread to the other provinces. Kadalie, seeking to enter Natal to organise the I.C.U. there in August, 1924, was forbidden by the Government to enter that province. The right of the Natives to trade union and political organisation was becoming a major issue in South African politics. The Cape Town branch of the C.P. − after Johannesburg the most important section of the Party − became enthusiastic supporters of the policy of carrying the communist message to the Non Europeans.

The Native question was the major issue at the C.P. conference held in Johannesburg during the Christmas holidays in 1924. Bunting found that he had vociferous allies. We of the Young Communist League had delegates at the conference, and we were wholeheartedly behind Bunting. From Cape Town came a strong delegation equally keen on a radical change in the direction of work among Natives. One of their leading members was S. Buirski, an eloquent debater who could not be suppressed and who came with reports of tumultuous support by Africans at Communist meetings in the Gape.

On the other side were the "conservatives" headed by W. H. Andrews and C. F. Glass. Behind them were many of the "old guard" of trade unionists and old time socialists who believed that the white workers were the "main revolutionary force.

It was interesting to contrast the two leading protagonists−Andrews and Bunting. For many years they had been the two most outstanding figures in the Left movement in Johannesburg. In many ways they were poles apart.

Andrews was handsome, with white hair and blue eyes, of stately appearance, reserved, careful of his dignity, a lucid and eloquent speaker, a clear and concise writer, an aristocrat of labour who had entered the socialist movement through the trade unions. There was nothing "woolly" about him: in a crisis he could make up his mind quickly; he had no patience with people who dithered. Bunting was dark, restless and ungainly, with the most determined jaw and a big nose. He was not a natural orator. His writing was often, though not always, abstruse and involved. Anxious to do justice to all parties concerned, and scrupulous in weighing all the possible consequences of any decision he might take, he seemed in 8 crisis over careful and slow. He was an idealist rather than a realist. He had no care for his personal dignity or safety. He held that the cause must be served first and only.

Andrews did not appear at his best at this conference. He was getting tired of his job as secretary of the C.P. He felt that the movement was floundering and that it was getting nowhere. He did not believe in fighting for lost causes. All the talk about the Native revolutionary masses left him cold. He believed that the Communist Party should work among the organised workers, which meant the white workers. He thought that it could best function as the radical wing of the orthodox labour movement. He did not say very much at the conference.

The Bunting faction decided to make the question of the attitude to the Labour Party the main issue at the conference. We felt that our main revolutionary task was among the Natives. By trying to get into the Labour Party as an officially recognised "left wing" the Party was in effect turning its back on the Native masses. We therefore opposed the motion that the C.P. should once more apply for affiliation to the Labour Party. This idea of getting into the Labour Party, was, we said, a mere mechanical copying by the South African communists of the policy of the Communist Party of Great Britain. In Britain, where the masses of workers were in the Labour Party, there seemed some sense in it. But in South Africa, where the overwhelming majority of the oppressed and exploited−the Non Europeans−were not only not in the Labour Party but actually excluded from the franchise, it was ridiculous for genuine revolutionaries to make the chief aim of their Party affiliation with a group of reformists who in any case would not admit them at any price.

Andrews made a formal statement, quoting the decision of the Comintern on the question of the Labour Party in Britain. He left most of the talking to Glass. We were not convinced. We secured a narrow majority against applying for affiliation.

A few days later Glass publicly resigned from the Communist Party. In an interview with the Star he declared that he did not agree with the policy of the Communists. They were running after the Natives "who could not possibly appreciate the noble ideals of Communism." This was the only direct resignation. Many others who disapproved of the new line gradually became less active and finally dropped away, to reappear perhaps on an occasional May Day or November the Seventh to show that they still believed in the workers of the world and the social revolution.

Andrews resigned his position as secretary early in 1925. He retained his membership of the Communist Party, regularly paying his subscription every year, but taking no part in the work of the organisation. He became secretary of the new Trade Union Co−ordinating Committee (subsequently renamed the S.A. Trade Union Congress), a body which took the place of the old South African Industrial Federation, which had died after the 1922 strike. In his new sphere Andrews could concentrate on trade union administration where he was really more at home. He remained a leftist and could be relied upon to support any radical resolution at congress and committee meetings. When the I.C.U. applied for affiliation to the S.A.T.U.C. in 1928 they found a supporter in Andrews.

The decision of the December, 1924, conference meant a definite turning point in the history of the Communist Party of South Africa. From now on to be a Communist meant that one was identified openly and always with the movement for the emancipation of the black people in South Africa. The work of Bunting and Jones, commenced in 1915, had at last been consummated. But a long and difficult road lay ahead. It was one thing to declare that the

Party was the leader of the African masses. It was another thing to make it so in fact.

Chapter 10. Transition

The defection of Glass, the retirement of Andrews and the growing lack of enthusiasm of the membership, meant a decline in Party activities. The whites were going or gone; the blacks had still to be recruited. With the whites went a large part of the Party income. The Party press no longer paid its way. Bunting sank a large part of his private fortune in it, but it was no use. The debts mounted up. The idea of sacking the white compositors and employing Native printers, defying the aristocrats of labour, salvaging the machinery and starting afresh on a new basis never occurred to any of us, certainly not to Bunting. The white trade union tradition persisted while the debts mounted.

In the meantime we had not yet struck root among the Africans. Various attempts were made to get into contact with politically minded Natives. The I.C.U. was growing. everywhere and this was considered the best field to work in. During 1924 the Young Communist League had roped in two promising young Africans, Thomas Mbeki (a labourer) and Stanley Bilwana (a school teacher). These had attended the Party conference in December, 1924. The white Young Communists assisted them in founding the Johannesburg branch of the I.C.U. −the first in the Transvaal. I.C.U. meetings began to be held regularly. I remember speaking at dozens of them under the chairmanship of a young man called Mazingi, whom a year later we came to suspect of having been in the employ of the police.

Kadalie came north in 1925 and decided to make his head quarters in Johannesburg. For a time he and the Communists Co−operated closely. The Communists at this time were the only whites really interested in the I.C.U., and the I.C.U. leaders liked to show a white man occasionally on their platforms. We found in the numerous meetings an excellent field for verbal propaganda and a sale for our newspapers, though the International−now renamed the South African Worker−did not carry much news of special interest to Africans; and articles in the vernacular, though they did appear, were very infrequent. In the Cape things had developed much further and a number of leading I.C.U. members had joined the Communist Party.

In 1925 a Communist night school was started. This was held at 11, Main Street, in the Ferreirastown slum, in a Native church building, hired on certain nights for the purpose. There were no electric lights. Enthusiastic white Communists tried by candle−light to teach semi literate Africans to read involved passages in Bukharin's " A.B.C. of Communism." It was all very amateurish, but we felt it was the beginning of something new and grand. The organiser of the school and the chief factotum in Native work was T. W Thibedi. He had been a member of the I.S.L. in the old days of Jones and the Industrial Workers of Africa. For years he had been the only black man in the Party. Now he proved himself a remarkably good organiser. Gradually the Communists began to get a Native following.

Communist propaganda among Africans was simple and straightforward. It was almost exclusively what one might call a " working class approach . " An article in Sotho by Thibedi published with. English translation in the S.A. Worker in 1926 contains the following: " There are only two groups of people on the earth and they are as follows:−

1. The group of the capitalists who stand only to govern the workers and make laws by which t
   workers of the product of their labour power.
2. The second group is that of the workers which is the one that makes everything necessary f

"These two groups do not agree, but face each other like a Cat and a rat . . . Now it is the duty of all workers of all countries to unite and fight against the capitalists and their laws and against the robbery that is made by the rich. If you workers wish to live in nice houses and get all the necessities of life, you must overthrow the Capitalist government and start government where capitalism and poverty shall not be known, as they have done in

Russia.... Workers of South Africa arise. and by all means do the same as the Russian workers "

But propaganda was not all such formal stuff. Thibedi visited the Cornelia coal mine as "shop steward of the I.C.U." and then published a fine article, describing the conditions of the workers. An African, Malamela, gave a lecture in Sotho on "Country Life−How Capitalism Has Changed It. " This was translated and reported at length in the Party paper. The Communists were beginning to "get down to it."

Meanwhile the I.C.U. was growing rapidly. Kadalie was becoming a power in the land. And with the growth of the I.C.U. came signs of a a change in its attitude towards the Communists. This great mass movement, nominally a trade union, had, after the early strikes at Cape Town and Port Elizabeth in 1919 and 1920, simply gone forward with its own momentum. It had drawn in tens of thousands of Africans who saw in it a promise of freedom. But it had organised the Africans en masse, not in industrial unions. It had confined its activities to meetings, resolutions and protests. Since 1920 it had organised no strikes; it had not brought about any improvement in the wages and conditions of the thousands who joined in the Orange Free State, the Transvaal and Natal. Naturally a " left wing " began to develop among its members−a left wing that shouted for action. The policy of the leadership began to be questioned. It was natural that the Communists should become less popular with Kadalie, and with Champion−now leader in Natal. The communists were giving aim and direction to the feeling of discontent and they were becoming dangerously powerful in the upper ranks of the organisation.

At the same time many other white people were becoming interested in the I.C.U., people like the liberal nigrophilists and some of the missionaries; Howard Pim and Rheinallt Jones, leaders in the " Joint Council " movement; Ethelreda Lewis, the novelist; the Rev. Ray Phillips of the American Board of Missions. These people had some influence and they were more "respectable" than the Communists. Kadalie looked to them for support, and they in turn looked to Kadalie for a more moderate and conciliatory policy. By the middle of 1926 this new anti−left tendency was definitely brewing.

At Maritzburg in Natal, L. H. Greene, the local communist, was admitted to the I.C.U.−although he was a white man. In the Transvaal we whites had thought it best not to join the I.C.U.−it would have seemed too much like interference. Greene published in the S.A. Worker in August an article on the work of the I.C.U. in Maritzburg in which he put forward some gentle criticism of the leadership. He suggested that the subscription of 2/ a month was too high. He and the " left wing" were in favour of a penny a week. Their slogan was " members, not money."

Champion replied to Greene by a letter to the S.A. Worker in which he stated that Greene as a member of the I.C.U. had no right "to pick up pens and pose as an official or reporter just because he happens to be a white man amongst the illiterate black fools.... We want 2/− for every member that joins in accordance with the terms of our constitution. We shall not be Jim−crowed by anybody, whether he has a white face or not." It WAS very difficult for any white person, in or out of the I.C.U., to criticise. He was damned before he started by the colour of his skin. Bunting replied editorially in conciliatory tone, though maintaining the right of criticism: "We wish to point out that the Communist Party wishes nothing but well−being to the I.C.U., but must also state at the same time that all working class matters are of vital concern to the C.P. The points raised by Comrade Greene were not simply matters of internal machinery, but points of interest to the whole working class movement. "

But in Johannesburg relations between I.C.U. and Communists still seemed to be cordial. In August (1926) Kadalie went on a tour of Natal, defying the Government order that he should not enter that province. No attempt was made to arrest him and he returned to Johannesburg a hero covered with glory. At a huge meeting in the I.C.U. hall he was received with applause and the singing of the " Red Flag." Bunting and Sachs also spoke at this meeting which was reported at length in the S.A. Worker.

In September, 1926, I left for England with a scholarship to study botany at Cambridge. Bunting was not very keen on my going either to Oxford or Cambridge. " The life at these old universities is very pleasant but very insidious, as I know from experience," he told me "Hadn't you rather go to London University?" It was the old

nonconformist attitude of " get thou behind me, Satan." I also thought I should go to London, not that I doubted that I should remain a revolutionary, but that I thought I should be more free in a non residential university. However my professor at Johannesburg advised the Botany School at Cambridge and to Cambridge I went−and did not regret it. Bunting once more became secretary of the Party−a post which I had held since the resignation of Andrews. James Shields, a newcomer from Scotland, became the editor of the paper.

Soon after I arrived in England I heard news which, in spite of all forebodings, came as a shook. The Communists had been expelled from the I.C.U. It happened on December 16, 1926, at the annual national conference of the I.C.U., held at Port Elizabeth. On a motion moved by Champion, the Communist members of the I.C.U. executive were given the alternative of resigning from the C.P. or. being expelled from the I.C.U. Three of them − John Gomas, Cape Provincial Secretary, J. A,. La Guma, General Secretary, and E. J. Khaile, Financial Secretary−refused to leave the C.P. and were expelled. The first two were Cape Coloured and the third an African. Thomas Mbeki, who at this time was Transvaal Provincial Secretary, held out for a day or two and then capitulated.

To illustrate how unprepared the communists were for this blow, I quote from a letter I received from Bunting, written by him on December 15, 1926, the day before the expulsions: " Behind the scenes the I.C.U. Secretary (Kadalie), who, when all is said is vain and anxious for limelight, though not yet a bad lot, is coming under the influence of reactionaries including Champion, who is now hostile, and quite a coolness now prevails between us. But it would be quite a topsy−turvy event if the mass he represents should be jockeyed into going to Amsterdam [i.e. joining up with the " reformist " International Federation of Labour Unions]. I think the fight should not be unduly intensified into a split, but our views must be made to prevail on every occasion of division, and the rank and file accustomed to act as a team and take the lead."

After the split, the I.C.U. seemed to go on from strength to strength, but it had expelled the only forces which might have saved it from disaster. In a few years' time it was in a state of decay and disintegration and the communists were busy picking up the crumbs. But at the time it seemed that the communists were a voice crying in the wilderness. A C.P. manifesto addressed to the members of the I.C.U. and calling upon them to reverse the decision of their leaders, met with no real success. The Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Vereeniging branches of the I.C.U. raised protests, but they were simply ignored by the leadership. In any case, the communists could not stand up against the cry of " no interference by whites. " The fact that Kadalie and his leading followers were hobnobbing with non−communist whites behind the scenes was not known to the rank−and−file.

In 1927 the I.C.U. affiliated to Amsterdam and Kadalie went on a triumphal tour of Europe. He had reached the zenith of his power and fame.

In the meantime the communists turned to other avenues of work among Africans. They found in the African National Congress−long since eclipsed by the I.C.U.−some who were prepared to work with them. Early in 1927, delegates were sent to the Anti−Imperialist Conference in Brussels. J. T. Gumede went as delegate from the African National Congress, while the South African Communist Party was represented by La Guma. Even the S.A. Trades Union Congress sent a delegate−Dan Colraine, who had come to the fore as a leftist during the 192 strike. After Brussels Gumede and La Guma went to the Soviet Union, where Gumede had the wonderful experience for a black man, of being lionised in a white man's country. La (Guma discussed South African politics with Bukharin, of which more was heard afterwards.

Meanwhile, the financial position of the Party, and particularly of the press, was going from bad to worse. Already in his letter of December 15, 1926, Bunting had said: " I personally have been preoccupied . .−. . with the financial battle which is raging severely at present, and in which few Party members can assist. In spite of all efforts it remains impossible to raise funds to pay out ' X ' [to whom the press had become indebted] and as that is still as necessary a step as ever, a sale may occur any moment, meaning a fresh start for the paper−possibly an

interregnum may be involved."

However, the International carried on till August, 1927, before the final crash came. The press was sold out, the Party cleared itself of debt, but was left without a press and without a paper. Bunting was afterwards blamed for the loss of the press, but it seemed to me that he had done all that human effort could have' done in the only way that was envisaged at the time.

After Bunting, the most dynamic figure in the Party at this time was Solly Sachs who had returned to Johannesburg in 1926. Sachs was young, intolerant and aggressive, active and capable, and determined to carve out a career for himself in the revolutionary movement. Bunting wrote: " We are having a conference here at Christmas [1926], at which Solly will no doubt have the most to say−I wish he would learn to say it in a less aggressive manner: perhaps he will some day."

In July, 1927, the Party left the Trades Hall, and moved to offices at 41a Fox Street, in the heart of what was then still a predominantly Native quarter. This was the final break with the old line. From now on the main interest was centred in the African masses. From now a new kind of Communist Party was to appear in South Africa.

Chapter 11. Upsurge

In 1928 things began to move. The communists began to reap the harvest of growing influence and membership, the reward of three years of struggle to establish themselves as a predominantly African organisation.

The South African Worker was revived on a new basis. It was now a " Native paper." More than half the articles in it were printed in the Bantu languages: Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho. Gone were the white compositors. In their place appeared an old Native printer and his boy, who turned the handle of the old fashioned printing machine in the Party office in Fox Street. It was not a very elegant paper from a printer's point of view, but it was the first real communist paper South Africa had seen. The paper was edited by Douglas Wolton, a young Englishman who had joined the Party in Cape Town in 1925. He had married a Jewish comrade, Molly Zelikowitz, who was petite, vivid, excitable, and a magnificent public speaker. The two of them were to play an important part in the history of the South African Communist Party during the next few years.

Another helper who put in valuable work at this time, was Charles Baker. A schoolmaster from England, he had lived in South Africa many years, and had taught in government schools up and down the country. He was an ex−Roman Catholic and a militant atheist, a supporter of the Rationalist Press Association. His chief business in life was to denounce religion as the " opium of the people," and to trounce the missionaries as " agents of imperialism." He was fond of quoting Swinbume:

" We have done with the kisses that sting, The thief's mouth red from the feast, The blood on the hands of the king, And the lie at the lips of the priest."

Baker became the principal of the communist night school in Johannesburg. Under his guidance the school expanded rapidly in its new and better premises in Fox Street. Better, but still with many shortcomings. The school was on the ground floor of a slum tenement. There were not enough desks to go round. Blackboards there were none, so the comrades blackened the walls. The neighbouring rooms were occupied by poor−white down and−outs, prostitutes and methylated spirit drinkers. Lessons were interrupted by stamping on the ceiling or by drunkards trying to force their way into the school room. Night passes were a great problem. Every African, if he wishes to avoid arrest after 9 p.m., must carry a " special pass " signed from day to day by his employer. Many employers would not give passes to attend a communist school. The teachers therefore had to write out the passes themselves, a laborious business. Afterwards they had special forms printed, which made things easier.

In the country districts too, the Communist Party made progress. At Vereeniging communists were refused admission to the location by the superintendent. But they held a meeting outside at which 2,000 attended. Several hundreds joined the Party, including numbers of women. At Potchefstroom the location went over en bloc to the communists. Thibedi had gone there to hold a meeting and had " addressed a large audience of more than 1,000 people." His speech was interrupted by detectives and finally he was hauled off to the charge office in a motor car followed by the entire audience. A melee ensued between the superintendent of the location and some of the women in the audience, which now showed a very menacing attitude. A truncheon was drawn and used. Finally a compromise was effected and the crowd agreed to become quiet if three of the audience were permitted to accompany Thibedi in the motor car to the charge office. Bunting went to Potchefstroom to defend Thibedi at the trial. The charge was one of inciting to hostility between the races. Bunting addressed the court for an hour and Thibedi was acquitted.

The magistrate (Mr Boggs) took up a very liberal attitude. He said there was perfect freedom in South Africa for all races to enjoy full rights of speech and assembly. If the Natives felt oppression by pass so laws or any other Government acts, there was no law to prevent them organising for the repeal of such measures, provided they organised constitutionally. The Communist Party was a legal organisation in this country, and if the European or Native workers wished to join it, there was nothing to prevent their doing so.

Hundreds of Natives crowded the court and lined the streets outside the whole day long; and when the verdict was declared there were tremendous scenes of enthusiasm. A meeting was immediately called on the market square and Wolton started a speech from a wagon on which a red flag was flying. A group of whites, " who had attended the court throughout the day with an ever−growing attitude of sullenness and displeasure, as the discharge of the accused became evident," came to the meeting and began to interrupt the speaker who thereupon addressed them as " fellow white workers." This seemed to displease them more than ever, and they attacked the wagon and assaulted the speaker. Both whites and blacks then scattered and obtained sticks from a nearby wagon. The fight became general; the police intervened. Finally the communists led the crowd back to the location. As a result of this affair, practically every man, woman and child in Potchefstroom location joined the C.P. White leadership has often been a hindrance to the communists, for Natives are naturally suspicious of whites, even those who claim to be their friends. They feel that, however friendly a white man may be, he usually has some sinister motive: at the best, he may be trying to make money out of them. But here they had seen white communists assaulted by the local whites whom they knew for their oppressors. That proved that the communists were genuine. Another factor which increased the prestige of the Party, was Bunting's defence of Thibedi. A lawyer who could win a case and get an African out of the hands of the police must indeed be a man of great power and influence.

The charge against Thibedi, viz " inciting to hostility between the races, " was a new crime in South Africa. In 1927 the Pact Government had passed a special law to enable the authorities to deal with the growing Bantu liberation movement. (clause 29 of the new Native Administration Act stated:

" Any person who utters any words or does any other act or thing whatever with intent to promote any feeling of hostility between Natives and Europeans, shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to imprisonment not exceeding one year or to a fine of one hundred pounds, or both."

The law also provided for the confiscation and destruction of " anything intended to be used for the purpose of committing such an offence." Presumably this gave the authorities the right to seize and destroy newspapers and books circulating among Natives. There was no intention of using the law against whites who incited to race hatred against blacks. Such incitement is an almost daily occurrence in South Africa, but in no instance has anyone been charged with such an offence. On the other hand the law was used against persons who protested against the unfair treatment of blacks.

An incident which took place at Paardekop, another country location, illustrate., the difficulties experienced by the police in coping with white agitators among the Natives. Thibedi and Baker went there to attend a public meeting of the local branch. Mounted police were present but did not interfere till the meeting ended, when they informed Baker that he had infringed the Urban Areas Act, and that they would arrest Thibedi accordingly. When asked by Baker why they did not arrest him, the reply was that Thibedi was a Native l After further argument, the police took both Thibedi and Baker in charge, together with seventeen other Natives, and marched them off to the superintendent's office. That gentleman was not to be found, having gone off to Standerton. The police then decided to march their prisoners to the police station at Platrand, a distance of fifteen miles. Here the Natives were locked up without food or blankets, and next morning fined half−crown each by the police. Thibedi was released with the others, and he and Baker were ordered to appear before the magistrate at Platrand a week later. The charge however, was subsequently dropped.

In the meantime the Johannesburg communists were breaking new ground in the field of Bantu trade unionism. Hitherto Native unions, such as the Industrial Workers of Africa and the I.C.U. had been rather loosely organised political parties rather than trade unions in the strict sense of the word. They had taken in every black man who cared to join and they had made little or no effort to organise the workers in particular trades or industries. But now an attempt was made to organise proper trade unions. The chief mover in this new venture, apart from Thibedi (who was a genius at getting people together, whether workers in a particular industry, women, location residents, or whatever were needed at the moment) was Bennie Weinbren, a white communist. He drove a laundry van and began his trade union career by organizing his fellow white laundry workers. He then turned his attention to the black laundry workers, and started the Native Laundry Workers' Union. Other small unions were quickly added to the list during the early months of 1927−Native bakers, Native clothing workers, and Native mattress and furniture workers.

The headquarters of the new unions was in the Communist Party offices at 41a, Fox Street, which, what with the night school, trade union meetings and other activities, became the rendezvous of hundreds of Johannesburg Natives. At first many of the new adherents were rather vague as to the nature of C.P. membership. Asked to prove they were members of the Party,. they would produce a trade union card, or night school pass. It was all very shocking to some of the Comintern purists, but as time went on things began to sort themselves out.

The new unions were eventually organised in a " Non European Trade Union Federation," of which Weinbren was the chairman and Thibedi the chief organiser. There were a number of strikes in the different industries concerned. Many of them resulted in defeats, but this did not seem to damp the ardour of the members. W. H. Andrews came and addressed meetings, giving the new organisation the blessing of the white Trade Union Congress.

Towards the end of 1928 Weinbren claimed that the N.T.U.F. had 10,000 members on the Witwatersrand.

At the end of February, 1928, J. T. Gumede returned from his tour of the Soviet Union. He claimed that he had brought back the " key to freedom." He held meetings at different centres, meetings at which leading members of the C.P. shared his platform. This gave a further fillip to communist membership and prestige.

May Day 1928 was a " fine show," as Bunting afterward described it to me. The Labour Party and the T.U.C. organised the usual white workers' demonstration, but it was a " poor show " with an audience of about 300. The communists, while they sent a speaker to the white meeting, concentrated on a separate meeting for black workers, where thousands came and subsequently marched through the streets with their communist and trade union banners, led by an African brass band.

Bunting must have felt that this was worth the years of argument and struggle. There was still no real unity of black and white workers−far from it−but the " African proletariat " was definitely on the march, behind the red banners of the Communist Party.

In the meantime nemesis had come upon the I.C.U. Topheavy, without an educated rank and file, riddled with government spies and provocateurs, financially corrupt, the battle ground of rival leaders, its most genuine revolutionary elements expelled, the huge structure came toppling down and split into fragments. Champion broke away, taking with him the whole of Natal. A " ginger group," headed by Keable Mote, seceded in the Orange Free State. The Cape Town branch refused to acknowledge Kadalie's leadership, and declared its independence. In the midst of it all, William Ballinger, the long awaited " adviser " from Britain, arrived in South Africa. His presence did not stop the rot.

On the contrary it seemed to accelerate it; for before very long he and Kadalie quarrelled and Kadalie himself broke away to form the " Independent I.C.U." By the end of 1928, the I.C.U. was a declining force. The Communist Party, on the other hand, was definitely on the upgrade.

Chapter 12. Black Republic

The " upsurge " of 1928 had brought into the movement a number of interesting and colourful personalities − mostly Africans. Of these, the most outstanding was Albert Nzula, a man of unusual ability, though with very grave faults which afterwards proved his undoing. A teacher at the A.M.E. mission school at Wilberforce in the Transvaal, he had attended a communist public meeting at Evaton in August, 1928. He was impressed by the fact that Wolton had continued to address the meeting even after rain began to fall. Writing to the S.A. Worker a month later, he says: " After reading through Communism and Christianism [a book by Bishop Brown, who had been defrocked by the Episcopal Church of the United States because he declared he could reconcile the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, Charles Darwin and Karl Marx !] I have come to the conclusion that every right minded person ought to be a communist. I have hesitated all the time because communism has been misrepresented; I have been brought up on capitalistic literature which is never satisfactory when it tries to explain working class misery. I am convinced that no halfway measures will solve the problem.... I am prepared to do my little bit to enlighten my countrymen on this point."

Nzula was, in the phraseology of the movement, a Bantu intellectual, an African teacher. So also were S. M. Kotu, Edwin Mofutsanyana, and John Marks. Kotu and Mofutsanyana were honorary officials of the C.P. in Potchefstroom. The location superintendent refused to allow them to reside in the location, because they were communists, and, as the law did not allow them to sleep in the town (where they were employed) they had for a period to sleep out on the veld, until they finally obtained a ruling from the local magistrate, " that a member of the Communist Party as such should not be classified as an undesirable person." Mofutsanyana was to prove one of the most loyal and steadfast of communists; but he was slow, not, very eloquent and lacked " drive."

Kotu was of more mercurial temperament and a good platform man. He did not last as long as Mofutsanyana.

The only African woman who played any part in the communist movement at this time was a Potchefstroom recruit, Josie Mpama. Her people were old residents in the location and the authorities found it difficult to deport her numbers of African workers came into. the Party at this time. Three of them deserve special mention: Gana Maka beni, Johannes Nkosi and Moses Kotane. They were workers who were attracted to the Party through the trade unions, and they received most of their education (political and otherwise) at the Party night school. Kotane, who was an avid reader, was subsequently to become one of the Party's theoreticians, in which capacity he proved himself capable of holding his own with any of the white intellectuals.

It was now seven years since the formation of the South African Communist Party and its affiliation to the Moscow Comintern. Hitherto the Comintern had taken no very active Interest in its tiny branch in South Africa. The local communists had tried to .follow the " general line " of the Comintern. I have already referred to the discussions on the " united front" and " immediate demands " where Bunting had appeared as the exponent of the " correct line " in opposition to the " left deviations" of certain Cape Town members. But these polemics had been

exceptional. In general the South African revolutionaries had got along with the minimum of Comintern theory and in any case had been left largely to work out their own salvation. During the dispute over the " Native question " in 1924 there had been no guidance from Moscow, except what had come indirectly through the Young Communist International to the youth section in South Africa.

But from 1927 onwards for a number of years Comintern " directives " became a very real thing in this country. This was primarily due to an increased interest by Moscow in the colonial countries. At this time the Bolsheviks regarded British capitalism as the main enemy. British diplomacy was trying to build a White wall round Red Russia: Poland, the Baltic states, Rumania, were in the British sphere of influence; their armies were being subsidised with British capital. The Soviet had made a treaty with Versailles−ridden Germany. And now the Soviet, through the Comintern, was trying to hamstring the British Empire by organising liberation movements in the British colonies, of which South Africa was one.

Apart from these special circumstances which called forth an interest in South Africa, there had been a general growth in the organisational apparatus of the Comintern. The various manoeuvres of the Comintern, determined primarily by the situation in the Soviet Union and the relations between that country and the capitalist powers, were reflected more strongly in the individual communist parties throughout the world. Hitherto any swings to right or left in the South African movement had been determined by local conditions. But from now on the South African communists were expected to fall into line with " the world revolutionary movement," which meant in practice that they had to repeat the " guiding slogans " which at any particular time were " correct " in the Russian party. Of course, such general slogans were always supposed to be adapted to the local conditions in any particular country. But these " adaptations" did not save the individual parties from violent changes of policy, which, on looking back on events, seem to me now to have been misguided in the extreme. They had disastrous results for the individual parties and in the long run they did not help the world revolutionary movement or even the progress of the Soviet Union itself.

The spate of Comintern directives, theses, and criticisms to which the South African communists now became subjected, nonplussed Bunting, dazed and finally overwhelmed him. For one thing, he was a slow thinker. Every step in his advance from a non conformist liberal to a revolutionary socialist had meant a mental struggle. Slowly he had advanced, clinging tenaciously to one set of ideas, giving them up with difficulty and then, when he had made the transition, adhering to the new ideas with equal tenacity. And because policies meant so much to him, because he held views so strongly, he could not be a facile manoeuverer. He was no Machiavelli: the end did not justify the means. He could not easily advocate one thing to day, and another to−morrow with his tongue in his cheek, and justify his behaviour by appealing to some ultimate abstraction. Also, ever since −his " come down " in philosophy at Oxford, he had been annoyed with hair−splitting dogma and formal theory.

Now suddenly the South African communists, with Bunting at their head, found themselves caught in a whirlwind of theory. The Comintern had decided to " bolshevise" its affiliated sections, the C.P.S.A. among them. Theoretical clarity became the order of the day. Directions from Moscow based on " Leninist " principles must replace empirical methods of trial and error. The various stages of the revolution must be grasped. Appropriate slogans corresponding to the main tasks of the period must be enumerated. Campaigns must be waged against various " dangers " real or hypothetical. Above all a " bolshevist leadership" must be created, social−democratic forms of organisation abolished, and the Party purged of "opportunist, vacillating and non−proletarian elements."

The storm which was approaching, a, storm which ultimately was to wreck the Party (at least for a period) and destroy its influence over the Bantu masses much more effectively than ever the police of the South African Government could have done, appeared at first as a little cloud on the horizon, a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. La Guma, when he had visited Russia in 1927, had had a discussion with Bukharin (then a leading figure in the Comintern) on the situation in South Africa. It was agreed that the struggle in this country was primarily an anti−imperialist one. The country was a colony or semi−colony of British imperialism. The Bantu, like the Indians and Chinese and other colonial peoples, were suffering national oppression. They were being deliberately

kept in a backward condition by British finance capital and its South African ally (Boer imperialism), in order that super profits might be extracted from them. Most of these super−profits were then exported to Britain, though part was distributed among the South African capitalists and landowners as a bribe to induce them to help in keeping the Natives in subjection. It wag clear therefore that the main task of the revolution in South Africa was to overthrow the rule of the British and Boer imperialists, to set up a democratic independent Native republic (which would give the white workers and other non exploiting whites certain " minority rights") as a stage towards the final overthrow of capitalism in South Africa.

Accordingly, a " draft resolution on South Africa " was drawn up by the Comintern and sent for discussion to this country early in 1928. The main slogan of the Party was to be " an independent Native republic, as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' government." The draft resolution was to be discussed and finally adopted by the sixth world congress of the Communist International, due in Moscow by the middle of the year.

To Bunting and the great majority of fellow Party members the new slogan came like a bolt from the blue. And to me. when I received the news in England, it was equally startling. 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. True, we had left the white workers' trades hall, we had fought to make the C.P. a predominantly black party; but we had always advocated the unity of the workers.

We did not want to put the black man on top and the white man underneath. We wanted them to be equal.

Though the majority reacted in this way, there was a minority which welcomed the slogan. These were led by the Woltons and La Guma. Bunting and his wife were sent to the Sixth Congress to put forward the views of the majority. The Woltons sent a minority report.

The South African Party was entitled to three delegates at the Sixth Congress. As I was in England and almost on the spot as it were, I was invited by the Party to be the third delegate. I met Buntings in London in July, 1928.

On our way across Europe to the Soviet capital we had plenty of time to discuss the slogan. The Buntings were inclined to regard it as all due to La Guma. It had all started with his discussion with Bukharin a year before. La Guma was a bit of a racialist. One gathered that if La Guma had never visited Moscow the slogan would never have been born. With this interpretation I found it hard to agree. I felt that the slogan was derived from Comintern theory, but that it was a false interpretation of such theory. I said that we South African communists were very backward with regard to theory and that we should realise our shortcomings in this respect. I harped on this matter a lot during our journey, but agreed with the others that the slogan was incorrect.

We spent a few days in Berlin, where the Reds had fought on barricades on May Day a few weeks before. The German C.P. was still powerful and growing in strength and was fighting the Social Democrats for the leadership of the working class. But there was another party in the field which had not been there on Bunting's last visit to Germany in 1922. Hitler and his Nazis were becoming a power in the land. We did not see any brown shirts or red−front fighters−we were unlucky in not seeing any big meetings during the few days we were there−but we saw posters everywhere, chiefly Nazi and Communist.

Bunting and I wandered through the streets eating cherries −the red−fleshed sort, at a few pfennig a kilogram. I recalled walking through the streets of Jeppe eating buns with Bunting while we canvassed for C. F. Glass in a provincial council election campaign−it must have been in 1924. ' Bunting's difficulty about making up his mind appeared in small things as well as great. One morning on a street corner we three discussed whether we should

go to Potsdam or the Tiergarten. Somehow it finally rested with Bunting to make the decision and we wasted minutes while he tried to make up his mind. Finally, after some false starts, we decided to go to the Tiergarten and rushed off only to see our bus disappearing round a corner I

We took the train through Warsaw to Moscow where we and crowds of delegates from all over the world were welcomed with bands and banners. Our main occupation in Moscow was not seeing the sights but attending innumerable meetings and discussing the slogan. Mrs. Bunting found the social atmosphere at the Sixth very different from that of the Fourth Congress in 1922. Then there had been a spirit of comradeship; comrades had exchanged news about conditions in their different countries. They had all been friends together, members of one big revolutionary movement. But now there were numerous factions and cliques, each trying to curry favour with the powers at the top, each with its own axe to grind. Comrades were afraid to discuss things openly for fear of being accused of political "deviations." Perhaps we South Africans were particularly sensitive to the absence of a spirit of fraternity, for we were deliberately cold−shouldered by some of the delegates, and the American Negro delegate, Ford, refused to speak to us. The story had gone round that the South African delegates were " white chauvinists "

We had come to Moscow bursting with a desire to state our case. But we could not find anyone in authority who was pre pared to listen to us. We were told by " Comrade Bennett" that the South African question would be decided by the Anglo−American Secretariat, which included Negro Africa within its scope, and of which Bennet was Secretary. This body would meet the South African delegates later. In the meantime we attended the general meetings of the Congress, listened−to the big speakers and put our names on the speakers' list, 60 that we too should have our say in due course.

Bunting soon took a violent dislike to Bennet, whose other name, we understood, was Petrovsky. Most of the Comintern functionaries had strings of aliases and one never knew for certain what their real names were. Bennet was a blond with a thin face, long nose and protruding eyes. " A slimy fellow " Bunting commented. But we had to put up with Bennet. He was the official channel through which all matters relating to the South African party must go.

Bunting's first chance to speak to the assembled delegates occurred on July 23. In this, his first speech, he did not make any direct reference to the slogan controversy, though he tried to prepare the ground for the coming fight by giving the congress an account of conditions in South Africa. He emphasised the proletarian character of the Native movement, pointing out that the greatest militancy had been shown on the industrial field and that vast masses of "peasants" in South Africa worked on the mines and other industries, returning periodically to the land.

Bunting criticised Bukharin's leading speech which had referred only to the " masses " in the colonies and had said nothing of the colonial proletariat as such. "The draft programme of the Communist International says that there are two main revolutionary forces: the ' proletariat' in the countries at home, and then ' masses ' in the colonies. I beg to protest against this bald distinction. . . Is not that 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."

Bunting's fight for thirteen years had been to bring the black worker into the South African labour movement, to get the white " socialist " to recognize the black man as a fellow worker. All this emphasis on the non proletarian character of the black masses−the need for a slogan'based on the anti imperialist national " agrarian " revolution−seemed to him to belittle the work of the South African Communists. A close study of the colonial policy of the Comintern would have shown him that the colonial proletariat was not ignored by the followers of Lenin and that a leading role was assigned to it in the national revolution. Here, as in many other cases, Bunting's almost complete lack of doctrinal knowledge, made him appear a blundering novice among the hard−bitten

functionaries, like Petrovsky, who had probably burned the midnight oil while they pored over the works of Lenin and Stalin and the voluminous theses of the Comintern.

The trouble was really the uncomradely atmosphere at Moscow. Bunting, though slow, was capable of learning. If he had been taken in hand by sincere revolutionaries who were willing to recognise him for what he was, a courageous and honest− est fighter, and who were prepared to bear with him, it would have been a different story. There really was a very bad spirit in Moscow. Bunting protested, but without any visible effect.

" 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 mentioned. If our parties are weak, then they should be strengthened. Better communication is required. It will perhaps surprise you to know that until about months ago we have not had a letter (except for circulars) from the Communist International for five or six years. That a thing which has to be attended to immediately. At any ate, we ask to be considered a little more as representing annually masses of workers, and not treated with, shall I say, a sort of step motherly or scholastic contempt 88 representing mere shapeless masses? When I came here an official of the Communist International [it must have been Petrovsky] 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−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 difference between us, we do not treat each other like that."

The promised attack came a few days later in speeches by Dunne (an American delegate) and Bennet Petrovsky. They declared that the South African delegate had made a " social democratic " speech. In the course of his speech Bunting had described conditions in the African continent as a whole, pointing out how different were the conditions in the eastern, western and southern parts, and he had said: " 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." Part of this statement, entirely removed from its context, was quoted by Dunne to prove that Bunting was a " white chauvinist.

Bunting replied to this distortion with an official statement, suggesting that perhaps he had been wrongly heard, as he was not a clear speaker. But it is more than likely that his traducers had deliberately distorted his remarks in order to discredit him. It was fortunate perhaps that official stenographic records were made of all speeches.

In the meantime we were trying hard to get past the facade of bureaucrats, jacks in office, and time servers, which seemed to constitute the "Comintern," as We found it, to those real Bolsheviks whom we believed were somewhere in Moscow−real Leninists who would listen and understand and appreciate, who would not be out to attack us but to give us their comradely advice. Mrs Bunting, in particular, was certain that inner core was somewhere to be found and she persuaded Bunting to write articles which she translated into Russian for Pravda.

I also was drawn in to writing descriptive articles showing the complexity of South African conditions. One, I remember, I gave as a speech to the Congress. It dealt with revolutionary movement of the white miners on the Rand, 1913, 1914, and 1922 strikes, etc. Whatever effect these efforts may have had on the ' real Bolsheviks" they did not alter the attitude of the bureaucrats.

Bunting's speech on the slogan question was delivered on August 20. I do not propose to quote the whole of this speech which occupied fourteen pages in the stenographic report. It was a much more sophisticated speech than any of his previous efforts. At least it referred frequently to Comintern theses and resolutions, particularly to the Colonial Thesis of the Second Congress. He emphasised that the " Native bourgeoisie" in South Africa was to all intents and purposes non−existent. The national revolutionary movement could be regarded in the main an anti−imperialist movement in which national and class interests tended to coincide.

Bunting maintained that the work in South Africa had shown that the slogans of the Party were adequate. "We have 1,750 members" he said, "of whom 1,600 are Natives, as against 200 a year ago, and we are adding to that and also organising militant Native trade unions which have learnt to conduct strikes. We are also combating and slowly overcoming white labour chauvinism, which we found yields when confronted with organised masses of Native fellow workers face to face. We 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 . . . 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 emphasise the contradiction between national and class movements, but put the whole Native movement at a great disadvantage unnecessarily and without oompensating advantage.

It will 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 of these safeguards is given−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....

"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 [in South Africa] 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 re−drafted 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 powers 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 C.P.B.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 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 "We have always instinctively felt this need of white labour support, but it is only when threatened by this' slogan with the 1088 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' ! 10 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 learned 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."

It is now fifteen years since Bunting made this speech and it is probable that any communist or other labour radical in South Africa would today endorse every word of it. But in Moscow in 1928 it was considered rank heresy. The left extremists in the Comintern who, under the slogan of " Down with social fascism," were busy making any sort of working class unity in Germany impossible and preparing the way for Hitler's seizure of power, were not likely to adopt a more reason able attitude towards Bunting and the little band of communists in South Africa.

A week or so. later the " South African question " at last came up for discussion before the Anglo−American committee. We were invited to be present. The meeting was held round a table in a large room. Petrovsky was chairman and there were some half−dozen others, including a Russian or two and representatives of the American and British parties. Petrovsky opened the proceedings and− called on Bunting, who spoke at length, very much on the lines of the speech he had made before the open congress and from which I have quoted. Two of the American delegates (Lovestone and Pepper) were apparently more interested in some affair of their own (there was the usual crisis in the American party and the rival factions were fighting for Comintern support) and while Bunting was only half−way through his speech they left the table and retired to a corner where they carried on a whispered conversation. Petrovsky sat with an indulgent smile on his face. It wag clear that nobody was really interested in what Bunting was saying. In fact we had been told confidentially that whatever we might say the slogan would not be altered. But I was annoyed − with the blatant indifference of the Americans, I interrupted the proceedings and demanded that the pair in the corner should return to their seats at the table. And so they had to sit and hear Bunting−at the end. It was our only victory in MOSCOW and a' hollow one at that. Nor could we take much comfort later when we heard that the Lovestone Pepper faction had lost the day and the Foster faction had triumphed.

A few days after this I had to return to England. The Congress was almost over, but we were told there would be another meeting of the Anglo−American Secretariat, and that the final instructions to the South African party would then be given. The Buntings stayed on, hoping for some last minute change of heart by Petrovsky, or rather by those higher up who decided these things.

On September 11 Bunting was back in London. He wrote to me from there. He was evidently very tired and suffering from nervous strain. He had taken the discussions on the slogan and our failure to get it altered, very much to heart. "As I still want a holiday," he wrote, "I am disposed to put in time here till October 18 [when the P. and O. boat was due to sail] in search of health and good sleep, but the Party wants us back at once. Still, our party life and work is going to be a desperate business from now on, the ' slogan ' is now ' law ' (all my latest efforts were treated with exactly the same contempt as when you protested at their not listening) and we are in for a hell of a time, however much we 'make the best of it,' in fact I can't see the future at all clearly; so it seems better to go back fit than early."

At this time I must have been trying to convince myself that the slogan was theoretically correct, that our failure to understand it was due to lack of theoretical knowledge. I wrote a letter to the Party in South Africa in which I said something to this effect, and I sent a copy to Bunting. He wrote me again on September 14: "I did not write to S.A. .re slogan or anything else.(because the absorbing topics are away from the slogan) until yesterday when I just gave the result and said I had not changed my views much but thought we might be able to make the best of it. I can't say I share your ' Mea Culpa ' view re lack of theory . . . there is no great question of theory behind the advocacy of the slogan, nor of lack of theory behind our objections to it; and I still think the switching off from class struggle to race struggle an exaggeration, and a departure from Lenin, quite apart from what you call expediency (as if 'theory' were something above expediency or expediency below theory). I asked Petrovsky to draw an election manifesto for Harrison [who had been suggested as a communist candidate for Cape Flats in the coming parliamentary elections] but he declined."

There was a lot more in this letter in reply to various things I had said in my letter to the C.P.S.A. Bunting concluded, " Well, the question will resolve itself into a different one in South Africa, we shall have to get our speeches written out and passed by Counsel before delivering them, or else go wholesale to gaol, which would be ' inexpedient 1' See you soon."

I was staying for another year at Cambridge but I met the Buntings again in London before they sailed for South Africa. He was full of apprehension for the future, but, as he said, "determined to make the best of it." There was never any question of his loyalty to the demands of the Comintern even when he did not agree at all.

Chapter 13. Tembuland Campaign

My next letter from Bunting was dated December 5, 1928.

When they got back, he wrote, they found the Party split sideways and edgeways with quarrels, intrigues, back−biting, etc., to incredible lengths. The differences over the slogan had led to general bad blood, with the Woltons and La Guma versus all the rest, but some of the rest also versus Thibedi. The branches were bewildered at this excess of partisanship at the head office and the trade unions were quite paralysed, especially by disagreements between La Guma and Thibedi. "As far as I can judge," said Bunting, " everybody concerned is to blame, and not least the Woltons for announcing in the middle of all the trouble that they are retiring to England at the end of the year. We left them last June, despite differences of opinion, on the best of intimate terms, but in our absence they have worked up a case against us to make you shudder, and try as we will to ignore it, it has destroyed all real confidence between us. What letters have been sent to Moscow all these months from them and La Guma we can only guess; we see now that; our very unpleasant experiences there were the result of a violent secret preparation in the shape of reports which, as you know, ' Bennet ' and Co. never showed us, but the contents of which we can imagine from the contents of another missive to Moscow which it seems was read, before despatch, by Baker and Thibedi, cutting us and others to pieces−so that we feel we have been unwittingly dealing all this time with some very deep customers. Well, it is all very depressing, and will take a lot of liquidating. "

Bunting was also bothered with financial and domestic affairs. With Wolton going away he felt he would have to give full time to party work and this meant giving up (or rather not restarting) his legal practice, thus losing whatever income it might bring. He did not know what to do with his children.

On the boat he had written a pamphlet of sixty pages, Imperialism and South Africa, being a report on behalf of the delegates of the S.A. Communist Party on their return from the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. It was, he says in his letter, "the best foundation I could think of for the slogan. "

On landing at Cape Town they had been met by "a regular hurricane fire of alarmist newspaper scares about Moscow and South African Natives," as Bunting described it. "We were pestered for interviews about ' Mrs Rebecca Bunting's opposition to the slogan' [a distorted account that had appeared in the South African papers during the Congress] and to clear the air I wrote a letter on the subject to the Star of November 17. Next day we delivered our message [at a public meeting in Johannesburg]. We were threatened and warned of arrest, but although we have made a number of speeches since, always dogged by crowds of detectives, nothing has happened beyond Chinese crackers thrown at an indoor meeting of the Trades Hall last Sunday by a woman in tow with Stewart, the man we spotted at the Cape Town Conference three years ago, and now openly connected with the C.I.D.

" We advertised a meeting specially for white trade unionists, but I don't think any came; the hall was full of miscellaneous whites. Tinker 11 is hot against us. I gather this is the attitude of such trade unionists as bestir themselves to take any interest at all. Andrews says he certainly is not going to have anything to do with a Black

Republic Tramwaymen, indicating me, shout to each other ' kill him.' Of course none of this is new but the white working class can only be won by very patient propaganda ....and even then they prefer to be apathetic. The S.A.T.U.C. has turned down an invitation to the Anti Imperialist League. I could see that Andrews was against accepting, though the ostensible reason I believe was lack of finds−as if they had forgotten that Colraine's expenses were paid ! [Colraine had been the T.U.C. delegate to the previous Anti−Imperialist Congress in Brussels.]

" White bourgeois are generally hostile, but more−ready I think to admit that what we say is true,' though they want to cling to Empire, not Black Republic. Benson the lawyer said ' A lot of us would be with you if you were not a communist and in tow with Moscow.' A parson said ' That's the stuff we ought to be preaching at St. Mary's.' And Marka of Market Street said ' I agree with every word '−i.e. of my speech of . November 18. Well, if we can even split the white bourgeoisie a little, even though the trade unionists hold aloof and the bar loafers are hostile and the Dutch murderous, it is something.

" As for the Natives, Wolton has reeled off the 100 word slogan 12 at them several times, but I couldn't see that it caught on like that. He has presented it too much− as a new incantation fresh from Moscow but it hasn't appealed like that. We shall see whether there is anything in it, or a ' trumpet call." Later on Becky went to Potchefstroom to a women's meeting, with Molly and coloured Mrs Bhola, a new chum from the African National Congress, and when Molly spouted the magic formula, a member of the branch said ' Nothing new in that, it is what the communists have been always hammering at, and we must go on hammering.'

"Despite Moscow's malignant obstinacy, I notice both Woltons and I have presented the slogan as a matter of 'majority' in the sense of your amendment: equality, liberty, etc..; These are the simpler creeds that tell. Even so, the I.C.U. has been inclined to repudiate the Black Republic, and−the A.N.C; has been silent. Many of our black members and trade unionists are−against' it, and I have to champion it (with rather bad grace I confess, for though it is challenging−to white−it does not seem to me inspired or inspiring as regards blacks) by saying: " Well, the wording is a bit harsh, but after all, we have always told the Natives they have got rule and I think they will settle down as the October drought gives place to rain....

During the discussions in Moscow I had suggested as an alternative to. − the official slogan, the following: " An independent workers' and peasants' South African republic, with equal rights for all toilers irrespective of colour, as a basis for a Native majority government." This had been turned down without discussion.

" I am hoping that perhaps the Woltons will get out of their huff and decide to remain after all, though they have sold their furniture and given up their (half share of a) house.... They have so far declined to give reasons for their departure, but the chief one seems to be that the office holders in the Party should all be black. But why, therefore, desert the party and the country ?"

The Communist Party of South Africa held its seventh annual conference in Johannesburg at the beginning of January,

There were 30. delegates, 20 Black and 10 White, representing, according to a report of the credentials committee, nearly 3000 members. In a lengthy programme which he drew up, and which the conference endorsed, Bunting outlined his idea of the " Native Republic " as follows:

" .... The Party devotes special attention to the national cause of the Native people as such, not indeed in the sense of a campaign ' to. drive the white man into the sea,' but in the Lennist sense of underlining the prime importance of supporting movements for complete national liberation of colonial peoples' removing all the political social disabilities which make their enslavement, restoring to them the lands and liberties taken away from them by foreign conquerors, settlers and financiers, and vindicating their right, as the majority and in the truest sense the people of Africa, to equality, emancipation, independence and self determination, and hence (for freedom here

means power) to predominant political power in their own country− on a basis, however of equal rights for Europeans and other minorities as ' most favoured nations."

Thus in his own words, not in the stilted jargon of the Comintern,. did Bunting express his own views and those of the Party for whose existence he was largely responsible. It is almost incredible that he should have been dubbed a white chauvinist and misleader.

He wrote to me on January 9, saying: " We got over our crises at our conference (a very fine one, splendid country delegates). We agreed on interpreting the slogan as meaning much the same as a (predominantly and characteristically Native workers' and peasants' republic, and not meaning a black dictatorship; and though some wanted to move amendments; and references back I felt bound, while allowing full discussion for the sake of arriving at an understanding, to disallow these as contrary to the Comintern statutes enjoining ' unreserved acceptance. After the 4 and half days' conference was over we got a cable from Inkpen (for E.G.C.I) requesting the postponement till March but cabled back that it was all over, slogan adopted, and we were now trying to finance elections. Wolton came out with his attack on the Party, very poisonous and diseased, but h reply he was induced to stop till after the elections, and his charges were not taken seriously. He is to fight Cape Flats and I, Tembuland. The head office will have to be in suspense, but we have got a Native assistant secretary, Nzula whose trust worthiness will still have to be proved, I fear, as his record is not quite irreproachable: but we'll see. Weinbren and Thibedi are still irreconcilable to the slogan, especially W., who is leading the Native trade unions against it−an awkward position which, however, must I think burn itself out. (I also think the slogan. defective, but we can get along with. it, and may make a hit, will see). I shall soon be departing for the wilds− a real adventure it will be, and Government. may shut us up there, the law prohibiting meetings there is in force now, and may be stiffened ! "

The Cape was the only province in South Africa where certain number of Non−Europeans had the vote, though even there only whites were allowed as candidates. There were only two constituencies where Non Europeans formed as much as half the electorate: Cape Flats − a suburb of Cape Town with a large number of both Coloured and African voters; and Tembuland−the Transkeian constituency in the Eastern Province where approximately half the electors were Africans. It was thought at the time that Cape Flats, where there was a Party group, offered the better field for a communist candidate and Wolton was very keen on fighting it. Characteristically; Bunting did not contest Wolton's choice but accepted for himself the less promising task of fighting in Tembuland.

The Tembuland campaign of 1929 we may regard as one of Bunting's most outstanding achievements It ended in his defeat, but a defeat which was in a sense a personal victory. The Communist− Party until now had been a party of the large towns and the smaller urban locations. In places like Potchefstroom contact had been made with a number of Bantu farm labourers and labour tenants. But in no instance hitherto, except perhaps in the visits to the Basutoland Lekhotla la Bafo (League of the Poor) had the red flag been carried into the Native reserves. The Transkei is by far the most important of South Africa's " Native territories." It has a population of over a million Bantu, and only some 20,000 whites; it extends nearly two hundred miles from east to west and over a hundred miles−from north to south. In the course of the campaign, which lasted three months, Bunting sent frequent reports to Johannesburg and these were printed in the S.A. Worker. He was accompanied by his wife and by Gana Makabeni, whose home was in the Transkei. Makabeni acted as Xhosa interpreter− and general political agent. They hired a motor van and Native driver in Durban and set out leading a sort of " caravan life," as Bunting describes it. They entered the Transkei on March 8, 1929.

" On entering these 'sacred territories,' BUNTING wrote, '−' the police began their attention at once no doubt on advice from Durban or 'higher up.' Wherever we made a halt they scrutinized our Native passes and our car licence, and at Umtata, the 'capital' they threatened us all with prosecution, and have actually arrested our driver for entering the Transkei without a permit, although he, like Comrade Gana, was born here.

The case was timed to hamper our movements and is still} pending. Eddie Litshaba (the driver) is out on 10 pounds bail though the maximum fine is 1 pound. Our slightest move is watched. and reported by the police from place to place. Moreover, the chief magistrate on our arrival informed us that our campaign was discountenanced by the authorities, who would refuse us any facilities or any information beyond what we were legally entitled to. The chiefs have been told to sake no active part. in the election campaign−and their salaries are at stake 1 Of course we knew that before, but it is more unblushing than we expected. The European population, generally, too, with one or two exceptions not communists but at least professing some sort of liberalism or labourism) are more vulgarly hostile than I for one. quite realised they would be: they have not so far offered us violence like the aristocrats of Potchefstroom, but have already repeatedly threatened to shoot us. The Christian parsons appear among the most reactionary of all. Generally the whites seem to consider themselves, like the three tailors of Tooley Street, to be ' the ' people of the country. As for the Native people, whose own reserve we supposed this to be, our general impression so far is −that they are more held down here than anywhere else in South Africa. By a long regime of ' segregation ' and congestion, all the stuffing seems to have been knocked out of them−so at least the authorities probably flatter themselves: perhaps we should rather say it is bottled up, with a very heavy official hand on the cork.

" There is no branch of the Congress; the I.C.U. broke up some time ago (although some still say they ' vote for Kadalie '), and there is no other Native organisation except official bodies like advisory boards, and, especially, the ' Transkeian (General Council' or ' Bhunga,' a Native mock parliament controlled by white officials, which seems mainly concerned in praying the Government to make petty reforms which the. Bhunga has no power to make itself . . .

" The Native voters consist mostly of lawyers' clerks, teachers, recruiting clerks, etc., and perhaps tend to consider themselves A superior caste, but we have already urged on them the duty of using− their ' privilege ' in trust for the whole of their people, and this we hope most of them will do, secretly, though openly they may have to kow−tow to their bosses. As for the mass of the Natives, they are already ours wherever we establish contact.

" We held our first meeting on the 6th on the market square, Umtata, the two halls having been refused to us. Amid a running fire of white shopkeepers' jeers, etc (although their customers are almost exclusively black) the big Native audience heard us gladly−never had they heard such a gospel, least of all from a white man. Our speeches became the talk of the whole district, and we propose, though everywhere the whites beseech us to depart from their coasts, to go from village to village delivering a like message. The police for their part will do their d...est to shut us up.

" More than ever we can see how completely these territories, with all their officials and paraphernalia, are to day mere appurtenances of the Chamber of Mines. The people have just so little land per family, and are taxed just so much, that they can only subsist by sending their men to the mines. And the whites simply batten on the couple of pounds brought home by each mineworker after his dreary contract has expired."

A few days after writing this, Bunting was arrested, together with Makabeni and Mrs Bunting. They were charged under the " hostility " law for speeches made at a meeting, and, in the case of Mrs Bunting, for distributing Imperialism in South Africa and the C.P. programme, and convicted by chief magistrate Welsh−Bunting to 50 pounds or six months' hard labour, and the others to 30 pounds or three months' each. Fortunately they were able to bail themselves out and go on with the campaign pending an appeal to the Supreme Court in the course of the trial a verbatim report of the meeting taken by a local newspaper correspondent, was handed in by the police, but the magistrate refused to allow it to be read to the court because of the large Native audience present.

They visited the mission station at Buntingville, " named " says Bunting " after an ancestor of mine, a Wesleyan divine." 13

" The parson in charge was the first−no, I beg the first one's pardon the second white man in the Transkei to behave at least decently to us, even in giving us a small hall to hold a meeting in, the weather outside being dreadfully bad."

They went on to Queenstown, still followed by the police. couple of Bantu " police boys " were told off to follow them about. (Gana writes: " When we stop they watch us and see what kind of food we eat and how we go to bed. When we camp for the night they have to do likewise. If we divide up our party they do the same, one following Bunting, another following me. I went up and down the same street (in Queenstown) so that the people could see what I was doing, and the C.I.D. man kept following me without any shame until the shop boys laughed at him. He had no time for a meal and had to eat out of a paper.

After covering a wide area they returned to Umtata, only to be arrested again " for practically all the speeches" they had made since the previous prosecution. Again they were convicted and allowed out on bail pending appeal. " Fortunately," says Bunting "we have managed to get our appeals to Grahamstown (the Supreme Court) postponed until June 24, after this election . to the chagrin of many here. But such tame speeches I can't help wondering how many years of imprisonment Lord Olivier, say, or even the editor of the Star would be doing if he came here, or where else in the world a candidate is brought to court for every election speech. "

At Cambridge I got a letter from Bunting, dated Umtata, May 14. " I have no time to write," he says "it needs a book to describe everything here . . . We have got to live on less, but I quite take to mealie−pap (the Natives can't afford even that)

and the field, the scope, and among all except the good−boy voters the response is unlimited. Most voters I fear are good boys, divorced from their people, so though the latter welcome us overwhelmingly everywhere, they are voteless; the voters may vote S.A.P. still." Then in a postscript: " Ask my sister [in London] to show you my letter to her of even date; of course such things are not put to her as I would put them to you, e.g. the poison of missionary education."

The African voters made up almost exactly half the elector ate and there were a few Coloured voters−as well. There were two candidates in addition to Bunting, the official government (S.A. Party,) candidate, Payne, and an independent, Hemming. It seemed therefore, that Bunting had a good chance of winning the seat, for it was clear from the start that he had the sympathy of the overwhelming majority of the Bantu inhabitants. But Bunting got only 289 votes, enough to save him his deposit. On the face of it, it was not a great victory but really it was quite 8 creditable performance if one considers the facts. ALL the forces at the disposal of the Government were used to discredit him. Officials openly entered the lists against him−something which would have provoked a crisis in South African politics if it had happened to, say, a Boer nationalist candidate in an ordinary election in a purely white constituency.

Bunting had already come to Umtata and the election campaign was in full swing when the chief magistrate said to the Bhunga: " People will come among you from all over the country, some even from overseas, and will try to tell you about new doctrines.... They do not care whether you are going through bloodshed and tears as long as they can get you to adopt their doctrine.... Your needs will become disturbed.... The Governor−General is in a position to deport a person who makes himself a nuisance . . . I would like to remind you of the agitation which is going on round about us just now and ask you to use your best efforts to try and quell it."

Reporting the results of the election, the S.A. Worker said (actually they are Bunting's words, though he refers to himself in the third person): "The shadowing everywhere by police, their interruption of the candidate's speeches (sometimes they. actually addressed his meetings themselves) and their personal interference between him and the electors actually had the effect they must have contemplated−of frightening the Native voters and Native people in general from his meetings. Many even leading Natives visibly shunned our candidate owing to the tick like presence of the C.I.D.: and not a few voters continued so scared that, wishing to vote for Bunting, they dared not

go to the poll at all.

" Apart from that the constant arrests and legal proceedings taken altogether lasted some five weeks−a big slice out of a campaign lasting little more than three months. Owing to the necessity of being constantly at or within call of the court at Umtata, Bunting had to rely on scratch meetings often at less than 24 hours' notice.

"Election leaflets given to voters were brazenly taken away from them by the detectives, who would also come up and listen to private conversations, and intimidate bewildered voters just before our candidate would come up to them.

" When Bunting applied for inspection of the record of his preparatory examination while it was still pending, he found that it was not at the magistrate's court at all but at the office of the police, who had already typed on the front sheet, in anticipation of the court's decision committed for trial,' on a number of charges named, two of which had not yet figured at all in the proceedings. It was a common thing to see a magistrate in the middle of a case go off to lunch in company with the prosecutor and police officers."

The Buntings and Makabeni won their appeal in July at the Supreme Court in Grahamstown which held that there was no intention on the part of the appellants to promote feelings of hostility, as they were merely preaching the doctrines of communism which was a recognised political faith. AB a result some fourteen charges made by the authorities at Umtata against one or other of the three Communists were dropped. They included a charge of criminal. slander of the chief magistrate of the Transkeian Territories and one of contempt of court, as− well as many charges under the " hostility clause " of the Native Administration Act.

Meanwhile Wolton had been fighting the election at Cape Flats. Things looked well at first with Wolton leading a huge procession of residents of Ndabeni Location to demand reforms from the Cape Town city council, but on election day the promised votes were not forthcoming. Wolton got only 93 votes and lost his deposit. This comparative failure of Wolton's contrasted with Bunting s comparative success, was a factor (so Mrs Bunting believed) in completing the estrangement between the two leading communists in South Africa. It did not seem to matter very much at the time because the Woltons left for England in July with no very clear indication that they intended to return to South Africa.

Chapter 14. League of Rights and Pass−Burning

At the time of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International there had been some discussion in Moscow about the need for a " mass organisation " under C.P. guidance. It was held that the wholesale recruiting of Africans into the Party was 8 bad thing, as in this way the organisation was being swamped by individuals who had no real understanding of Marxist principles. The Comintern favoured the idea of a small and select party of trained revolutionaries working through a larger " mass organisation." In this way the communists would preserve the purity of their ideas and the Party would be able to give a clear and decisive lead on all questions. The advice was based on experience in India,. the East Indies, and other colonial countries. It was held that a similar method would do equally well in South Africa. Bunting and I accepted the suggestion, and while in England I discussed it at some length with the colonial committee of the British Communist Party. We were both back in Johannesburg in August, 1929, and we proceeded, with. the help o£ the Party, to put the idea into practice. While he was in the Transkei Bunting had started a tentative experiment on the new lines. A group of new recruits at Manzana had been formed provisionally−into a " League of Native Rights," a " designedly innocuous organisation," as he called it " with the preservation and extension of the Native franchise and universal free education as the prime objectives, the Communist Party's interest in the scheme not being expressed. but not necessarily to be concealed." We all thought the. name excellent and accordingly called a public meeting at the Inchcape Hall, Johannesburg, where the "League of African Rights" was launched as a " national organisation.' The new organisation was immediately joined by J. T. Gumede, who was made president, and by Doyle Modiaghotla (of

the Ballinger section of the I.C.U.) who became vice−president. The chairman wag Bunting and the vice−chairman N. B. Tantsi of the A.N.C. Nzula and I were joint secretaries. Charles Baker was treasurer.

The League called upon all to join who were interested in the struggle of the black man for freedom in Africa. It drew up a " petition of rights," with demands for the abolition of the pass laws, the retention of the Cape Native vote and the extension of the franchise to Africans in the three northern provinces, universal free education, and full rights of freedom of speech and public meeting irrespective of race. On the lines of the Chartist movement in England it proposed to get a million signatures to the petition and to present it to Parliament. It took for its slogan " Mayibuye i Afrika (" May Africa come back ") and for its badge a black, red and green emblem. Tantsi and I wrote to the tune of " Clementine " a song, " Mayibuye," which caught on like wildfire.

The L.A.R. was a big success from the start. Political fever among Africans was still running high. The " beer riots " in Natal in June had inflamed Bantu public. opinion. The I.C.U. was breaking up, but there were thousands who were still politically minded and looking for just such an organisation as the League, which would rally all the forces of the national movement. Thousands of petition forms were issued and signatures began to come in from all over the country. A big conference was planned to take place in Johannesburg on the approaching Dingaan's Day (December 16).

In the midst of it all a telegram arrived from Moscow ordering the immediate dissolution of the League.

We were dumbfounded, to say the least. Had we not started this new movement on instructions from Moscow? The reasons for the order were not given in the telegram but it was indicated that a letter would follow. Like good " Leninists," though with sorrow in our hearts, we carried out the order from headquarters. " There is nothing for it," said Bunting " we will have to do as we are told." The−petition forms which continued to come in for some time were dropped into the waste−paper basket. And so we missed our chance. Eight years later the E.C.C.I. was instructing the South African communists to develop just such an organisation as the L.A.R. but the political enthusiasm of the masses and the prestige of the Party had declined so catastrophically in the interval that nothing could be done.

When the letter from Moscow arrived in due course we learned that the L.A.R. had to be dropped because it was putting forward " reformist " demands, that it was bolstering up reformist leaders, such as Gumede, and that the communists would not be able to control it, which seemed to us nonsense. I drafted a long letter in reply, defending our action in starting the L.A.R. and this letter was endorsed by the Party executive and sent to the E.C.C.I. But the Muscovites again were adamant. 60 we carried on without our auxiliary mass organisation.

Towards the end of 1929 there were many alarmed and excursions. Pirow, the new minister of justice, announced a new bill, an amendment to the Riotous Assemblies Act, which would give him the power, without reference to the Courts, to banish any individual from any part of the country, to forbid any individual to attend public meetings and so on. This move towards fascism was justified in the eyes of the Government by the obvious shortcomings of the race hostility law as a weapon against the African movement, and it is probable that the decision of the Supreme Court in acquitting Bunting on the charges arising out of the Transkeian campaign led directly to the introduction of the bill.

We replied to the new threat with a big campaign in which the African National Congress and both the Kadalie and Ballinger sections of the I.C.U. joined. There were big meetings at which Pirow was burnt in effigy. These did not prevent the bill becoming law. It passed its final reading in May, 1930.

Dingaan's Day, 1929, was marked by big demonstrations in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and other centres. The African National Congress in Cape Town had, the year before, conceived the idea of counter demonstrations on this day when white South Africa celebrates its triumph over Dingaan " and his dark hordes." The Communist Party readily fell into line with this idea. On Dingaan's Day, 1929, white civilians attacked the Communist

meeting at Potchefstroom with revolvers. One African communist, Hermanus Lethebe, was murdered.and Mofutsanyana and Marks had narrow escapes.

A protest meeting was held in Potchefstroom on the following Sunday. The location oh this occasion was fully guarded by the police and no further trouble took place. On December 28 the dead man was buried. Several hundred people marched in the funeral procession, which was also guarded by the police. Bunting delivered the funeral oration. Mafutsanyana reported " that− the people of Potchefstroom are not at all cowed by these brutal shootings, but are even more determined to fight against tyranny and terrorism."

Six months later Joseph Weeks was tried for murder before a visiting judge and a white jury at−Potchefstroom. The evidence showed that Weeks discharged the contents of his revolver at the Natives and was reloading when he was arrested by Detective Classens No−evidence was given that any other person had fired the shots.. In spite of this the jury returned a verdict of not guilty."

In November, 1929, I left for Cape Town to take up a post in the Government Department of Agriculture. I held it for only three months, when I was dismissed for engaging in political activities. I thought I saw a good opportunity of getting the Party newspaper, the South African Worker, printed in Gape Town more regularly and efficiently than in Johannesburg. It was at that time only coming out at irregular intervals. I wrote Bunting accordingly and the executive agreed. We gave the paper the title Umsebenzi (the Worker) and it re started as a weekly in April, 1930. We decided to start a big campaign for a nation wide burning of passes on the following Dingaan's Day.

In a long letter to me Bunting emphasised that the new venture should not lightly be undertaken or abandoned. " You can't play fast and loose with a legal connection like that, it is not so volatile, nor can you, I think, with the running of a paper. " (He was trying to restart, his legal practice and, finding it difficult). He was doubtful if it was advisable to start a weekly; it might be better policy to make it a fortnightly for the time being. This advice I did not follow, being confident that I could manage a weekly, and feeling that an agitational newspaper should appear as frequently as possible.

Referring to the threatening new legislation he writes: " I think we may be able to carry on, whatever form Pirow's bill eventually takes, though subject to greater persecution. Still, as editor you will have to take particular precautions; in particular I must go into the question whether advocacy of pass−burning is in itself an offence. As regards the pass−burning itself, inviting wholesale gaolings, it will I think mean a very long campaign of preparation. We needn't rely on the gaols being−too full; they will make camps or islands for the prisoners as in Dutch India. The question is rather, will a really big number undergo the sacrifice? Hot air at a couple of meetings is no guide: the inert mass is great.

During the period when Umsebenzi was published in Cape Town (i.e. until the end of 1930) Bunting sent money to help keep the paper going. I afterwards learnt that he was sending 3 pounds a week out of his private pocket. In view of the state of his finances it must have been a hard struggle to do this.

We went ahead with our campaign for the pass−burning. The communist movement grew, particularly at Durban and Bloemfontein. At Durban, Johannes Nkosi, a one−time domestic servant and general labourer, who had been sent from Johannesburg, was building up a big branch in the face of some opposition from Champion's I.C.I.J., which was still strong in that area. In Bloemfontein a Jewish comrade, Sam Malkinson, was training a group of African revolutionaries of whom the most outstanding was Isiah Ntela. Ill the Western Gape Province− we were co−operating closely with Bransby Ndobe and Elliot Tonjeni, militant leaders of the African National Congress. All along the "Garden Route," from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth, branches of the A.N.C. were established. They regarded Umsebenzi as their newspaper and I wrote an Afrikaans version of the Mayibuye song which was soon being sung enthusiastically by Coloured farm−labourers as well as Africans.

In the meantime domestic troubles were developing in the Communist Party branch in Johannesburg. They were centred largely in the personalities of T. W. Thibedi and A. Nzula. Thibedi was accused of mismanaging the affairs of the trade unions of which he was organiser. He was expelled from the Party. Bunting wrote " Thibedi has gone, but I doubt if all who cast stones at him are without sin even of the same kind. The .investigation ordered by the Conference was a mere empty affair, though it could have been given some content but they would not wait, and expelled him. I very much opposed the scamping of a proper inquiry. Nzula, as the virtual successor of him and Weinbren in the Federation, has so far accomplished nothing; indeed the unions are at a very low ebb. We are very short of good ' functionaries ' ! "

The trouble with Nzula was much more serious. He had been Wolton's favourite, and Wolton before leaving had expressed the desire that he should be made secretary of the Party. He was in many ways outstanding−a good brain, an eloquent speaker. But he was a hopeless drunkard. Now Bunting, for all his atheism and revolutionary socialism, was in personal matters very much the son of his fathers−a rigid puritan. Drunkenness was something he could not tolerate, and Nzula was often grossly drunk. There were occasions when he came drunk to committee meetings, was very aggressive and shouted at everyone. Once he was so drunk that he rolled under the table and lay there while the fleeting went on. To make matters worse Nzula used frequently to drink in company with a crony of his, one Mhlongo, an African detective employed by Marshall Square. And if there was one thing Bunting hated more than drunkards it was detectives. Bunting could not handle this situation. Nzula had supporters and to expel him would have meant to split the branch. Besides the Comintern would have been outraged at such an example of " racial chauvinism." He tried to reason with Nzula. He administered reproofs at committee meetings when Nzula was sober. It was no use. So for a time they carried on with Nzula as best they could. It was not a happy situation. Finally they simply had to remove him from the secretaryship.

As Dingaan's Day approached we tried to take stock of the situation. Would the masses follow the lead of the Party and burn their passes? The situation in the Cape did not count because there were no passes in that province. In the Orange Free State we had a big following and it seemed likely that there we should achieve a real success. In Durban we were growing and might pull something off. On the Rand the position was doubtful. In October the Party invited all African organisations to a conference in Johannesburg, to prepare for Dingaan's Day.

The conference was considered a rousing success. Fifty delegates from outside Johannesburg attended. All present, with the exception of some of the I.C.U. and Congress leaders, pledged themselves to burn their passes on Dingaan's Day and go to prison if need be. Bunting wrote: " Our conference was an interesting exposure of the orthodox leaders and also a revelation of grit on the part of I think most of those on the floor, but after all even if there were 600 people present what a flea bite is that out of the millions?"

On December 7, nine days before Dingaan's Day, Kadalie suddenly appeared at Bloemfontein, some said with Government connivance. He had been out of the public eye for months, in retirement at East London and with the threat of deportation to Nyasaland hanging over his head. He addressed a large meeting in Bloemfontein and denounced the pass burning campaign. The Government, he said, would find space in the gaols for the lawbreakers. Africans could do nothing until they were properly organised. They must join the I.C.U. The masses in Bloemfontein did not join the I.C.U. and many of them opposed Kadalie. But his action was sufficient to cause a rift in the lute. It was enough to spoil the one hundred per cent. unity which was necessary if the pass burning was to succeed(l.

On the evening of the 16th the communists could take stock of the passes burnt. Johannesburg reported a mere 150. Nzula had dramatically placed his pass exemption certificate in the flames. But it was raining, the meeting was not big and the masses aid not respond. As far as the largest town in the Union was concerned the passive resistance move was a failure. Pretoria was a little better with 400, but still not enough to make a real impression. Potchefstroom's 300 was better for a small town, but even there it was only the C.P. members who burnt their passes.

The only centre where the pass−burning reached mass proportions was Durban. There, at a large meeting on Cartwright's Flats, about 3,000 passes were burnt, together with poll tax receipts, hut tax receipts and other documents. The Durban borough police, black and white, attacked the meeting, the former armed with assegais, the latter with revolvers. Nkosi tried to calm the crowd but was struck down or shot down while still on the platform. The Africans resisted with sticks, stones and other missiles. Before they dispersed the meeting the police had mortally wounded or killed four men (among them Nkosi) and seriously wounded twenty others.

There followed a reign of terror in Durban. Dozens were imprisoned and hundreds were deported. Attendance at a party meeting or possession of a party membership card was sufficient, if discovered by the police, to ensure one's arrest and deportation. The. Party in Johannesburg tried hard to keep some sort of organisation going in Durban, but as fast as organisers were sent they were arrested and deported.

The Party had few means of carrying on an underground struggle. The Africans of Durban continued to burn passes. Passes also were collected. from the surrounding districts and brought in bags to Durban for destruction. Many who were deported came back to Durban, often on foot, only in the majority of cases to be arrested again and put in prison. If only the rest of the country had displayed the heroism of Durban we might have smashed the pass law. As it was we had lost a fine leader and other brave supporters and we had not achieved our object.

Chapter 15. Right Danger

Just before the pass burning campaign reached its climax Douglas Wolton turned up unexpectedly in Johannesburg (November 13, 1930). Bunting wrote to me in Cape Town the next day. He said that Wolton stated that he had been instructed by the executive committee of the Comintern to engage in full time work for the Party in South Africa. It appeared that he had spent some time in Moscow. He brought back two lengthy resolutions of the E.C.C.I. on South Africa, one political and the other organisational. " They were on more or less familiar lines'? wrote Bunting, "with−a bit more elaboration, in no way tending to greater clarity, on the subject of the bourgeois democratic revolution, etc., and with the anticipated condemnation of me in particular and also of you, as chauvinists, social democrats, etc. I had hesitated a couple of weeks over sending in my resignation (as acting secretary) as there was really nobody to take over my jobs But Wolton's arrival at once made it easy and he was appointed to take over my duties until the Party Conference. I enclose cheque for 6 pounds to keep up the weekly payments of £3 for November 1 and November 8, which. will be my last. −Wolton, like Sachs. is for terminating the Cape publication of the paper and the conference will probably carry that with acclamation, but I will produce your letter." [I had written in defence of continued publication at Cape Town and stating my doubts as to the possibility of producing a weekly paper in Johannesburg.] " I must say that to my mind it has been providential that the paper was carried on at the Cape this year, and something very convincing ought to be brought forward before an arrangement which has on the whole worked smoothly is terminated. "

From a letter written on November 29: " Wolton is leaving to night for Gape Town to introduce the ' new line ' to the Cape Town branch. At the Johannesburg branch meeting last night, at which I was absent owing to stomach trouble (my first absence this year) he held forth something on the lines of the enclosed ?'_ a summary of the speech taken down, I think, by Mrs. Bunting, which I have lost. "It reminds me of the conference of two years ago when he made a violent attack on me, and the rank and file said that they did not want to listen to all this quarrelling. I cannot help thinking that under cover of theses, C.I. resolutions, etc., there is a long−standing personal antipathy or jealousy .... I hate fighting for position and have not yet decided whether I ought to do it or not. I am afraid this campaign is again militating against the pass campaign, in which neither Wolton (the ' Comintern Representative' and with all the dictatorial airs of one) nor Sachs is taking or intends to take any public part. My letter to the executive [outlining his views on the party situation] has been ignored and scarcely anybody has read it, although I think it is the truth."

When Wolton visited Cape Town he and I had a long talk on the transfer of the paper and other party matters. It

was unthinkable, he said, that the Party newspaper should not be under the immediate control of the executive. It was impossible to have the paper published a thousand miles away. Strict adherence to the Party line was essential. The paper must go back to Johannesburg and I with it. He was confident they could maintain regular publication. I saw the logic of his remarks and agreed to pack up my type and go.

I found I did not share Bunting's dislike of Wolton. I had always thought him sincere, and now I was further impressed by his confidence in himself and his mission, his determination to make the Party a real Bolshevik−organisation. He seemed to have Just those qualities in which Bunting was lacking. Here was a man with a definite theory of revolution, with a clear cut doctrine and a programme of action−all beautifully co−ordinated and tabulated. Next to him Bunting appeared a mere empiricist. I was impressed. I was prepared to work with him.

The ninth conference of the Communist Party of South Africa was held in Johannesburg at the end of December, 1930. This conference was run on lines quite new to us in South Africa−. Here was the new Bolshevik.'− monolithic " method: the Party must be hewn from a single piece of stone. Gone was the old " social democratic " method of electing officials. Wolton submitted a list of names for the new committee and asked that they should be voted for en bloc with a broad hint that anyone who voted Against the list was disloyal to the Party and the−Comintern. Accordingly the new Bolshevik leadership was installed. I, as an ideologically weak member who nevertheless showed willingness to learn, found myself on the new committee, but Bunting was left out. He did not fight against the decision. He said " All right. Perhaps I'm too old. Perhaps I don't know enough about communist policy. Let a young man take over.

Wolton wrote a report of the conference for the first issue of Umsebenzi to be published in Johannesburg. "For the first time in the history of the Party," he wrote, " the conference was able to make a general analysis of the situation and tasks of the Party in this country in terms of Leninist theory. The conference faced the mistakes of the past and on the basis of the political and organisational resolutions of the Communist International, determined to avoid such errors in the future. Chief among the dangers to be confronted is the Right Wing danger, expressing itself in a lack of faith in the revolutionary capacity of the Native masses and resulting in the past in a reformist or chauvinistic outlook on the part of the party leadership (opposition to the Native Republic slogan, formation of the League of African Rights, running after Kadalie, etc.). "

Wolton had got most of this stuff−out of the resolution of the E.C.C.I. which he had brought with him from Moscow. The resolution itself, 3 lengthy document, was published in installments in Umsebenzi. −Referring to a letter Bunting had sent to the colonial commission of the British Communist Party, the E.C.C.I. said: It is evident that Comrades−Bunting and Roux attempted to lay a theoretical basis for reformist views. These comrades have elevated to a theory the chauvinist views they gave utterance to at the Sixth Congress of the C.I. and which were severely condemned by the Congress. They are attempting to revive the theory of South African exceptionalism and are rejecting bhe the thesis of the Sixth Congress on the colonial question as inapplicable to South Africa. "

There followed a long list of Bunting's sins He denied the revolutionary role of the Native peasantry " by trying to skip the bourgeois democratic stage of the revolution to the ' pure r proletarian revolution." He was trying to reduce the Native movement for national independence to a mere reformist struggle for equal rights. And so on and so forth. From all this flowed " the opportunist tactical line expressed in the League of Rights and still more glaringly in Bunting's letter which says that ' even the most honest move must choose the line of least resistance I The Communist Party is compelled to try peaceful methods. . . a moderate policy, because in the attempt to realise an immoderate one it will be immediately suppressed by force.' "

If a prophet had told Wolton and the Comintern bureaucrats who composed this document that in less than five years' time the Communist Party would have dropped all mention of the Native Republic and would be content with a mere struggle for equal rights, that it would be trying to make a united front " from above " with labourites, bishops and " reformists " of all kinds, he would have been laughed to scorn. And yet the new line was to be−just

as sacred as the old one, as much bolstered up with Leninist theory, and all who opposed it were to be condemned in equally scathing terms. The truth was really that the ultra left line of 1931 and the ultra right line of 199/5 were determined solely by the situation in the Soviet Union and the demands− of Soviet. foreign policy. In 1931 England was leading the movement to build a "white wall" round. the Soviet Union. Hence the need. to weaken the British Empire. from within. Hence support for national revolutionary movements in the colonies. And hence the Native Republic slogan.

Hitlerite Germany had become the chief danger. There was a military, alliance between France and the U.S.S.R. Anthony Eden had been to Moscow. A "people's front" was in existence in France. Hence a soft pedalling of anti British slogans and a willingness to co−operate with reformists.

But the Native Republic slogan was supposed to be based on an analysis of the relationship between the African masses. and Anglo−Boer imperialism, and these relations had not altered fundamentally between 1931 and 1935. If it was "inexpedient" to stress the slogan of a Native Republic in 1935 it was probably just as inexpedient to do so in 1931, and Bunting was probably right.

Poor Bunting tried to reply to these attacks. He sent in a letter to Umsebenzi which I inserted, probably without Wolton's permission for I remember I got into trouble over it. The maintained that he had been deliberately misquoted and his remarks wrenched from their context. " I said the Africans had been crushed and degraded by their conquerors. Is that to say I am in favour of their being crushed and degraded, ' accept white domination,' am a chauvinist, have ' a complete lack of faith in the Natives' ? Why, surely, our whole policy and activity would be an utter futility, and a conscious one at that, if we had no faith in the Africans and their high destiny as a race; surely all our Party's work in recent years, including mine as (to quota Comrade Nzula) ' Its most active member,' is direct evidence of such faith. Chauvinist? I invite any rank and file African reader of this paper, not primed against me, to quote any genuine case of chauvinism, or of ' a contemptuous and patronizing attitude towards Negroes' as such, on my part (or Com. Roux). 'Accept white domination' indeed? Why, what has been the main and practically the only burden of all our party effort, especially since the Congress (including e.g. the pass burning campaign)−perhaps even too much to the exclusion of the pure proletarian movement−if not to push forward African liberation and independence,−to overthrow the white rule, and, not in words only but still more in deeds, to advance, not a mere ' reformist struggle for equal rights ' (Native reformists indeed look on us as their chief enemies), but the slogan of the Native Republic or, as we put it more idiomatically in the African, 'Mayibuye Africa'? Are we then such hypocrites, or lunatics, that we do not mean, not only what we say, but what we do?"

At the foot of Bunting's letter was an editorial note stating that the reply of the political bureau would appear next week. The reply began by saying that "the publishing of the letter from (Comrade Bunting . . . must be sharply condemned as a violation of democratic centralism, in that discussion was re−opened after the 9th Party Congress had decisively adopted the new Party line. Furthermore, the publishing of the letter reveals an underestimation of the right danger by the ' compromise ' to the right wing in opening the columns of Umsebenzi for the ventilation of right wing statements. In view however of the publishing of this letter it, now becomes necessary to reply to some of the points raised. "

There followed various doctrinal arguments about Bunting's heresies regarding the agrarian movement and South African exceptionalism. The statement ended by giving " three of the most serious aspects of white chauvinism of the right−, wing." These were " (a) the removal of Native functionaries from the −leadership of the Party, (b) the social democratic campaign of v vilification against leading Native comrades in the Party, and (c) the sabotage of political training of Native cadres."

Any further reply from Bunting was disallowed, though was boiling over with indignation at this fresh crop of " unwarranted charges." Wolton had referred to ' Native functionaries − and " leading Native comrades " in the plural, but to the best of my knowledge there was only one person concerned and that was Nzula. Charge (a) then,

referred to Nzula's removal from the secretaryship after he had repeatedly come drunk to' meetings and (b) to Bunting's−strictures on Nzula for getting drunk. The only charge that had some small basis of fact was (G) that− Bunting (or the displaced leadership) had not started any training classes on Marxist−Leninist theory. This could hardly be made a case of chauvinism, however? for Bunting always regarded Marxist−Leninist classes as something very unreal, and bookish. He could have replied that the Party had conducted a night school for African workers and that some of the best "functionaries," like Kotane, Makabeni, and Nkosi, had been trained in that school.

At this time Molly Wolton was still in Moscow, attending a course of political instruction at the Lenin School. But Wolton had secured a valuable lieutenant in the person of Lszar Bach, a young communist from Lithuania who had recently come to live in South Africa. Bach was the " ideal Comintern type," soft spoken but thorough−going. He had an amazing knowledge of Comintern doctrine, could quote Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, chapter and verse, on any conceivable aspect of policy, and he knew the various theses and resolutions of the Comintern practically by heart.− He had that delight in intellectual subtleties which one often finds in Jews who have studied the Talmud as part of their early training, Wolton and Back became in practice the "bosses" of the Communist Party. They insisted on an African majority on the new Political Bureau. But the African members, though intensively coached in the theory and practice of the " new line," were made thoroughly subservient. In fact the Party was as much dominated by Europeans as ever.

The Party newspaper, Umsebenzi, under the new regime was not a great success At once it assumed a graver and less popular character. "Imprecor language became the prevailing style. Almost all Wolton's writings and speeches began with a reference to the deepening economic crises. African comrades soon gave him the nickname " Deepening economic crisis." The paper became less of a newspaper; the record of events was swamped by long doctrinal articles; slogans were multiplied; "directives for struggle," of the most complicated lengthy and impossible kind, took a prominent place. Five weekly issues were printed at the beginning of 1931, then the paper became a fortnightly. Within a year it was again. being printed at irregular intervals and −its circulation had slumped badly.

At the end of February, 1931 I Was sent to Cape Town, where John Gomas and I threw leaflets from the gallery of Parliament on March 6, "day of struggle against unemployment. "From Cape Town I went to Durban to try to hold together what was left of the Party organisation there, under conditions approaching very near to complete illegality.

On my way to Cape Town I halted at Bloemfontein on instructions from the Party, to interview the local branch and explain why Malkinson had been removed from the executive. Malkinson was among those who were considered politically unsound by Wolton. For this reason he had not been put on the new " political bureau," though, as the most active communist in the Orange Free State it had always been taken for granted in the past that he was entitled to a seat in the leading committee of the Party. Malkinson simply could not understand why he had been deposed. Nor could Ntela and the other African communists in Bloemfontein. They had written to Johannesburg asking for an explanation. I was sent to give them this explanation, but I am afraid I was a bad advocate, not understanding it very well myself. The comrades at Bloemfontein said, " Malkinson built up this branch. He taught us about the (Communist Party. He has always helped us and stood with us in our struggle. Because of his activities he has been ordered by Pirow not to attend any public meeting in Bloemfontein. Now you tell us that Comrade Malkinson is no good and you have removed him from the executive. Why?" I replied that Malkinson lacked theoretical clarity, that he did not understand the new kind of Bolshevik Party we were trying to build up in South Africa. The political bureau must consist of 100 per cent. Bolsheviks, etc. Naturally I did not convince them.

The Bloemfontein Branch sent another letter to Johannes burg demanding Malkinson's reinstatement. Wolton and Bach immediately summoned a meeting of the political bureau and Malkinson was expelled " for fractional activities against the party line." "That will show the right wing that we mean business," said Wolton. By this step

the Bloemfontein branch of the Party was destroyed. Malkinson was out; Ntela and the others lost their enthusiasm. Wolton was " crushing the right danger," but he was also smashing the Party.

And this was only a beginning.

In the meantime in Johannesburg, the Party, though hindered somewhat by its preoccupation with the " right danger, " was still able to strike fear into the hearts of the authorities. By this time the boom of 1928 v as definitely over and unemployment was growing among both black and white workers. The Party was able to gain considerable influence not only among the black unemployed but also among the whites. Its most popular agitator was Issy Diamond, a barber by profession, who became known for his humorous speeches. On May Day, 1931, for the first time in the history of the Witwatersrand, there was a joint demonstration of black and white workers on a large scale. According to Umsebenzi some 3,000 Bantu and 1,500 Europeans assembled at Newtown market square and "with cheers for the solidarity of black and white workers, " moved off in a procession. They passed the offices of the Native Affairs Department and the police headquarters with resounding boos, and then marched to the front of the city hall where a big meeting was held. This spot had been a well known meeting place for generations, but never had a Native crowd gathered there. When the communist procession arrived the so called " United May Day Committee," consisting of representatives of the white Labour Party and trade unions, was holding its meeting (a small one) in typical white fashion. The communist procession "swept up with banners flying and completely overwhelmed the gathering of reactionaries forcing them to close down their meeting." After the meeting a large crowd of unemployed, consisting largely of Natives but with a fair number of whites as well, marched to the Carlton Hotel, led by Diamond and shouting " we want bread." A rush was made to get in, but police closed the doors. The demonstration then: went to the historical Rand Club and again attempts were made to enter. The police replied with a baton charge in the course of which white and black unemployed and police were mixed up in a general melee. " Several white workers repeatedly rescued prisoners from the hands of the police and inflicted severe punishment on the thugs of Pirow." Native banner bearers fought valiantly to retain the flags they were carrying, one of them " being batoned into insensibility " by the police.

Following the riot eight Europeans and two Africans were arrested and charged with "public violence." The two Africans were fined 2 pounds each. Two Europeans, De Villiers and Jones (unemployed and with previous convictions) were sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour apiece, and Diamond for " incitement to violence" received a twelve months' sentence.

Bunting, though no longer in favour with the political bureau, was still prepared to serve the Party. He acted as Diamond's attorney in the big trial and also in a number of less important trials which had preceded it; for Diamond had been very active in the period immediately before May the First. For instance he had led a group of white unemployed into one of Johannesburg leading restaurants where they had asked for food until they were thrown out by the police. Bunting's conduct during these trials was subsequently used against him, as we shall see.

Wolton's plan during this period was that he and Bach should remain as far as possible in the background, not exposing themselves to undue risks, but keeping a strict eye on policy and tactics; while others, like Diamond and me and of course some of the African comrades, should function as the public instruments of the Party. I did not think then, nor do I believe now, that this was due to cowardice on Wolton's part; for he had shown and was to show again that he was prepared to face the music. It was rather " revolutionary realism. " Why should the brains of the Party, on whom so much depended, be exposed unnecessarily to the danger of arrest and imprisonment? But Bunting and. Diamond did not see it in this way. Bunting snorted his contempt; and Diamond still cynically recalls how, on the occasion of the May Day meeting, Wolton and Bach stood on the outskirts of the crowd listening to his speech and noting all " deviations " for future reference.

Chapter 16. Expulsion

It was not until September, 1931 that Wolton and Bach finally " liquidated the Right Danger." For months they had been working up a case against Bunting. They had secured certain supporters in the Party. But Bunting remained the great leader in the eyes of the African rank and file both inside and out side the Party. All the talk about "deviations," the long−winded resolutions and theses in Umsebenzi, meant absolutely nothing to them. Charges of " white chauvinism " seemed equally unreal, for was not Bunting known in locations up and down the country as the man who defended Africans in Court and asked no payment ? Years afterwards some communists were selling literature in an out−of−the−way location. An old African was interested. " Who are you?" he asked. "We are from the Communist Party,". they answered. "Oh, I know the Communist Party," the old man said, "he wears big boots."

A resolution of the political bureau was published on September 4, 1931. It began with a lengthy statement on " the deepening world crisis" and the international dangers of "social fascism" and the "right danger," and went on to enumerate the shortcomings of six leading communists who were thus notified of their expulsion from the Party . The statement declared that " the right wing activities of Comrade S. P. Bunting have not lessened but have on the contrary increased from month to month until they assume the form of fractional activities against the line of the Party. " Examples of the "continuous ventilation of the non−party line of Bunting" were firstly that "when defending Diamond in court in connection with the Frascati Restaurant case he had compared the struggle of the unemployed for bread to a students' rag." Bunting had stated in court that the unemployed had entered the cafe to ask for food to draw public attention to the fact that they were starving. Their behaviour was no more criminal than that of students out for a " rag."

The second offence was that in defending the unemployed arrested on May Day (when the fracas had occurred outside the Carlton Hotel and the Rand Club) Bunting had " appealed to the magistrate to have vision and thereby treat the prisoners leniently." Again, when Diamond was on trial for contempt of court Bunting had persuaded him to apologise to the court. It was further stated that a " number of elements " had been gathered "round the expelled member Thibedi" in an attempt to reinstate him to membership, "in the process popularising . the differences that exist between Comrade Bunting and the Party leadership. " Another reason given for Bunting's expulsion was that he had addressed a meeting of the African Bantu Club and had spoken on the same platform as members of the I.C.U. and African National Congress. He−had spoken in the name of the Communist Party and this constituted "a compromising of the Party and−a further reflection of the dangerous work of Comrade Bunting."

The other expelled members were W. H. Andrews, C. B. Tyler, Solly Sachs, Fanny Klenerman and Bennie Weinbren. It was claimed that Andrews had lost all organisational contact with the Party for many years "merely claiming nominal membership on paper." "All the work of Comrade Andrews has been of a purely individual character with no reference to the Party." This was essentially true. Andrews' membership of the Party was unreal, In addition he was accused of having spoken on the " social fascist " (i.e. Labour Party and trade unionist platform) on May the First and of having failed to publish a declaration renouncing this "counter−revolutionary action" when instructed by the Political Bureau. Thus the C.P. got rid of its most well known member in the ranks of the white trade unionists and a man who had consistently supported the cause of the Left and of Native unionism in the Trades and Labour Council.

O. B. Tyler was another example of one who had drifted steadily away from organisational contact with the Party and who had pursued an "individual line" in his work as secretary of a "reformist trade union"−the Building Workers' Industrial Union. His "drift to the right" had reached a stage where "disciplinary action" had to be taken.

Fanny Klenerman was accused of not having undertaken any work for the Party and of having conducted an uninterrupted campaign against the Party leadership.

The chief charge against Solly Sachs was that he had persuaded the Garment Workers' Union, of which he was secretary, to− support neither the African May Day Committee (communist) nor the United May Day Committee (reformist) but " to go on a picnic instead of demonstrating on the streets."

Last on the list was Bennie Weinbren, founder an l president of the Native Trade Union Federation. He was accused of having " conducted his trade union work along purely social democratic lines, involving the workers in class collaboration machinery. " This meant that Weinbren, while protesting against the reactionary portions of the Industrial Conciliation Act and the Wage Act, was in favour of trade unions using the legal machinery as far as possible to secure better wages and conditions for the workers. This subsequently came to be regarded as quite orthodox communist strategy.

The expulsions in Johannesburg were followed by expulsions in other centres. In September J. Pick, an old stalwart of the Party in Cape Town, was expelled for " fractional activities against the leadership." La Guma suffered a similar fate, a month later.

The expulsion of " the Right Opportunist Bunting clique " was subsequently fully endorsed by the Executive Committee of the Communist International, which called upon the C.P. in South Africa "to continue and intensify the struggle against Right opportunism and all remnants of Buntingism." (Umsebenzi, 18/1/32)

The expulsion came as a terrific shock to Bunting − and not only to him but to hundreds of his friends and enemies throughout the country, who knew him as a courageous and leading exponent of communism in South Africa. All the leading newspapers referred to it and published summaries of the statement, of the political bureau. It seemed to the man in the street that the Communist Party was committing suicide, for practically all those who were regarded as leading white communists were in the list of the expelled. The expulsions did more than anything else to alienate party sympathisers and fellow travellers and to lower the prestige of the Party.

There was some attempt on the part of the African rank and file of the Party to disavow the decision of the political bureau and secure Bunting's reinstatement. Gana Makabeni and a number of others took up the cudgels on his behalf. At Johannesburg and Potchefstroom protests were made by members. But democracy had disappeared from the C.P. and Wolton had the few branch executives which might have intervened well under his control.

Bunting addressed a printed leaflet to the Party membership. It was headed " Private, for circulation among members of the Communist Party only," and dated Johannesburg, October, 1931. " Dear comrades of the Communist Party," it began. " No doubt you have heard of the recent expulsions, and perhaps you have wondered what is the reason for them. Speaking of my own case only, I believe the great majority of the comrades, and the African comrades in particular, will say they know of no reason why I should be put out of the Party.

" The trouble does not emanate from the membership, how ever, but from the new leadership installed at (or rather before) last conference, which really means Com. Wolton, for the rest of the leading personnel remained much the same as before. Some of you may remember how bitterly, and as I think, falsely, Com. Wolton attacked me at our 1928/9 conference and how that conference did not want to hear anything of such quarrels. Since Com. Wolton's return from Europe last year, however, the attack has been greatly intensified, until it has become almost a ' frame up.' What have I not been charged with during the past few months? ' Chauvinism;' 'opportunism,' 'right wing deviation,' 'being against trade unionism,' 'against the Pass Campaign,' etc., etc., −to all of −which I plead, and I believe your verdict should be, not guilty ! Similarly with the charges published in Umsebenzi .... about 'sabotage work' or 'fractional activities' being against trade unionism,' 'against the Pass Campaign,' in connection with T. W. Thibedi, the African Club, etc.−rather thin charges, I think you will agree, even if true, but actually quite false as the members of my group and all others who know the facts (except a mere handful attached to Head Office who have reasons for not knowing them) will testify.

"In short, my expellers cannot clearly state any of their reasons except by grossly and knowingly distorting the truth. Or they say T do not follow the ' party line.' The only line I know is that published in our Party programme, Conference Resolutions, etc., in accord with the Communist International, and this I follow. No other ' line,' even if authoritative, has been given out except this lying ' anti−Bunting ' line, to the propaganda of which much time and man power has been sacrificed, with the result that much real Party work has been scamped or most inefficiently conducted and party membership and general agitational activity have shrivelled almost to a skeleton (and then they blame me for all that too !)

" Well, without engaging in anything like an opposition or a split, I am obliged, in applying to the next Party Conference for reinstatement, to ask you all for your support. That does not mean that I hanker after ' leadership,' let the best man lead, whoever he is. For a year already I have worked hard as a rank and filer, especially on the founding of a miners' union, and should have been content so to continue. I only want this 'ban,' passed by a small dictatorship without giving any notice (much less a hearing) either to me or to you, to be removed so that I may resume doing my bit in the great war for African emancipation−free this time, I hope, from the persistent misrepresentation, boycott, and persecution−especially behind my back, to which I have been subjected for over a year past.

"It will not be so easy for you to do what I ask. The present leadership will possibly do its utmost (and controlling the party machine it can do much) to prevent you from securing free expression of your will, through your own freely−chosen delegates, at the conference. It may say ' this appeal of Bunting's is fractional ' or ' opposition to the leadership cannot be tolerated ' or ' Bolshevism does not believe in hearing both sides, ' or it may try to shelve the matter altogether. But if there is something wrong with a party or its bureaucracy, if there is some danger or poison or disease at work, must you just hold your tongue and say ' Ja baas' ? No, you cannot be deprived of your right to put matters in order at a party conference, and for that purpose to ascertain and discuss all the facts beforehand. If, therefore, you think that in the interest of the Party and the African masses I should be reinstated, I beg you not to be indifferent or inactive, not to be bluffed or intimidated, but to assert yourselves by insisting on the conference being held and the matter properly placed on the agenda, and by sending delegates definitely instructed to cancel the expulsion resolution.

Yours ever fraternally, S. P. Bunting. "

It seemed to me that there was something very unpolitical, not to say naive, in this statement of Bunting's. There had been misrepresentation, boycott and persecution no doubt; there were indications of a frame−up too, but surely there was much more to it than that ! What had happened could not be attributed only or even mainly to Wolton's malignancy, to a mere personal grudge on his part. There was enough evidence to show that Wolton was trying to introduce a new policy in the Party and that he was carrying out to the best of his ability the instructions he had received from Moscow. Our experience at the Sixth Congress, the various theses and letters from the E.C.C.I., all pointed to a definite line of policy which the Comintern was seeking to impose on its sections. If Bunting believed that the policy of the Comintern was wrong let him go to the root of the matter and say so. I for one still believed that the Comintern was right in the main though I felt some qualms about the cold−blooded Machiavellian way in which Wolton was setting to work. I was in Durban when the expulsions took place and I was not consulted about them.

Though I was not happy about Bunting's .removal from the Party I acquiesced in it, partly because I felt that I did not completely share his outlook, and partly because I realised that any protest would have resulted in my own expulsion. Without the Party machine behind me I should have been unable to continue with the work I was doing in Durban. I was to find myself dragged still further along the path of shameful acquiescence in the months that followed.

I came to Johannesburg on a brief visit at the end of December, 1931 and took part in the next round in the fight against Bunting and the "right danger." Bunting had sent a letter to those Party members he believed sympathised

with his cause, inviting them to a meeting in the Inchcape Hall on Sunday morning, December 27! to consider what steps should be taken to secure the revocation of the expulsions. The meeting was described as "private." A copy of the letter came into the hands of Wolton and Bach a day of two before the 27th. They hastily summoned a meeting of the political bureau to decide what steps should be taken to counteract the Buntingites. Now a conference of "Labour Defence" (Ikaka) had been arranged for that same Sunday morning. I forget whether it was Wolton or Bach who suggested the idea that we should transfer the Labour Defence meeting to the Inchcape Hall. We should go there, occupy the hall and start our meeting an hour or so before the Bunting meeting was due to begin. Then when the Buntingites came they would interfere with our meeting at the peril of being charged with sabotage l I was appointed chairman of the " Labour Defence " meeting. Bach undertook to provide an audience from members of the newly−established Jewish Workers' Club, who could be relied upon to support the official party. The members of the club were mostly young men and women from Poland and Lithuania, earnest adherents of the Communist International, but with as yet only a very limited knowledge of the movement in South Africa or the events that had led to Bunting's expulsion. They had been told that Bunting was a traitor, and that was enough for them.

When Bunting, Makabeni and the others arrived at the hall they found our meeting in progress. For a time they kept quiet, too much taken aback to do anything. Then some of them began to shout " This is our meeting. Why have you taken our hall ?" A fight started between the Jewish Workers and the Africans. Makabeni went outside to get a stick. Blows were exchanged. I and some of the less fanatical people on our side intervened and managed to stop the fight. But Bunting's sup

porters remained and insisted that it was their meeting. Finally the proprietor of the Inchcape Hall, a Coloured friend of the movement, forced both parties to leave the hall, which he then locked up. In the next issue of Umsebenzi the following appeared:

> BUNTINGITES SMASH UP IKAKA CONFERENCE
>
> "Agents of Pirow and Hertzog prevent Exposure of Prison Brutalities
>
> "The Johannesburg District Conference of Ikaka, held on Sunday, December 27, at the In
> convened in order to develop a Union−wide campaign against the brutal prison regime ex
> and to launch a mass demand for the introduction of a special prison regime for politi
> Africa. Representatives from factories and various districts were present.
>
> "At the outset it was clear that Bunting (the expelled communist) had organised groups
> and others in order to prevent the delegates from speaking of the prison conditions wh
> At a later stage in the conference the Buntingites, at a given signal, shouted down th
> fight.
>
> "Several of the Buntingites were thrown out of the hall, but finally, due to the wides
> developed, the conference had to be closed.
>
> "Thus the Bunting clique again clearly reveals itself as a definite agent of the Gover
> and prevent any organisational work being done.
>
> "Against the united front of Pirow, the employers and the Buntingites the masses must
> back. demanding the abolition of gaol brutalities and the introduction of a special pr
> prisoners."

Against men who used such methods Bunting stood no chance. The campaign against him went forward relentlessly. He was a member of the "non−party organisation," the Friends of the Soviet Union. The F.S.U. had held a meeting at Marabastad Location, Pretoria, and Bunting had been sent there by the Johannesburg committee as one of the speakers. At the meeting a leaflet published by the Communist Party was distributed among the crowd. The leaflet was an attack on Bunting. It denounced him among other things as an " imperialist bloodsucker." A copy was handed up to Bunting on the platform, and in his speech he referred to it briefly,

denying the charges contained therein. The C.P. then instructed its " fraction " in the F.S.U. to demand a vote of censure on Bunting by the executive of that body on the ground that he had committed a breach of discipline by using the F.S.U. platform for ventilating his private quarrel with the Communist Party. Bunting was accordingly censured, though he defended his behaviour in a capable speech. During the debates he leaned across the table and asked a woman member (a newcomer to the Party who was having her first experience of " fraction work "): " l}o you think I am an imperialist bloodsucker?" She answered " No."

At the next general meeting of the F.S.U. there were stormy scenes when a resolution was moved stating that " Fractional elements were using the platform of F.S.U. in order to slander the Communist Party, the Communist International and other revolutionary organisations." Bunting again defended himself, admitting that he had referred to the Communist leaflet when he spoke at the Marabastad meeting, but stating that he had to do so, though briefly, as the leaflet was distributed to the audience by Joffe, a member of the F.S.U. committee and of the Communist Party, who had accompanied him to Marabastad. Bunting was followed by Party speakers who attacked him on the usual lines. They included John Marks. While Marks was speaking, Mrs Bunting shouted an interruption from the back of the hall. Marks replied with some not too complimentary epithet and then Bunting was observed walking swiftly towards the platform. Whether his intention was to hit Marks or merely confront him was not clear. He was stopped by the audience before he reached the platform.

The incident was reported in typical style by Wolton in the next issue of Umsebenzi with the heading "Buntingites attempt to wreck F. S . U. meeting−White chauvinist attack on Native speaker" . . " Bunting stated his case admitting that he had attacked the Communist Party at these meetings. He stated his case without interruption. Numerous white speakers followed and gave examples of the counter revolutionary work of the Bunting group, but it was only when a Native speaker came forward that the real violent white chauvinist line of Bunting and his clique was demonstrated. Immediately Comrade Marks (Native committee member of the F.S.U.) took the platform, Bunting male a violent rush for the platform to physically attack Comrade Marks. Only due to the intervention of a white worker was Bunting prevented from injuring the Native speaker.

" This incident coming on top of all the other activities of the Buntingites immediately caused speaker after speaker to rise and demand the expulsion of the Bunting clique from the F.S.U., pointing out that the open Fascist activities of these elements called for the entire liquidation of this group. The workers and oppressed peoples of South Africa increasingly understand the demagogy of the Bunting group who by counter−revolutionary deeds give the lie to all the pretensions of serving the working−class movement and openly reveal the Buntingites as agents of Imperialism, of Pirow, Hertzog and Smuts."

Though many of us deserted Bunting, there was one man who stuck to him through thick and thin. Gana Makabeni defied Wolton and the P.B., and openly championed Bunting's cause. But Wolton was not in a hurry to expel Makabeni even after various attempts to win him away from Bunting had failed. For one thing Wolton was trying to show that Bunting was a white chauvinist. It was a bitter pill to have to admit that an outstanding African leader like Makabeni was in the Bunting camp. Another thing that weighed with the P.B. was the fact that Gana was the popular secretary of the African Clothing Workers' Union. However, Gana's intransigence showed no signs of abating and finally, in March, 1932, it was decided that " drastic disciplinary action must be taken." Makabeni was therefore formally expelled from the C.P. on the ground that He had " openly conducted propaganda in favour of Bunting and the reactionaries" all that he had opposed an attempt by the C.P. to secure the disaffiliation of the .African Clothing Workers' Union from the ' reactionary (white) Garment Workers' Union " led by Sachs.

Wolton and Bach claimed that the rank and file of the African Clothing Workers' Union had remained loyal to the Party and the African Federation of Trade Unions. But it seemed that Makabeni had taken a substantial section with him, and it was not long before he had the entire union in his hands.

Gana's subsequent activities are a fine example of devotion and consistency. During the depression years 1932 and 1933 the African Clothing Workers' Union was in a bad way. But Gana stuck to his purpose. He obtained work as a labourer in a furniture factory and conducted the affairs of the union in his spare time. The organisation weathered the storm and became one of the most successful African unions.

Chapter 17. Monolithic Party

For some time there was little reference to Bunting in the columns of Umsebenzi. That "counter revolutionary" was believed to have retired from active political work. On account of his health and on medical advice he had given up his lawyer's business, which in any case had been more of a liability than an asset. After recovering from a partial stroke and spending a period in hospital, he got work as a viola player in the orchestra of the African Theatres Trust.

The Communist Party in the meantime was undergoing an even more thorough process of "bolshevisation." Molly Wolton had returned from Moscow where she had spent a year at the Lenin School. In addition a representative of the Comintern had come to South Africa and was actively guiding the Party along the new line of complete bolshevisation. Nzula and another African had been sent to the Lenin School. 14

With these new additions to its leadership the Communist Party found itself " Ideologically strengthened." A most elaborate programme covering every field of activity was drawn up, and such party members as remained were subjected to the most rigorous discipline. New trade unions were to be built up. The African miners were to be organised. Peasant leagues were to be started. Political training classes were to be made compulsory for all party members. Special day schools for " functionaries" were to be held from time to time. Umsebenzi was to be enlarged and its circulation increased ten fold Everything was planned down to the minutest detail. The Party was to be completely re organised in factory, farm, and street nuclei. Organised party fractions were to function in all the trade unions and other " mass organisations." Every committee, every group, every individual was to be given a definite task or tasks and an elaborate time schedule was laid down for their fulfilment.

The only drawback about this scheme was that there were not enough people to carry it out.

The expulsions had robbed the Party of many active and capable people. Whole branches had disappeared in the purging of the Right Wing. Trade unions which had once been close to the Party had come to regard the C.P. as their chief enemy. " Mass organisations " like the Friends of the Soviet Union had become narrow sectarian groups consisting almost exclusively of Party members. The hundreds of Africans who had followed the Party had been completely mystified by the anti−Bunting campaign and had become politically indifferent. The denunciation as " social fascists," "national reformists," "agents of imperialism," etc. of all who did not accept the Party line unreservedly had caused the Party to become an ever−narrowing sect.

In addition. such forces as were available for carrying out this stupendous programme were still further reduced by a process called " preparation for illegality." Certain comrades were told that they were not to identify themselves publicly with the Party. They were to remain behind the scenes, functioning on secret committees which would direct the work. These secret functionaries had practically nothing else to do but draw up gigantic plans which the over−burdened " legal functionaries " strove in vain to carry out, At one stage practically all the open work of the Party was done by two of us, Louis Joffe and myself, though in the end neither of us was considered good enough for membership of the political bureau.

By October, 1932, most of us who worked in the Party and those who still read Umsebenzi were beginning to forget about Bunting. We were having a hectic time; trying to organise the unemployed both black and white; carrying on at Germiston, in the face of bitter police persecution, a campaign against the lodger's tax; fighting a parliamentary by election with Comrade Marks as our " Native demonstration candidate" 15 ; helping the garment

workers in a bitter but futile strike, while at the same time we fought Solly Sachs, their union secretary.

Suddenly we were reminded of that " imperialist bloodsucker Lord Bunting," as he was now called. To the general charge of " rightism " was now added a new one of " alliance with counter−revolutionary Trotskyism."

The evidence on which this new attack was based was rather scanty. A new paper, the Maraphanga, had appeared, edited by T. W. Thibedi. Thibedi had evidently written to ,Trotsky and received a letter from him in return, but the Maraphanga did not appear to have any definite political line. Thibedi was not a theoretical Trotskyist. Almost the whole of the new paper was in the vernacular and dealt with various Native grievances. There was no mention of Bunting; no attack on the communists. I, for one, did not know what to make of Thibedi's new effort.

But within a day or two came another piece of information which might have had some bearing on Thibedi and the Mara'phango,. The one−time manager of the I. S. l. Press was now running a small printing works of his own, and he was doing work for the Communist Party. In my capacity as manager of Umsebenzi I used to visit his office quite frequently. One day, shortly after the Maraphanga had appeared, I met Bunting coming out of the printer's office. Inside, by some strange chance, I noticed lying on the office desk a red card, similar to a Communist Party membership card, but with the caption " Communist League."

Like detectives hot on the scent− the Political Bureau now proceeded to put two and two together. Bunting was starting a " Communist League " in opposition to the Party. The Maraphanga, although it did not say so, was the organ of the new body. Thibedi, on his own admission, was in league with Trotsky. Bunting was behind Thibedi and was helping to subsidise his paper.

This was grist to the mill of the Comintern " rep," who ordered a special double−size edition of Umsebenzi which he practically filled with articles denouncing the " counter−revolutionary alliance of Bunting and the Trotskyites." Much of this writing was vile stuff (for instance, Bunting was described as the " prominent son of Sir Percival Bunting, an aristocratic British peer and a firm fighter for British imperialist domination−himself a rich lawyer and an absentee landlord now exploiting Natives on a wattle farm in Natal") and I told my fellow members of the editorial board that I did not like it.

They replied " You yourself have provided the evidence. How can you suggest that Bunting is not in alliance with the Trotskyists ?" I replied that we did not know for certain but should wait for more definite evidence.

A few weeks later Wolton announced that there were too many white members on the Political Bureau. At that time there were four Europeans: the two Woltons, Bach and myself. Wolton suggested that the number should be reduced to three and these should be the three " most thoroughly Bolshevik white comrades." I was charged with having shown weakness over the articles on Bunting. Furthermore I had had frequent disputes with Molly Wolton, my chief fellow member of the editorial board, about the general tone of Umsebenzi. It was clear that I did not have a proper understanding of the Party line. The Comintern representative (whom personally I found a very likeable fellow) agreed with Wolton's proposal, and accordingly,− I lost my seat on the P.B. I was instructed, how ever, to continue my technical work in connection with the publishing of Umsebenzi, which I did.

I have never been able to discover exactly what happened behind the scenes in the Maraphanga−Communist League affair. Bunting made no public reply to the attacks on him in Umsebenzi. Apart from the card on the printer's desk, nothing more was ever seen or heard of the Communist League. After its first number, the Marapharaga did not appear again.

− Bunting never did start an opposition party, though he was asked on many occasions to do so. On visiting Cape Town he was invited by the " Communist Opposition Group " to speak at the Lenin Club and did so. But in his speech he strongly urged that there should be no revolutionary party outside the C.P. and he said he would not assist in forming one.

Chapter 18. Last Days

Far from being a "rich lawyer and an absentee landlord exploiting Natives on a wattle farm in Natal," Bunting was by no means well off. When his fingers became partially paralysed and he could no longer play the viola, he was glad to accept a post as caretaker of a block of flats.

But before the state of his fingers made it impossible he did get some satisfaction from orchestral playing. While touring South Africa with the orchestra he met old friends in different parts of the country−among them Colonel Creswell on his farm near Bellville on the Cape Flats.

In the subsequent history of the Party that expelled him, he lived to witness a dramatic justification of his own standpoint during the bitter years when he was denounced as a chauvinist and counter revolutionary.

The Comintern representative left South Africa towards the end of 1932. In December of that year the Woltons went to Cape Town where they played a prominent part in a tram and bus workers' strike. The communists organised a group of militant tramway workers to oppose the secretary of the union, Stuart, who, they alleged, was trying to negotiate an agreement in favour of the bosses. In the midst of the strike Wolton was arrested on charges under the Riotous Assemblies Act and the Conciliation Act. He was not allowed bail until the strike was over. In May, 1933 he was sentenced to three months' hard labour. This was his second period in gaol within eighteen months (he had served three months early in 1932 following articles which had appeared in Umsebenzi alleging gaol brutalities inflicted on African prisoners in Natal). The continual arrests and imprisonment's, the hectic life they led and the financial insecurity which always dogged the footsteps of the communist agitator in South Africa seemed to have a depressing effect on the Woltons. Molly had a weak heart; the doctor advised her to give up her public speaking which wag doing her no good.. Their daughter, born in 1926, was having no sort of family life, being " parked " now with this woman comrade and now with that.

When Wolton came out of prison in August, 1933 he found a letter from his brother in England, offering him employment on the Yorkshire Times and a home for Molly and the child. The temptation was more than they could resist, and the Woltons left hurriedly for England without obtaining the permission of the Political Bureau in Johannesburg. It was a gross breach of the discipline they had so loudly and fanatically enforced on their fellow members in the Communist Party for some years. To the Buntings and the other expelled members. it seemed evidence of the insincerity of the denunciations and the expulsions and of the whole campaign against the " Right Danger."

The departure of the Comintern representative and of the Woltons led to changes in the leadership in Johannesburg. The desertion of the Woltons had done much to discredit their policy and some party members were now almost brave enough to look round with open eyes and to ask themselves whether this narrow sectarianism and extreme " leftism " was really doing the Party any good. Two African members of the P.B. who had been the roughly trained in the anti−right tradition, left to study in Moscow. Lazar Bach had now to carry largely on his own shoulders the burden of the struggle against the "Right Danger."

The Political Bureau was now so depleted that new blood had to be brought in. Josiah Ngedlane, an old stalwart from the Cape, and John Gomas, came to Johannesburg and were given seats on the P.B. Moses Kotane was another addition. I also found myself back on the committee. As I was a full − time worker in the Party and virtual editor of Umsebenzi, this was almost inevitable. Without any overt change of line or any new resolutions or theses the Party began slowly to follow a more realistic policy. Umsebenzi was published as a weekly from the beginning of 1934. It was enlarged, made more readable, and it soon became once more the most widely circulating Bantu newspaper. Bach continually pointed to " serious deviations " in articles in the paper; he tried to keep the Party tied down to the old line, but he was in a minority on the P.B. and we went ahead in spite of him.

During this period some of us were able to re−establish friendly personal relations with Bunting. His old itch to do something was still upon him. He developed an interest in collective farming, on the Russian model, and wondered whether anything could be done to propagate the idea in the Native reserves. In December, 1933, he wrote a pamphlet, and, as the Party now had its own press, he asked us to print it, which we did, " purely as a business proposition."

This was Bunting's last pamphlet, his last piece of political writing. He called it " An African Prospect− an Appeal to Young Africa, East, West, Central, South." Though addressed primarily to Africans, it was written in his usual involved style. As an effective political tract it was a failure, but as Bunting's final testament, it is of interest to us. Here he slates his belief in the inadequacy of the old liberalism. " Liberalism 'is not enough' to−day. Its real job seems after all to be, at best, to reduce some of the superficial (though serious) disparities and brutalities of imperial rule in order to safeguard that rule from the dangers of ' unrest '; but it does nothing to relax the imperial grip on the Colony or the vampire activities of its capitalists." In this situation the oppressed masses of Africa should look rather to Soviet Russia for inspiration and an example to follow. Bunting attacks again those " parlour Bolsheviks " he knew so well in South Africa, " who thrill and gush over this ' Russia for the Russians ' but never think of translating it into terms of Africa; Some perhaps even hope, subconsciously or secretly, that Socialism will never come to Africa in their time !" After various attacks on the fascists, the segregationists, the penny−in−the slot reformists, who think for instance with Father Huss of the Roman Catholics that co−operative societies alone will be the salvation of the blacks, " forgetting that blacks and even poor whites have next to no property to pool or co−operate with, and especially if the races are barred from co−operating, " Bunting goes on to discuss a general plan for the redemption of Africa.

" Let us suppose (skipping, as others have done, the problem of ' how to get there') that Africa decides for Marx, and that her working masses, organised as a Government of workers and peasants for the whole continent, and led perhaps by some sort of all−African ' Communist Party,' command sufficient political and military power (for ' Red Armies ' may be needed to defeat sabotage, disruptive or subversive movements, and recrudescence of the old order) to carry that decision into effect, on more or less similar lines (adjusted to local custom and to later Russian experience) to those of the 1918 Russian constitution from which we have already quoted:

" ' With the fundamental aim of suppressing all exploitation of man by man, of abolishing for ever the division of society into classes, of ruthlessly suppressing all exploiters, of bringing about the Socialist organisation of society and of establishing the triumph of Socialism in all countries, the Third All−Russian Congress of Soviets . . . decrees:

" ' (a) In order to establish the socialisation of land, private ownership of land is abolished; all land is declared national property, and is handed over to the workers, without compensation, on the basis of an equitable division carrying with it the right of use only.'

" '(b) All forests, underground mineral wealth and waters of national importance, all−live stock and appurtenances, together with all model farms and agricultural concerns, are declared public property.'

" We will imagine that some sort of Pan−African ' State Planning (Commission ' and ' Supreme Economic Council' has been created. Given cash to pay sufficiently attractive salaries, as the Soviet also had to do in its initial stages to secure the beat technical advice, or alternatively given a fair modicum scientific patriotism. we may even anticipate that this Government will from the outset have at its disposal the sincere services of the finest expert brains, specialists and engineers, besides organisers, business managers, auditors, etc., of the whole continent and more, eager to play a part in making the very best of all its available resources ' for the utmost benefit of all concerned ' and that the ' co operation to the fullest extent ' of existing technical staffs to that end can be guaranteed."

From this he goes on to discuss the need for an agricultural survey leading to the planning of farming on a continental scale, with the planned transition of tribal agriculture to collective farming on modern lines. "Altogether a Five Year Plan will doubtless be not enough for Africa; with its ' So many worlds, so much to do So little done, such things to be ' (those words so prostituted by Rhodes) thirty or fifty years will be well spent on the work, in fact there is no limit to human progress once the forces hitherto imprisoned are set free."

Finally there is an appeal to the African leaders themselves.

" Then why falter, why flounder, why wag your heads between Yea and. Nay, asking what ' the authorities ' would say if you came out boldly for your people−the authorities who, as you well know, are placed where they are in the interest of that small class? Why fight against the change to please them, why not grasp it with both hands, every one of you (there is safety in numbers) throwing yourselves heart and soul into the lifegiving task of ushering in the New Age? It is not ' faddism,' it is the sober and serious recognition of plain facts that inspires men and women to work hard, even ' fanatically ' for a better life, realising that ' it must come ' in both the indicative and the imperative sense, that both the future and the right and the duty are on the Socialist side.

" The demand of a nation of a hundred and twenty million human beings for release from their chains must some day sweep the length and breadth of the whole African continent like a tidal wave; the mightier its sweep, the more irresistible its power and the speedier and more bloodless its victory.... May it come quickly !

The new era of comparative reasonableness in the Communist Party, which came in unobtrusively by the back door after the departure of the Woltons, was not destined to last very long. We reformers on the P.B. were rather timid at first and not quite sure of ourselves, fearing perhaps the heavy hand of Moscow if we should move too far to the Right. We did not deal with Bach as he and the Woltons would have dealt with us. We allowed him to keep his seat on the P.B,. and I for one argue that he should be kept there " because of his theoretical knowledge and his value as a critic."

But Bach steadily strengthened his position. He was supported by Louis Joffe, who, as financial secretary of a very small party now consisting almost entirely of paid functionaries, was a powerful ally. Bach found numerous " Right deviations " in the articles in Umsebenzi and in the public speeches and activities of various comrades. In particular he found Moses Kotane guilty of " petit bourgeois national reformism," because that comrade had suggested the organisation of a united front of Non European organisations in which the Party should not thrust itself too openly to the fore. Kotane maintained that the Party tended to ruin every " united front mass organisation " by blatantly controlling it and dictating its policy. A united front to be successful must be a genuine united front in which Africans could feel that they really had some power and control.

Bach did not merely criticise Kotane's proposal. but found in it evidence of a fundamental deviation. The trouble lay in the fact that Kotane's interpretation of the slogan of a Native Republic was incorrect. The slogan controversy therefore flared up again, but on a different level. It was no longer a question of being for or against the slogan but for or against a certain interpretation thereof. Kotane, who could quote chapter and verse with a facility equal to Bach's, maintained that the Original formulation of the slogan was correct. This had stated that the Native Republic was a stage towards a workers' and peasants' government. But while the Comintern representative was in South Africa the slogan had been altered so that the Native Republic had become synonymous and synchronous with the workers' and peasants' government. This was the interpretation which Bach supported.

I do not propose to go into the details of this controversy, which resulted in stormy debates into which all the Party members in Johannesburg were drawn and which lasted often into the small hours of the morning. The theoretical arguments seemed to me to be but the cover for disagreements on the practical work of the Party. Some of us took the line that Bunting should never have been expelled, that the trade unions had been driven away by an extremist and intolerant party leadership, that the whole campaign against the Right Danger was not

justified−by conditions in South Africa and had been most unfortunate. We questioned whether the Party should continue to domineer in the mass organisations, antagonising all non−party fellow travellers in the trade unions and in the Friends of the Soviet Union, and whether Louis Joffe should continue to act as dictator in the newly−formed Anti Fascist League.

When it was proposed to re−open the Party night school, which had been dead for years, and to try to make the Party headquarters a centre of social activities, this was described by Bach as a social democratic deviation−"Not because I am opposed to the school as such," said Bach, "but because the pro posed re−opening of the school has been put forward in such a way as to suggest that there is something wrong in the Bolshevik system of organisation of the Party." These subtleties were beyond the comprehension of some of his followers; one of them, Peter Ramutla, declared " You shall start your night school over my dead body. "

On the P.B. matters had reached a climax. But that body was equally divided between the Bach and Kotane factions. Bach, however, was favoured by fortune.

Suddenly there arrived back from Moscow two of the comrades who had been sent there for training. Without any argument they resumed their seats on the P.B. In their hands rested the final decision. It did not take them very long to make up their minds. They voted for Bach's interpretation of the slogan, and in the same breath condemned the whole outlook and criticism of the opposition.

In September, 1935, disciplinary action was taken against the " Right deviators. " Some half−dozen of our more vociferous supporters were expelled from the Party, because they had " attacked the line and leadership of the Party," and had "thus sown discontent in the ranks of the Party and mass organisations sympathetic −to the C.P.S.A." Kotanc, Ngedlane and I were expelled from the Political Bureau. Issy Diamond was suspended from membership of the Party for three months " for being associated with elements that have been conducting fractional activities against the line of the Party, both in the Party and in the mass organisations. " The published statement of the P.B. which announced the expulsions, ended as follows: " Now that the situation is clarified, we sincerely hope that all those who have been previously confused will now see their way clear to following the Party line and leadership."

Apparently many of the Party sympathisers were not at all clear, for the leadership found it necessary to call a special public meeting at the Jewish Workers' Club at which Edwin Mofutsanyana, on behalf of the P.B., made a speech explaining and justifying the expulsions. At this meeting, in defiance of all Party discipline, I replied to the P.B., defending those who had been expelled and demanding their re−instatement. I was also able publicly, for the first time, to express my regret at my compliance in the expulsion of Bunting and my silence during the discreditable attacks that were subsequently made on him.

Bunting was present at the meeting. I met him a few days after. He was the same old gruff bear. " We were glad to hear your confession," he said. We spoke of the future of the Party.

He thought nothing good would come of it until the " bad elements " were removed. These people, however, were still in the saddle and the expulsions had strengthened their grip on the Party machine. But I was full of hope that the " new line " expounded by Dimitrov at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, which had just been held, would usher ID a new phase in party policy. The " people's front " was now the policy. There was no more emphasis on the "Right danger." Instead the chief danger was " sectarianism." It appeared that practically all the parties of the Communist International had made sectarian leftist mistakes, thus tending to isolate themselves from the broad masses. In fact what had been happening in our small Party in South Africa seemed to mirror exactly what had been happening., in the Communist Parties in Germany, India, Bulgaria, Brazil and a dozen other countries.

I hoped that the Comintern would now admit its mistakes in South Africa, remove Bach and Joffe from the leadership, and restore the expelled members. Perhaps it would even allow Bunting to return. But nothing of the sort happened. Kotane, Gomas and I had sent an urgent telegram to Moscow stating that the sectarian leadership was splitting the Party just when the Italian attack on Ethiopia made unity of the left movement essential. We asked for the immediate intervention of the Comintern in South Africa. As a counter−blast to our telegram, the P.B. sent a representative, a Russian comrade named Richter, to Moscow.

In reply to the telegram the Comintern asked the Party to supply them with more information about the split, and finally asked that representatives of the opposing factions should go to Moscow to talk things over. Bach went immediately. An African comrade representing the opposition went some weeks later. I did not go, It was months before any reply came from Moscow, and then it was simply: " We are not interested in discussing past mistakes. Here is the new line. Get on with it." Bolshevik self−criticism apparently was demanded only of comrades who found themselves−in a minority in opposition to the official line; it did not apply to the Comintern itself. In fact some comrades declared: " The Comintern does not make mistakes. If mistakes were made in South Africa it was because the instructions of the (Comintern were not carried out, or because Moscow was misinformed about the situation in South Africa."

The subsequent history of Bach was peculiar.. He did not return to South Africa. He became involved in the purge and the anti−Trotskyist trials. He had shared a room with Lurie who was accused of communicating with Trotsky and executed. The charge against. Bach was that, though intimate with Lurie, he had not informed the Party that I.Lurie was receiving letters from abroad. Bach was officially expelled and was sent away from Moscow, to some rural area. Many in Johannesburg believed that he was subsequently shot. There has been no confirmation of this and he may still be alive. That Bach of all persons should have gone over to Trotskyism seems to me utterly absurd. Strangely enough Richter and his brother (who was an editor of a Jewish newspaper in Moscow were also involved in the purge and were expelled from the Party. That happened to them is still not known to me.

The last time I saw Bunting was at the beginning of May, 1936. We met at a political meeting (perhaps it was the annual May Day social) and I walked part of the way home with him. Ethiopia had just collapsed before the blackshirt armies and we discussed the " international situation," as one does on such occasions. I remember him saying what a pity it was we had not a powerful Communist Party in Africa " to unite" he said, "all the scattered anti−imperialist forces in a common front against oppression." He also told me about his fingers, how they would sometimes fail to respond to his brain, and how it interfered with his viola playing. The doctors, he said, did not seem able to help him.

On May 24 he had a stroke and they took him to hospital.

As he lay there dying, in the bed next to his by a strange coincidence was one of his old Comrades, Gideon Botha.

Gideon Botha was one of the few Afrikaners in the left movement in South Africa. He had been a member of the International Socialist League. Previously he had been a gold miner and had taken part in the strikes of 1913 and 1914. I remember dimly hearing him speak in Afrikaans on the I.S.L. soap box, on a windy night at the time of the First Great War Afterwards he joined the Nationalist Party and played some part in the 11922 strike. He came back to the left movement and joined the Friends of the Soviet Union in 1931. He wag present when Bunting was expelled from that body. In 1932 and 1933 he helped the Party in its work among the white unemployed, proving extremely valuable as an Afrikaans speaker. Now he was seriously ill and Bunting was dying in the bed at his side.

On Monday, May 25, Bunting's condition was serious. The nurses brought screens and put them round his bed. Botha shouted out: " Bunting. Comrade Bunting, I d d not vote for your expulsion from the F.S.U. Believe me, I did not." Whether Bunting heard we do not know. He was probably unconscious by that time, and he died before morning.

Botha was not the only one in the movement whose conscience troubled him about the way Bunting had been treated. There was a guilty feeling that his death was in some sense a result of his expulsion, for it was said that it had so weighed upon his mind that his health had given way. In any case he had undoubtedly worn himself out in the service of the movement which he more than any man had created and which had turned and denounced him.

We all went to the funeral: old trade unionists and members of the I. S.L. long since outside the Party, the African trade unionists, and the Party itself, both expellers and expelled.

There was a red flag, draped in black, and among the pall bearers were three Africans, as was fitting.

Bennie Weinbren had organised the funeral and he had allowed four speakers: C B. Tyler for the old guard; Gana Makabeni for the African workers, Willie Kalk for the Part leadership, and me for the opposition. Officially Kalk represented the Leather Workers' Union and I was the Party speaker Tyler made an orthodox funeral oration. Gana, who had loved Bunting, was too overcome to say very much. My own remark were less tactful than was fitting at such a scene of unity. Kalk put the " Party line " which was that Bunting's great service was to bring the black workers into the movement, and for this they honoured his memory.

" De mortuis nil nisi bonum." In an obituary notice Umsebenzi said: ' 'Comrade Bunting was for a number of years the leader of the Communist Party and as such has taken up the cause of the oppressed and exploited people of South Africa Although he was excluded from the Communist Party, due to a persistent disagreement on fundamental principles, his honesty and devotion to the cause of the workers and oppressed people of the country were unquestionable. The historical significance of the role played by Comrade Bunting in the history of the revolutionary movement of South Africa lies in the fact that he realised the great importance of the Native masses in the anti−imperialist struggle, and that under his leadership the Communist Party began to organise these masses for the struggle for their emanci pation. thousands of exploited and oppressed South Afrioans will remember Comrade Bunting as a staunch fighter." A fuller account of Bunting's role in the revolutionary movement was promised for the next issue, but it never appeared.

The Spark, the Trotskyist organ published in Cape Town, was more lavish in its praise: " The Revolutionary Movement has lost a valuable member. But in Bunting, South Africa has lost something more than a valuable member, something more than an honest revolutionary. It has lost a leader, a pioneer, a Bolshevik. And the Revolutionary Movement in South Africa, so poor both in quality and quantity, will find it difficult to replace a man of Bunting's calibre. Such men are rare.

" He was one of the first to break not only with the Labour Party, but with Social Democracy; one of the first to hail the October Revolution in Russia, one of the first to form the Communist Party. And as an ardent Communist he had to fight, and did fight enemies of every possible kind−Imperialism and Capitalism and their lackeys; the Labour Party; anarchists of various 'brands inside the Communist Party; and last, but not east, white chauvinism. When, moreover, he had succeeded in building up a Communist Party, he was deposed and expelled . . . for opposing as unsuitable the slogan of ' Native Republic '

" Bunting will always remain a living symbol in the South African Revolutionary Movement. For none in South Africa as so beloved as Bunting by the Bantu workers and peasants who, thank;, to him, were drawn into the movement. It ; they who most fully appreciated his great loving heart, the qualities of his character, and his crystal−clear honesty as man and as a revolutionary. This is not the time to recall his faults and mistakes. Who among us is faultless and which of us does not make mistakes?

The memory of Bunting will remain with us."

One of the finest tributes to Bunting's life and struggle was the establishment of the Sidney Bunting Memorial Scholarship, at the South African Native College at Fort Hare. The money is subscribed annually by a group of

Bunting's old friends, and it has enabled many young Africans to carry on their studies at South Africa's only Native university college. Unfortunately the capital sum needed to put the scholarship on a firm basis has not yet been raised. In the meantime, however, the money required every year to keep− the scholarship going has been regularly subscribed. The honorary treasurer of the fund is Advocate F A W. Lucas.

It is not easy to say in a few words what I feel about Bunting. His was a peculiar and complex character. He retained throughout his life certain characteristics developed by his early training, much of the outlook of the Wesleyan liberals from which he sprang. There was his intellectual honesty and the feeling that he was under a moral obligation to do what his conscience dictated, whatever the consequences. combined with this was a marked empiricism and an almost pathological aversion to formal theory. " This rage was right in the main, that acquiescence vain," he was fond of quoting. " In the main "−not utterly and absolutely, but only in a general sense, was any particular political formula right or wrong. Affairs were complicated; one had to take the line that seemed best on the whole, realising always that there were many aspects to every problem. This explains, I think, the complexity of his writing, the frequent parentheses and interpolations. Every statement had to be complete−the whole truth not merely part of it. It explains also that tendency to dither in a crisis, that inability to make up his mind quickly, which made him a difficult leader and annoyed many of his fellows in the Party.

And yet he had a tremendous drive, a tremendous sincerity, a tremendous persistence. While others gave up the struggle, he carried on. To be a communist in South Africa to day is to be a nigrophilist−a " kafferboetie." That was Bunting's achievement.

The tragedy in his life was a double one. The Party he had built the Comintern he had served, expelled and denounced him. That was tragic enough. But the greater tragedy was that he did not understand why this child of his, this thing he had adored, should turn and rend him.

And yet he remained loyal; he remained a communist; he died believing in the Soviet Union and in the Communist Party.

Was that sheer obstinacy or was it the finest tribute that could be paid by a great man to a great cause?